

# Hospitality

## New York by Water

An Interview with Daniel Boockvar,  
Chief Executive Officer, New York Cruise Lines, Inc.,  
Owner of Circle Line Sightseeing Cruises



World Yacht Duchess under the Brooklyn Bridge (left); North River Lobster Company at Pier 81 (below);  
A Circle Line tour boat cruising New York's East River (above)

**EDITORS' NOTE** Daniel Boockvar was appointed to his current post in August of 2014 after having held senior executive positions for several iconic consumer service businesses. Most recently, Boockvar served as Chief Operating Officer and Chief Customer Officer of the Girl Scouts of the USA where he oversaw, among other things, the digital transformation of the \$800-million cookie business and core program infrastructure. Prior to that, Boockvar spent almost 12 years as a senior executive at Weight Watchers International. During his last five years at Weight Watchers, he ran the \$1-billion U.S. Operation, and was responsible for the roll-out of new national service offerings and the launch of businesses in China and Mexico. Boockvar, a Class of 2010 David Rockefeller Fellow sponsored by the Partnership for New York City, is a native New Yorker who has served on various nonprofit boards in New York, including the Success Academy Charter Schools and the NY Chapter of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.



Daniel Boockvar

**COMPANY BRIEF** Circle Line Sightseeing Cruises ([circleline42.com](http://circleline42.com)), New York's oldest and largest provider of scheduled and chartered sightseeing and special event cruises, as well as one of the most famous boat rides in the world, has hosted over 60 million passengers in New York since 1945. Today, Circle Line, located in Hudson River Park on 42nd Street and the Hudson River, and convenient to Time Square, the High Line, and Hudson Yards, is the only cruise line dedicated exclusively to sightseeing, while using the most modern vessels and offering magnificent views of the Manhattan skyline, year round. Circle Line's parent company, New York Cruise Lines (NYCL), also operates New York's first and finest dinner cruise fleet, World Yacht Dining Cruises ([worldyacht.com](http://worldyacht.com)), and Manhattan's very own thrill ride, The BEAST speedboat. In 2014, NYCL created a brand new restaurant concept, the North River Lobster Company ([northriverlobsterco.com](http://northriverlobsterco.com)), which is the first floating lobster shack in New York.

### What excited you about this opportunity?

Professionally, I've spent my career running and transforming iconic service businesses. Personally, I'm a native New Yorker who grew

up riding the Circle Line. My kids love *The BEAST* and my wife's office has had team off-site meetings on the Circle Line. The brand will also be 70 years old next year and has hosted 60 million passengers since it began – it was just the perfect professional and personal combination for me.

### What is your vision for growth?

The message I got when I was hired was to continue to innovate and grow – and that is a great position to be in.

North River Lobster Company had a terrific launch in May of 2014. It was an innovative process of taking a very successful World Yacht business and restructuring it for Millennials and locals. It was a great pivot, using an available asset and creating something that is potentially a great stand-alone growth vehicle for us.



Circle Line, which offers the quintessential New York experience, has innovated as well this year. The company has started to tier some of their service offerings, now extending guests access to a Premier service. Following in the footsteps of hotels and airlines, we're learning how to segment our offerings around the customer.

The attractions industry has a surprisingly complex, matrixed channel structure. Our great challenge is to stay above the commoditized and destructive pricing battle and to reset the conversation around premium, differentiated brand experiences.

### Are you happy with the product you have today?

Yes, we're fundamentally happy. The boats are the most modern sightseeing boats in New York. The sightlines are amazing, and we are the only sightseeing boats that can get fully

around the island of Manhattan. We offer full lunch, snack, and beverage offerings, which can be served to customers at their seats. This really sets us apart from our competitors.

The boats are also just getting better. In fact, we just placed an order for three brand new sightseeing boats that will continue to ensure that we have the most modern fleet in the business. Delivery of these boats will begin next year and I can't wait to share updates on them with our travel partners.

The diversity of our offerings is a reflection of such a top notch marine operation and our relentless focus on the customer experience. Our best option is the two-and-a-half hour 'Best of New York' tour where you can travel all the way around Manhattan and see 125 sights and hear the most amazing stories from our guides, who are all trained by the New York Historical Society. Not only do you get unprecedented views of the skyline, you'll learn everything from where Alexander Hamilton lost his life in a duel to the details of Captain Sully Sullenberger's "Miracle on the Hudson" landing of US Airways Flight 1549. Circle Line ships and crew were some of the first on the scene, rescuing Captain Sully and the 135 passengers. When the tragedy of 9/11 happened, Circle Line ferried 50,000 people off the island. Circle Line is a part of the fabric of this great city, helping shape and share the fantastic New York stories that make us the most remarkable metropolis in the world.

### You mentioned World Yacht earlier. How have you positioned that business?

World Yacht is on Pier 81 and operates a top-notch dining cruise business. We have a private events business where you can charter out our beautiful luxury boats for weddings and corporate events. We also have a dining cruise business for the general public where couples can spend a romantic evening on one of our World Yacht vessels, enjoying our world class food.

In addition, we also have the new North River Lobster Company. You can just walk on the boat, no reservations required. It sails for a half hour and there is no additional cost for sailing, as it is all included as part of the experience.

We have options for everyone to experience at New York Cruise Lines and will be innovating even more in the months ahead. I'm truly excited to continue growing this historic and iconic company into a tourism and hospitality powerhouse. ●