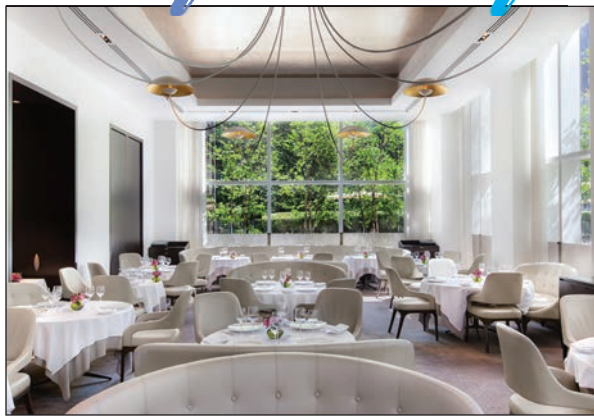


A Service Culture

An Interview with
Prince A. Sanders, General Manager,
Trump International Hotel & Tower New York



Jean-Georges restaurant (left); Park View Two-Bedroom Suite (above)

EDITORS' NOTE Prince Sanders was named to his current post in April 2017 after serving for three years as Hotel Manager at the property. He launched his hospitality career in 2002 with Starwood's W Hotels, first in Chicago and then in New York. Sanders continued his career at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, New York, where he served as Front of the House Manager and Assistant Rooms Executive. In 2010, Sanders assisted with employee trainings for the openings of *The Waikiki Edition*, *The Istanbul Edition* and *The London Edition*. Sanders is an avid writer who has published a series of children's books.



Prince A. Sanders

PROPERTY BRIEF Soaring above Central Park and Columbus Circle, Trump International Hotel & Tower® New York (trumphotels.com/central-park) – the only Forbes Five-Star/AAA Five-Diamond hotel with a Two-Star Michelin/Five-Diamond restaurant, Jean-Georges – is an icon delivering the highest level of service, style and exclusivity. The 52-story structure features 176 luxurious guest rooms and suites, complete with European-style kitchens, marble bathrooms and spectacular views of Central Park and the Manhattan skyline. Amenities include a 6,000-square-foot spa and fitness center and in-room dining by Three-Michelin-Star chef Jean-Georges. The property has earned many coveted awards including Travel + Leisure's "World's Best Hotels," Conde Nast Traveler's "Top Hotels in New York City" and "Best in the World," and U.S. News & World Report's "Best Hotels in the USA."

What have been the keys to Trump International Hotel & Tower's leadership in the industry?

Resilience, communication, and adaptability. It is interesting to reflect on this question post-election. Leadership was a critical role to our continued success in this new environment. It was very easy for us as a hotel to separate politics from hospitality. Within our environment, we had this confidence in moving forward and doing what we do best – delivering a Five-Star luxury experience. What we had not considered was the public and industry's response and we were faced with many challenges. The impact of personal political views and the reaction to

the hotel, a non-political entity, placed us in uncharted waters. As a leader, I had to adjust, re-evaluate the needs of my team, define this new landscape for them, educate my team and continue to motivate them as we re-evaluated our strategy in the luxury hotel environment. Together we worked through these new realities and I saw the best of my team shine through.

You recently took the hotel through a renovation. Will you highlight the changes that were made?

Undertaking a \$20 million renovation was one of the most exciting opportunities in my career. We took this occasion to incorporate feedback from our customers and our partners at *Forbes Travel Guide*. In doing so, we have created a more youthful, energetic, and luxurious atmosphere.

For many years our hotel was synonymous with the color gold. After 22 years, we found our guests were evolving and we needed to evolve with them. We introduced a new cool gray color palette, adding a crisp, white crown molding and base. In the bathrooms, we brought in chrome Kohler fixtures, a new marble vanity, and added glass panels to our showers and soaking tubes accentuating the size of the bathroom.

The hallways had a total transformation. As the elevator doors open, our guests are surprised and delighted to find that the mirror and fabric panels have been replaced by a woven wooden accent wall, LED crystal chandeliers and custom sconces. It is rewarding to welcome our guests back and see their amazement and joy in the renovation.

Are you happy with the state of the product today and are additional changes planned?

I'm delighted with the transition of the hotel product and as an operator it remains exciting because I continue to enhance the hotel with new accessory pieces.

The updates we made in 2018 were specifically focused on the interior of the hotel: guest rooms, corridors, lobby furniture, as well as updates to the fitness center. In 2019, our focus turned towards the residential tower within the building, which spans from the 23rd to 52nd floors. In this area, we will complete a \$6.6-million renovation of the residential corridor and exterior landscaping.

What has made the property's partnership with Jean-Georges work so well?

We are incredibly fortunate to offer our guests and residents a culinary experience led by one of the world's most celebrated chefs, Jean-Georges Vongerichten. Since the hotel's opening, Jean-Georges has led the culinary program with his two-Michelin starred restaurant Jean-Georges, alongside the more casual Nougatine, the seasonal Terrace at Nougatine, and in-room dining.

Our partnership has spanned 22 years. Jean-Georges is committed to delivering an exceptional experience and is often seen in the restaurant, elevating the experience with his warm welcome and hands on approach.

Jean-Georges has recently curated a new dining experience in Jean-Georges. The new dining experience will delight epicureans with his four and six course omnivore and vegetarian lunch tasting menus and eight to 10 course omnivore and vegetarian dinner tasting menus. The timing for creating this new dining experience compliments the recent enhancements that we have made to the property.

Will you discuss Trump International Hotel & Tower's commitment to its workforce?

Given my training and development background, it has always been a priority for me to invest in training and the growth and development of our employees. Trump International Hotel & Tower New York has maintained a strong relationship with *Forbes Travel Guide* and twice a year we partner with them to facilitate hands on training with our team members. I've found these trainings to be valuable to ensure our team remains focused, up-to-date on new standards, and re-energized. In these trainings we include our partner Jean-Georges who leads the culinary program at the hotel and Trump Spa.

In addition to *Forbes Travel Guide* training, we layer in our brand trainings by Trump Hotels which are facilitated regularly on property.

Will you discuss the property's service culture?

Operating as a Forbes Five-Star hotel, we focus heavily on service standards. When operating in the luxury hotel environment, one must understand that service and luxury are subjective. Within our service culture, we try to identify what luxury means to each guest individually. We adjust the way we service our guests based on their needs and in a way that makes them feel special. ●