



## Empowering Employees

An Interview with Kanvar Singh,  
General Manager, The Time New York



A Time model living area (left); The Time Hotel lobby (above)

**EDITORS' NOTE** Kanvar Singh began his career with Hampshire Hotels as a front desk agent at The Time Hotel in 2002. He quickly rose to become one of the youngest GMs in the city at the Night Hotel in 2008. Under his leadership, Night was voted "the sexiest hotel in America" by Trip Advisor and won service awards from Booking.com, Trip Advisor and Agoda. He then returned to The Time as General Manager in 2010, managing both The Time and Night properties for over a year. He is currently overseeing a multimillion-dollar renovation of The Time Hotel by the David Rockwell Group, which is slated to be completed in mid-September. Singh is a graduate of Baruch College and of the General Managers Program from the Cornell School of Hotel Administration.



Kanvar Singh

I have an excellent team that I am extremely proud of and honored to work with, and as a GM, I'm very passionate about service. I believe passion to be contagious, and my team has adopted the same service-oriented mindset that continues to be the cornerstone of my hospitality career. As management, we have to care about people – our guests as well as our employees. I believe in creating a positive environment that fosters personal and professional development for all of my team members. This also means

empowering employees and giving them the tools they need in order to excel. At The Time, if a guest has a problem or issue, the employees are equipped to handle it themselves. They have the authority to upgrade guests or send a customized or personalized amenity – and are encouraged to do so.

**Do you look at your competitive set mainly from a geographic perspective or is it broader?**

It's a bit of both. Currently, in our comp set, we have The Paramount, Hotel Mela, and Night Times Square, which are all in the Times Square vicinity, but also the Hudson which, even though it's further uptown, is a similar product with a similar rate.

With the upgraded product, our new competition becomes The Refinery, Viceroy, WestHouse, or even The Nomad. These hotels are a bit further away from Times Square, but are upper upscale, design-focused properties with comparable facilities. The fact that we are located in Times Square gives us a competitive advantage over these hotels.

**Do The Time, Dream, and Night have a similar guest? Do these properties work closely together?**

Both Night and Dream hotels attract a younger clientele. People staying at Night want a fun boutique experience on a budget, while guests at Dream often stay there because of their chic restaurant and nightlife outlets.

The reimagined Time New York targets a very sophisticated clientele, looking for a refined and well-curated experience. While offering unique dining and lounge concepts, it's not as focused on nightlife. We will put more of an emphasis on the business traveler with an added conference room, a business concierge, and our enhanced tech focus.

**PROPERTY BRIEF** The Time Hotel ([thetimeny.com](http://thetimeny.com)) is a true urban sanctuary, situated just steps from Times Square, two blocks from Rockefeller Center, and within minutes of any Broadway show. The Time is currently in the midst of an in-depth renovation to become an elevated lifestyle offering. The overhaul, spearheaded by the much-lauded Rockwell Group, will position The Time as the flagship property for a new Time brand from Debut Hotel Group.

**What do you see as the most significant strengths for this property?**

Our location in Times Square is a major strength right now. The hotel was opened in 1999 and was the first boutique hotel in the Hampshire Group. It became the catalyst for the creations of both the Dream and Night brands.

Once the renovation is complete, our design and decor will be another major strength for us. David Rockwell is designing the property, which we're very excited about. I believe his unique perspective on design and aesthetics will become one of our most competitive advantages. We will be focusing heavily on integrating the most current technology, from iPad check-in systems to convenient room keys that can be worn on the guests' wrists. Sleek USB ports have been added to our bedside tables, and our mirrors now double as Smart TVs. We will be using fine Italian linens from Frette and are proud to announce that we will be using Maison Martin Margiela bathroom amenities, designed exclusively for The Time brand.

That said, all of these hotels are under the Debut umbrella, which means that we are able to collaborate and share resources.

**What is the key ingredient to being successful in food and beverage?**

Finding the right partners – Vikram and Sant Singh Chatwal have done a phenomenal job in choosing them. Strategic Management Group for Dream Downtown was a home run, and Serafina at this property, and at Dream Midtown, has done very well.

**Is it hard to communicate to a guest that a boutique property can still offer truly great service?**

With boutique hotels, people have the expectation of more personalized service. Night Hotel only has 72 rooms, meaning the doorman is able to alert the front desk that a guest is checking in before they even approach the front desk. In addition, when I was the GM there, we would have a manager walk the guest upstairs with the bellman and show the guest all the details of his or her room personally. I also had the concierge create an individualized sheet for each room that detailed specific events and potential points of interest for that specific guest in the city that day. We began to use social media heavily to keep up with guests' requests before, during, and after their stay with us. These programs were so successful that I ultimately rolled them out at The Time as well.

One way I intend to make the experience even more extraordinary at The Time post renovation is by allowing my team to come up with one new service idea each quarter that they will be allowed to implement. I want to encourage them and make them feel proud that their ideas are being used and incorporated into the Time brand. I also want to make the guest service agents personally known to guests using social media and personalized business cards. When guests feel familiar, recognized, and warmly welcomed, they will return.

Service should always be exemplary when running boutique hotels. I'm the type of GM who believes in personally interacting with his guests on a daily basis. How else can one keep his hand on the pulse of the hotel? No leader should excel only in an office setting. Continually walking the property and interacting with guests in the lobby is the best way to stay informed about the guests' overall experience. As a hospitality professional, we should never forgo the finer details. It's those minor elements that make up the bigger picture. ●