

Hospitality

Delivering Excellence



An Interview with
Prince A. Sanders, General Manager,
Trump International Hotel & Tower New York

*Trump International Hotel & Tower New York (left);
Two Bedroom Park View Suite living area (above)*

EDITORS' NOTE Prince Sanders was named to his current post in April 2017. Over the past three years, Sanders served as Hotel Manager at Trump Central Park. He launched his hospitality career in 2002 with Starwood's W Hotels, first in Chicago and then in New York. Sanders continued his career at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, New York, where he served as Front of the House Manager and Assistant Rooms Executive. In 2010, Sanders assisted with employee trainings for the openings of *The Waikiki Edition*, *The Istanbul Edition* and *The London Edition*. Sanders is an avid writer who has published a series of children's books.



Prince A. Sanders

PROPERTY BRIEF Soaring above Central Park and Columbus Circle, Trump International Hotel & Tower® New York (trumphotels.com/central-park) – the only Forbes Five-Star/AAA Five-Diamond hotel with a Two-Star Michelin/Five-Diamond restaurant, Jean-Georges – is an icon delivering the highest level of service, style and exclusivity. The 52-story structure features 176 luxurious guest rooms and suites, complete with European-style kitchens, marble bathrooms and spectacular views of Central Park and the Manhattan skyline. Amenities include a 6,000-square-foot spa and fitness center and in-room dining by the Three-Michelin-Star Jean-Georges. The property has earned many coveted awards including Travel + Leisure's "World's Best Hotels," Conde Nast Traveler's "Top Hotels in New York City" and "Best in the World," and U.S. News & World Report's "Best Hotels in the USA."

What have been the keys to Trump International Hotel & Tower New York's consistent leadership in the market?

The longevity of the team and the detailed training. We have some of the greatest professionals in the industry. We invest in these employees with vigorous training programs, from Trump Hotels' training to yearly Forbes training. The staff consistently delivers standards in every action. It is very common in New York City for hotels to experience turnover. However, we are fortunate enough to have celebrated our 20th anniversary with 44 employees celebrating 20 years of service and 10 employees celebrating 19 years of service. Those team members set the

standard and have taken pride in their level of service since the day the hotel opened its doors.

Would you highlight the strength of the suite offering at the property?

One of the unique features of the hotel is that of the 176 guest rooms, 141 of those rooms are suites. While the hotel is received as a more traditional style, our suites carry a great balance of traditional and modern styles, creating a space that can be enjoyed by all tastes. The suites boast 10-foot floor-to-ceiling

windows offering unobstructed views of Central Park and the city. I'd like to consider the windows a part of the art of the building; moving art. Every day we look out over Central Park, it is ever changing, offering one a glimpse into New York City.

The hotel has been sought out by guests traveling with their families or staying in New York for longer periods because each of our suites offers full kitchens. There is also the option of an incredible meal in your suite sculpted by Jean-Georges.

Trump International Hotel & Tower New York has achieved great success in food and beverage with your partnership with Jean-Georges. What has made this relationship work so well?

We have a very special relationship with Jean-Georges Vongerichten. Jean-Georges, who is also celebrating 20 years at Trump International Hotel & Tower New York, has curated the hotel's food and beverage program from his three Michelin starred restaurant Jean-Georges, Nougatine restaurant, as well as the hotel's in-room dining program. Jean-Georges can be seen weekly in his restaurants. His professionalism and dedication to excellence mirrors our values, which makes our collaboration a match made in heaven.

How much of a focus is wellness for the property and would you provide an overview of your spa facilities?

Trump Hotels is dedicated to health, fitness and wellness. From our Jean-Georges curated Nourish menus, that include healthy options customized for one's personal nutritional needs, to our Travel Fit program, which offers personal trainers, and light fitness equipment delivered to one's guest room, we make it easy to maintain one's healthy lifestyle while staying with us.

The Trump Spa and fitness center are exclusive to hotel guests and residents. The 6,000-square-foot spa features a 55-foot salt water lap pool. Our fitness center includes state-of-the-art equipment and personal trainers on staff who are readily available to assist our guests with their fitness needs, including Kettle Ball training and Yoga in Central Park. The spa team provides a full array of innovative and traditional massages, facials, body and nail treatments.

Trump International Hotel & Tower New York places a major focus on training its workforce and investing in its employees. How critical is this in retaining talent at the property?

When an employee feels an investment in their growth and development, it builds trust. In addition to traditional training, it is incredibly valuable to spend one-on-one time with team members. Spending time together creates a personal connection. This connection leads to personal investment, enthusiasm and passion for delivering excellence. Fewer people work for great companies than those that work for great leaders.

How do you define the role of the general manager, and has the role become as much of a financial role as it is about hospitality?

The role of a General Manager is always evolving. We wear many hats. To be successful in the role, GMs cannot make it an office-based position. They need to immerse themselves within the team, within the operation. They have to solicit feedback from their guests, they have to have their finger on the pulse of their product and they have to ensure that the team knows the values and the vision that they have for the hotel.

What I have learned over the years is that to get the most out of one's team, one has to involve themselves in the work that one does. Before a decision is made and procedures are established, I partner with the team and explain the goals we are trying to achieve, then secure the team's buy-in and, together, we accomplish our goals.

There is a fine line between finance and service. It's expensive to run a luxury hotel. That doesn't mean one can negate their financial responsibilities. The bottom line is that we are here to make money, but we can only do that with the proper balance of service and amenities that are closely monitored. I'm always challenging myself and my leaders to look for opportunities to achieve a savings without compromising the services. ●