



## Building Viceroy's Visibility

An Interview with Gerard Denny, General Manager, Viceroy New York



**EDITORS' NOTE** Gerard Denny was appointed to his current post in April of 2013. He joins Viceroy Hotel Group from the Essex House New York, where he served as General Manager. Previously, he held senior positions at the five-star property Jumeirah Carlton Tower in London and the Four Seasons Hotel Dublin. He began his career opening and managing a number of award-winning boutique properties. A graduate of the Dublin Institute of Technology, Denny holds a BSc in hotel and catering management.



Gerard Denny

**PROPERTY BRIEF** Representing the next generation of New York luxury hospitality, Viceroy New York ([viceroynewyork.com](http://viceroynewyork.com)) is Viceroy Hotel Group's first branded property in Manhattan. Uniting some of the most prestigious names in development, architecture, design, nightlife, and cuisine, the 29-story hotel sits on iconic West 57th Street. The hotel features a striking double-height lobby, bespoke interiors, sweeping public spaces, and top-of-the-line amenities in 240 luxury guestrooms. On the hotel's ground floor, revelers can visit Kingside, a bar and restaurant featuring Gerber Group's renowned bar program alongside Chef Marc Murphy's interpretation of New American cooking, as well as expansive global wine offerings, regionally brewed craft beers, and small-batch spirits. Gerber Group recently debuted a rooftop lounge and outdoor deck with awe-inspiring views of Central Park and a rotating selection of innovative cocktails and varied selections from Kingside.

### What was the vision behind developing the Viceroy New York and how is it positioned in the market?

We're located in an area with many traditional properties – we're surrounded by the best of the best in hotel brands. It's a fantastic location for Viceroy to enjoy because it puts us on a different playing field in terms of hotel awareness. We cited ourselves as a downtown-style hotel in a midtown location.

Our restaurant, Kingside, is different than many of the restaurants you will find in many of those big-name hotels. This restaurant is sympathetic to the New York experience and is set up in such a way that it would be a successful

restaurant in its own right, independent of the hotel.

Our food and beverage formula was put together based on knowing how other traditional properties have struggled with that area. We definitely see that in how it impacts the whole vibe and image of the hotel.

We work very closely in partnership with the Gerber Group on all issues that arise from a food and beverage perspective because we're not involved in the day-to-day management of every business. It has been a very successful formula.

### What is the design concept for the property?

The hotel was designed by Roman and Williams.

There is a slight nautical theme throughout it and in our standard rooms, which are beautifully designed, guests will get the feeling they're in the cabin of a luxury yacht.

The roof space was finished recently, and it gives the feel of being in an exclusive space in the clouds. It's alongside magnificent skyscrapers but it also provides a view of the park.

These elements have created an interesting property, which is not from the same mold as many of the other hotels around us.

We appeal to people who are young and those that want to continue enjoying a young vibe, so we can stretch our demographic successfully.

### What is your target customer set?

We target two sets: one is aspirational and one is design, which is closely related to the concept of this property.

Our aspirational set is based on our location and gives us an indication of the RevPAR performance of those nearby properties. Some of them operate at higher average room rates.

The design set gives us a much better barometer of what is going on within hotels like ours, where customers who would be likely to choose us might be less likely to choose one of those nearby hotels.

We look at it from all angles in order to be able to properly understand where we sit and how we're doing. When you open a property, it's great to see the graph going up all the time, and we're in that lovely stage now in terms of our RevPAR penetration in the market.

The two-bedroom, two-and-a-half bath Suite 57 overlooks Central Park and the Manhattan Skyline (left) Viceroy New York Exterior (above)

### How have you balanced providing the latest technology with maintaining a personal touch?

I love how technology makes it easier to do business, but it should always be an option – we should not impose it on those that don't want to use it.

We have embraced technology but we still feel a personal touch is extremely important. Even with the great design and location of this hotel, our most consistent feedback relates to the warmth of our employees. It's something we as a company put on our list of priorities.

### Is the Viceroy brand well understood?

With 16 hotels, which are geographically diverse, there are a lot of people who are just learning about Viceroy. Now is a great time to get to know about it, because it's a really exciting brand. The brand is becoming more well-known and New York has contributed to that since it's a global gateway city, which puts the company on the map in terms of its visibility.

We just announced three hotels being developed in Dubai. We also recently announced another one in Cartagena, Colombia, and there are more on the way.

Viceroy doesn't have the same visibility as some of the larger brands, but that could add to its attractiveness and individuality for people who are looking for something different.

### How have you approached the training of your people, and how important is it to have metrics in place to track service standards?

Our people are one of the most important assets we have, and to keep them and develop them is an important part of my job. We don't always have solutions for people who want to grow their careers because they geographically want to stay in the same area. However, we do have the duty to look after them in terms of how they can grow their own knowledge within their environment.

As a growing company, training is definitely at the forefront of what we do – recognizing the need to have this pool of talent we can resource from.

We recently appointed a Vice President of Training to develop our tools for training so we can become better at what we do in that regard.

Ultimately, this is the key to making our company and our people successful. ●