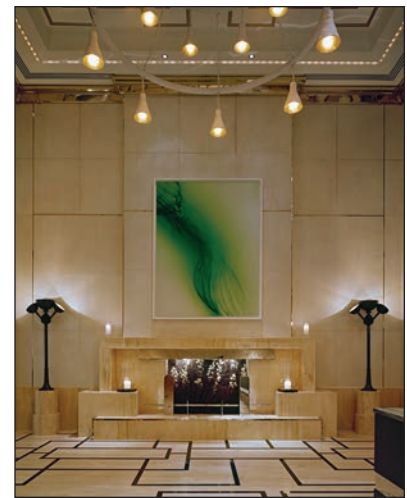




Delivering Value

An Interview with Jennifer N. Rutkowski,
Vice President, Sales & Marketing, The London Hotels



Gordon Ramsay restaurant at The London NYC (left); The London NYC lobby (above)

EDITORS' NOTE Jennifer Rutkowski began her career as the Director of Sales for the Treasure Island Resort in Grand Cayman. Following three years overseeing sales for this resort from their Miami office, she relocated back to the New York metropolitan area and joined Hilton Hotels Corporation. After three years at The Hilton Woodcliff Lake, she accepted a position as the Director of Sales for Paramount, an Ian Schrager Hotel in Manhattan. She was promoted to Director of Regional Sales, New York, for Ian Schrager Hotels/Morgans Hotel Group. Eight years ago, The Blackstone Group recruited Rutkowski for the exciting opportunity of launching and opening The London NYC as Director of Sales & Marketing. After six years, with The Blackstone Group, she was promoted to Vice President, Sales & Marketing, The London Hotels, which encompasses The London NYC, The London West Hollywood, and Gordon Ramsay restaurants in both locations. She received her master's degree from New York University.

PROPERTY BRIEF The London NYC (www.thelondonnyc.com) is the perfect blend of glamour and function that is relevant and true to the essence of its gateway city, New York. The London NYC embraces the vibe, energy, and cosmopolitan style of the city of London, situated exactly at the intersection of commerce and culture. The David Collins-designed hotel features all-suite accommodations, intuitive service, and sophisticated ease complimented by the cuisine of the culinary team of Gordon Ramsay.

What makes The London NYC so special and helps it perform well year after year?

The London NYC is quite fortunate to have loyal guests who appreciate the many unique qualities about the experience. A strong foundation to our success is supported by the unique value propositions that position us in the marketplace. In any competitive environment where guests face numerous choices, it is critical to position your product in a manner that highlights the unique and innovative ways your experience will benefit the consumer. I firmly believe that consumers, even in a luxury market, appreciate the value in what they receive. The London NYC delivers this throughout its luxurious room product consisting of all suites, through its exemplary culinary experience, and through consistent service execution.

How does The London NYC offer value, and how do you maintain this offering consistently?

The London NYC provides incomparable value with the largest standard guest room in the market, which is a London Suite offering over 500 square feet of living space. In a city that prices per square foot, the price/value relationship is unmatched. Our spacious surroundings are thoughtful in that our design couples glamorous surroundings with functionality. The consistency is realized from the diligent maintenance of the materials and furnishings through a capital budget that supports this initiative.

How challenging is it to differentiate in this market, and what is The London NYC difference?

It can be very challenging to differentiate yourself in a market that is saturated with luxury experiences or those hotels that are in the upper tier of the market. Many of these hotels are propelled by the expansive distribution channels, which are a by-product of the larger, more global brands.

The difference can be found in the notion that, since The London NYC launched, we have never deviated from the value propositions that brought us to market, and our unique DNA. Our objective is to truly understand our demographic and remain relevant to our loyal guests, and to those we are targeting. We maintain full integrity and transparency in our pricing, giving the consumer confidence in what he is buying.

Your property focuses on the human touch and providing personalized service. How critical is this today, and how do you ensure that you consistently meet your service standards?

A hotel's experience commences at time of booking and pervades even after check-out, when the guest is deciding if he would positively share our experience with someone else. The idea of personal touch points and recognition are paramount to any experiential success.

With the multitude of choices and the constant influx of new hotels, it is even more critical now to ensure that service standards and the level of human interaction is exceptional.

A confident and empowered team is a key element to exceeding a guest's expectations. Leadership that strives for excellence is the foundation.

Would you highlight your luxury suite offering and the importance that your suite product has as a differentiator in the market?

We offer a Luxury Suite Collection that ranges from our 900-square-foot Sky Suite to the pinnacle with our 2,500-square-foot duplex Penthouse. Having viewed the many luxury suite offerings in Manhattan, I can say these are some of the most bespoke and beautifully appointed.

What is your market for private events, and are you primarily focused on intimate, high-level gatherings?

The London branding is consistent throughout, most especially for private events. From planning to execution, our experience is easily differentiated.

Aesthetically, the private event space is adorned with a custom-built bar that is an exact replica of The London Bar, simply proportionate to the space. One room surrounds guests with hand-stitched silk wall coverings while the other is adorned with hand-painted wall coverings.

The bespoke feel begins with the aesthetics and carries throughout with the culinary aspect. All private events and meetings come to life via the culinary team of Gordon Ramsay. The idea is that, although you may not be physically sitting in a fine dining room, you can have a similar experience in a customized space.

One will never feel as if he is in a private dinner placed in a meeting room. The London NYC is the complete antithesis of this.

What do you enjoy most about the sales and marketing role?

The idea of launching a concept to the market and having the privilege of supporting it in its maturation process is truly an incomparable professional experience. When launching a product, you have one chance for proper execution and positioning.

The methodology in understanding what is important to your guests and the manner in which you deliver it, is crucial. It is so rewarding to introduce and share an experience that you believe in, and watch others understand and appreciate it.

At the end of the day, one leaves a hotel with a memory of an experience. If we can all positively affect that in some way, then it was all worth it. ●