

The Energy of W

An Interview with
Ed Baten, General Manager,
W New York - Times Square



Ed Baten

EDITORS' NOTE Ed Baten has been a General Manager at Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide with the W brand since 2000 and assumed his current post as General Manager for W New York - Times Square in June 2014.

PROPERTY BRIEF

Guests of W New York - Times Square (wnewyork.timessquare.com) bask in

the bright lights of Broadway perched above the "Crossroads of the World." Their 509 guest rooms, including 43 suites, satisfy every desire, and with their signature Whatever/Whenever® service, a guest's wish is their command. The hotel recently renovated the Living Room, the brand's signature see-and-be-seen spin on the hotel lobby, a sultry, yet playful tribute to the Times Square of the past—from the gilded theaters of the 20s and 30s to the neon-soaked scene of the 70s and 80s. Dos Caminos also arrived at W New York - Times Square and features a 40-seat mezcals and margarita bar on the street level and a guacamole bar on the subterranean level while Blue Fin, the hotel's signature seafood restaurant, just received a brand new look.

What has led to the success of this property?

What makes it work, and has made it successful over the past 15 years, goes to the heart of what we do with our W brand, which is to make each hotel unique and relevant for its location. With this property, we have embraced our location in Times Square at the heart of Broadway. Our brand's passion points have always included fashion, music, and design, so we use those elements to remain current and relevant for our guests. They enjoy our branded lifestyle experiences, which contributes to our ongoing success.

Is there an adequate understanding of Times Square as a destination today?

Over the past 15 years or so, we have seen a great progression within Times Square in terms of not only being a leisure travel destination but also a corporate center.

Times Square, specifically the Broadway world, is certainly having a moment right now. The theaters are star-studded with more mainstream celebrities and the audiences packed with a younger, more fashion-forward crowd and W New York - Times Square is embracing it. The close proximity to the rising neighborhood of Hell's Kitchen also gives our hotel that edge bringing in the artsy, grittier side of this area, which we celebrate. ●

An Interview with Bill Bunce,
Complex General Manager, W New York
and W New York - Union Square



Bill Bunce

EDITORS' NOTE Bill Bunce's relationship with Starwood Hotels & Resorts began in 1994. Since that time, he has held various leadership roles within the company, including Director of Rooms, Director of Six Sigma, and General Manager for properties. He has been the General Manager of W New York - Union Square for the past two years and recently be-

came Complex General Manager for W New York and W New York - Union Square.

PROPERTY BRIEF

W New York - Union Square (wnewyorkunionsquare.com) is situated on the edge of the square at the intersection of uptown and downtown. Established with an avant-garde feel, in the landmark 1911 Beaux-Arts Guardian Life building, it remixes electric music venues and underground bars with glamorous shopping and fine dining.

Whether traveling for business or pleasure, W New York (wnewyork.com) hotel is a refreshing mix of high-tech hospitality and glamorous urban living. An oasis among skyscrapers, this New York City hotel is close to Central Park, Times Square, the Empire State Building, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Broadway Theater District.

Where is the market today and is this a challenging environment?

Within the past few years, with all of the new inventory coming in, it makes it harder to be competitive from a RevPAR perspective.

In the Union Square area, where we've seen growth in limited service inventory most recently, the full service inventory has now started to push down from Midtown into the Chelsea/Flatiron district and over onto the East Side.

However, our ADR hasn't been impacted, as we still command a growth in rate. This is in large part due to the strength of the W and Starwood brands, particularly in the NYC market, where W was born.

How critical has it been to attract and retain talent?

At W, we're very focused on customer service from the start. We don't want it to be an interaction with the customer but an experience. W, as a brand, puts money and resources into teaching our talent how to read body language, listen to tone of voice, get a feel of what the customer is looking for and to understand the trip persona, so they are able to provide a personalized and memorable travel experience. ●

An Interview with
Gonzalo Gason Maggi Bescos,
General Manager, W Hoboken



Gonzalo Gason Maggi Bescos

EDITORS' NOTE Gonzalo Maggi has held his current post since August 2014. Prior to this, he held a variety of positions at W Barcelona, Radisson Royal Hotel Moscow, Le Meridien Bangkok, Marriott Hotels, and Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts. He received his Bachelor's Degree in Hotel Business Administration from Glion Hotel School.

PROPERTY BRIEF W Hoboken (wboboken.com) is a fabulous waterfront Hoboken hotel offering sparkling panoramas of the New York City skyline. A cosmopolitan oasis just minutes from Manhattan, New Jersey's hottest spot is packed with scintillating nightlife, delectable dining, and high-tech amenities. Guests can cozy up in one of the 225 rooms and 40 Residences at W Hoboken, each with a pillow-top W bed, totally wired technology, sinkside Bliss® Spa amenities, and a yummy Munchie Box.

Would you talk about the development of Hoboken as a destination?

People are choosing to visit Hoboken because of its location and status. As the only lifestyle hotel in Hoboken, we take pride in being the destination within the destination, and attracting trendsetters and artists to our property. The W brand's irreverent and energetic characteristics work well with Hoboken's vibe. Young professionals are relocating to Hoboken from Manhattan in search of more space, more affordable housing, and a trendy, neighborhood feel. Hoboken blends the city and suburban lifestyles seamlessly and W Hoboken is in the middle of it all. We have the exclusive, inside look into Manhattan without actually having to head into the city. Locals frequent our restaurant and bars because they want the New York City feel, great music, and top-notch cuisine and cocktails without traveling across the river. We pride ourselves on exceeding those expectations at W Hoboken.

How broad is your suite product?

Specialty suites make up about 12 percent of our inventory at W Hoboken. The suites all have incredible views of the Manhattan Skyline and Hudson River, and are perfectly designed with comfort and style in mind. To showcase our suites, we like to think outside of the box. We often partner with local brands for corporate meetings, cocktail parties, and pop-up shops to invite guests and locals into the suites so they can experience what they have to offer even if they are unable to stay. ●