



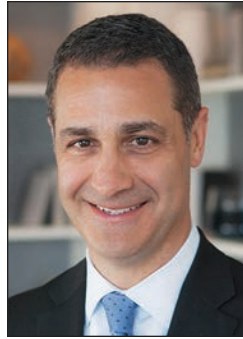
The Full City Hotel Experience



An Interview with David Chase,
Managing Director, Omni Berkshire Place

Omni Berkshire Place (left) and its 17th floor terrace (above)

EDITORS' NOTE David Chase has worked in the hospitality industry for over 25 years, beginning his career at The Ritz-Carlton San Francisco. After relocating to the east coast and working in Boston, he settled in New York to open the first W Hotel in New York City. Since then, Chase has held management positions at prestigious hotels such as the St. Regis, The Ritz-Carlton, as General Manager of Trump SoHo, and, most recently, as the General Manager of The New York Palace.



David Chase

Chicago, Boston, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.

We are so well established with such incredible hotels that even I was not completely versed in all we had to offer. Once I joined the group, I realized the significance of our loyalty program called the Select Guest program, and the loyalty of the customers of the Omni brand. This is an incredible benefit to this hotel that I didn't realize was going to be part of the package.

Are you happy with the condition of the property and are there changes on the horizon?

The property is in fantastic shape. We had a room renovation a few years ago, and the rooms remain in exceptional condition.

We do have a conversion of the restaurant planned in 2016. It will be a several-million-dollar boost to the lobby and restaurant area. We believe this will add a lot of life to the intimate lobby of the hotel.

Are you concerned that the New York market can sustain all of the new supply and is it challenging to grow in this environment?

The supply of these past several years has been a challenge for all who operate in the city.

The strength of the Omni brand, driving my loyal guests through the Omni Select Guest Program, is something that keeps our head above water.

The location of this hotel and consistent execution of service delivery by its tenured team helps us when it comes to delivery.

This hotel embraces and will continue to deliver important amenities like 24-hour room service and a three-meal restaurant, and we're going to continue with luxury amenities. Much of the growth in the market has come from very limited service hotels that have let go of the art of travel and providing true hospitality to people.

We have continued to offer the full-city hotel experience and that has allowed us to continue to get more than our share of the room occupancy.

How far out can you effectively forecast when the booking window has become so short?

Although it's ever-changing, our partners

have vast data about forecasting travel into the city and booking trends. Every week at our revenue meeting, part of our review covers what the market is doing. Our partners provide us with excellent data, and we adjust our strategies accordingly.

What value do suites provide within your room mix?

We have 45 incredible suites here, many with balconies and great city views.

Like many luxury hotels, we fight to win the suite customer. One of my personal focuses is to spend a lot more time garnering suite guests. We've deployed some strategies with new salespeople in certain segments of the market that will help us increase our suite business.

How important is it that Omni has a long-term vision around building its brand?

Working for a company that owns and manages virtually all of its assets aligns things so well behind a single vision and direction. We don't have to manage the relationship between an owner and a management company; we're a single entity.

In this case, the owner of our company is committed to the hospitality business. There is no concern from employees or leaders that the hotel will be sold someday. There is an extremely long-term commitment to this building as a hotel for years to come.

The people at headquarters are truly engaged and aware of what goes on at the individual properties. We have a corporate culture that is completely supportive of employees and our business needs – it's a breath of fresh air.

How important is it to engage the employees in your vision for the hotel?

There are more than 300 employees at the hotel. I came in and had town hall meetings with larger groups and individual meetings with each department. It was very easy to get to know the individual employees in this hotel. It was also very easy for them to understand my vision for the future: the desire for excellent service, and the desire to win when it comes to revenue generation. The pride of the employees is extremely deep and that comes from a good majority of them being 20-year employees since the Omni company purchased the hotel. ●

PROPERTY BRIEF Conveniently located on 52nd Street between Madison and 5th Avenue in the heart of Manhattan, Omni Berkshire Place (omnihotels.com) is near Central Park, Times Square, Rockefeller Center, and Radio City Music Hall. Guestrooms and suites were designed with the feel of an Upper East Side residential townhome, while keeping them spacious and larger than most Manhattan accommodations. The property boasts 398 luxury guest rooms including 45 suites; a 17th floor sundeck overlooking midtown Manhattan; 24-hour in-room dining; state-of-the-art fitness center; 7,000 square feet of function space; and a 24-hour business center.

What excited you about leading Omni Berkshire Place and has it been what you expected?

It's a historic property, a real pillar in the heart of Midtown, and at this location – 52nd between Madison and Fifth – we are literally in the greatest part of the city; just steps from Rockefeller Center and a few blocks from Central Park and Park Avenue offices.

This hotel is equally important to the leisure guest because of the Fifth Avenue location as it is to the financial community on Park Avenue because of customers like JP Morgan and BlackRock.

Is there strong recognition of the type and level of service that Omni offers?

I have known of this hotel for many years but our 60-hotel group, overwhelmingly located in North America, is a great, solid luxury chain that has some of the most wonderful hotels in some of the most important gateway cities in the country such as