

Merciless Hospitality

An Interview with Offer Nissenbaum,
Managing Director, The Peninsula Beverly Hills Hotel

EDITORS' NOTE Offer Nissenbaum began his career with Helmsley Hotels in NYC. In 1986, Nissenbaum joined the Doral Tuscan Hotel across town in New York and, two years later, he was transferred to Miami and promoted to General Manager of the Doral Saturnia International Spa Resort. Nissenbaum returned to New York in 1997 and joined The Plaza Hotel as Resident Manager. In 1999, he joined Omni Hotels and ultimately became Regional Vice President of Operations and the company's liaison to the Global Hotel Alliance before assuming his current role with Peninsula Hotels in December 2007. Nissenbaum currently serves on the Board of the Beverly Hills Chamber of Commerce and is a member of the Rotary Club of Beverly Hills. Nissenbaum graduated from Paul Smith's College in New York where he majored in hotel and restaurant management.



Offer Nissenbaum

PROPERTY BRIEF The Peninsula Beverly Hills (www.peninsula.com/Beverly_Hills) looks and feels like an exclusive private residence built in classic Renaissance style, and is situated at one of Southern California's most desirable addresses. Guests have 196 elegant rooms and suites and 16 comfortable detached Garden Villa Suites to choose from. The Peninsula Beverly Hills is a member of The Hongkong and Shanghai Hotels, Limited portfolio, a holding company incorporated in 1866 whose subsidiaries are engaged in the ownership and management of prestigious hotel, commercial, and residential properties in key Asia and U.S. destinations.

The travel and tourism industry has been deeply affected by the global economic crisis. How much of an impact have you seen at The Peninsula Beverly Hills, and what is your outlook for the property for 2010?

We have been blessed to have been less affected than our competitive set and have actually grown market share in this economic downturn. We have discovered in this process that guests gravitate to where they feel comfortable and to where they feel value is present. They are not necessarily wooed by lower rates and newer properties, because our market of highly affluent leisure and business

travelers are creatures of habit who recognize the greater value of being nurtured at a hotel.

We are cautiously optimistic about 2010 and do not anticipate a recovery to the levels of 2007. Nonetheless, we anticipate modest growth in occupancy. We have been able to maintain rate due to continued demand for our suite product.

Would you highlight some of the new projects taking place at the property that guests can expect in the coming years?

In the coming year, the hotel will undergo a comprehensive enhancement of our guest room product. Rather than being a brand new redesign, we will ensure that this renewal retains the feel, style, and DNA of our existing accommodations that our guests expect, with beautiful, new, soft goods and updated technology.

In such a competitive market, how challenging is it to differentiate the property from your competitors and to show what makes The Peninsula Beverly Hills unique?

Because our focus over the past two years has been on service, during this down economy, we have successfully differentiated ourselves from other properties that have cut back on service levels as a means of reducing expenses. Our strategy for service excellence has been two-fold: innovation and a philosophy of merciless hospitality. At the same time, we are fortunate to have a unique physical property – the design and layout, its location nestled in a highly desirable area – that is unmatched in our local marketplace.

The Peninsula Beverly Hills offers a wide range of accommodations. Would you provide an overview of the room and suite offerings at the property?

We offer 196 guest rooms, of which 16 of the 36 unique suites are detached Garden Villa Suites. The myriad of guest rooms and suite prototypes allow us to appeal to a range of preferences.

Beverly Hills has many great stand-alone restaurants. Is it challenging to be successful as a hotel restaurant?

Our Belvedere Restaurant at The Peninsula is the only AAA Five Diamond restaurant in Los Angeles, so that rating differentiates us from the start. However, we don't rest of the

laurel of that award. We constantly refresh our culinary concept by continuously revising our menu to keep it compelling for our discerning guests. Our chef has demonstrated incredible leadership in helping our culinary team reach their best potential, and that comes right out of the kitchen and into the dining room to give dimension to the restaurant experience, which is key in ensuring it does not feel like just another hotel restaurant. About a year ago, we re-launched our Roof Garden restaurant to create a casual, al fresco dining experience at the rooftop of The Peninsula, and it has become very successful for all meals and evening cocktails.

Guests expect luxury hotels today to have a full service, quality spa/fitness offering. How much of a focus has this been for The Peninsula Beverly Hills, and would you provide an overview of your spa facilities?

The spa experience is far from an indulgence. Today, in times of stress, our clientele look for opportunities to relax, unwind, and de-stress, so we offer a wide variety of treatments at our spa that have spiritual and holistic elements, including rejuvenating beauty services and a state-of-the-art fitness center. We also introduced a pool Spa Cabana treatment menu. Our facilities are intimate and the quality is extraordinary, due in no small part to the spa's size, which prevents the undesirable phenomenon of "spa traffic" and ensures that each and every guest feels like a centerpiece of our spa.

As you look to 2010, what are the key priorities that you are focused on for the property?

Our mission is to create an emotional connection with all of our existing guests, to continue our intense focus on the guest experience, and to "wow" each customer at every opportunity, to show them our appreciation for their business, and to constantly create value for them – in expected and unexpected contexts. At the same time, we will improve our already unique physical product. We view the guest experience as a multi-dimensional goal, not a composite of clinical steps taken to achieve a happy customer, and that allows us the room to approach guest satisfaction from many angles – our number one business strategy. ●

Couples spa suite (upper left); Garden Villa Suite living area (right); Belvedere Restaurant (lower left)

