

## Q&amp;A

Profile of  
PETER  
ROCKWOODVice President/General Manager,  
The Platinum Hotel, Lounge & Spa

By Jennifer Prosser

A self-proclaimed “hotel version of an Army brat,” Peter Rockwood has moved an average of once a year in a career that started with Stouffer Hotels & Resorts, then later the Olympus Hospitality Group, before joining Marcus Hotels and Resorts as vice president of sales and marketing. Luxury properties under his helm have included the Wailea Beach Resort in Maui and the Stanford Court Hotel in San Francisco. With Marcus, he first came to Vegas in 2004 to do viability studies on the site that is now The Platinum; he later moved there to become the property’s GM.

**You’ve spent your career working for resorts in the luxury arena. What are your main concerns in overseeing sales activities, and how do you continue to exceed guest expectations?**

I think that we have to continue to evolve as the market evolves and as consumer trends and tastes change. A guest, whether a group participant, a leisure guest or a local guest, is basically looking for the same thing — a quality product with quality service, or value for dollar. Prices have gone up year after year as they do in any industry, and people don’t mind spending more money than they have in years past. They just want to make sure there’s a value proposition associated with that. If we’re selling a spa treatment for \$150, we want to make sure they feel as though they got \$200 worth of service, that we extend our services to go beyond guest expectation. That’s how we’ll succeed now and in the future.

As far as overseeing the sales operation, it’s really important that we have very aggressive salespeople, tenacious in finding business and following up with guests that are interested in the hotel. At the same time, they should be easy to do business with. As long as you’re easy to do business with and provide a quality product, I think that you can find a nice niche in any marketplace.

**In any profession, finding and keeping good people is key. How do you go about doing that?**

I personally interviewed every single employee who was hired to work in this hotel — from the dishwasher to the waitresses to the director of operations. The only way you can control or manage that quality experience is to make sure you hire the best and the brightest, that you hire people who share that same passion you do for doing a good job and serving the guest. We hire more for mentality and personality than we do necessarily for job skills — unless, of course, it’s a technical skill like a chef or an accountant. We have to make sure there’s a common strain of DNA in the employees, that even though you’re a security guard or an engineer, when you meet the guest, you provide a high level of customer service so they feel as though they’ve gotten more than a service call.

**What are the biggest challenges in building a property from the ground up?**

The biggest challenges for us have been in building our brand, building awareness, because we’re not a part of the major casino operations that have been around for years. Getting that level of awareness out into the marketplace where there’s a lot of noise and clutter out there in terms of advertising messages — that’s the

biggest challenge we face. From a training standpoint, from a product standpoint, from a quality standpoint, we’re in very good shape to address the market. It’s getting the market to address us, getting the consumers to know about us that’s a daunting task, but one that we’re chipping away at. It’s really a grass-roots effort. It’s old-school blocking and tackling and reaching out and touching as many people as we can as quickly as we can and both in the conventional and non-conventional ways of advertising and direct sales.

**The Platinum was one of the few hotel/condo developments that succeeded in what became an oversaturated market. To what do you attribute that? Do you think this type of property is still viable as a trend in Las Vegas?**

Part of it was a timing issue, in that we were at the right place at the right time. We were at the beginning part of the curve and the boom in the 2004-2005 building cycle. I think we got in at the right time from a construction cost standpoint that allowed us to price these units aggressively and favorably, and it was appealing to many people who choose Las Vegas as a second, third, fourth home. Then, of course, you get a lot of value for your dollar here — a full-sized unit with a full kitchen and almost 1,000 square





feet of living space, a block away from the Las Vegas Strip.

I think that a lot of things contributed to our success in being the second condominium-hotel to enter the marketplace. The strength of our corporation contributed, and our belief in the product contributed — we felt as though this market could support and sustain another condominium model, and the financial structure was such that it was doable for our company and development partners. All of those factors, along with a lot of hard work, contributed to us getting to the point we're at today.

**Is it (the condo-hotel) a viable product for Las Vegas moving forward?**

I think it is. We see that with other projects being built around town, with Project CityCenter, the Cosmopolitan and the W all coming online, I think that's great for the market and great for us, because it'll attract even more attention to our project, and Las Vegas is just a fabulous destination that will never grow old.

**Do you foresee any future projects for Marcus out here?**

I do. I think that there's always an opportunity, especially in a market as robust as Las Vegas. I think that both gaming and non-gaming could be a consideration for the company. We're a very conservative company and don't jump into things feet first. If the right opportunity came along, with the right partner, we'd certainly take a long hard look at it, and if it made sense, we would probably do it. Mr. Marcus believes in this market and sees it as a nice stepping-stone in the West for the company.

**Please discuss your company's electronic distribution management and customer relationship management system.**

We revved up our whole effort when I was back in the corporate office. Many of our hotels had a presence, but not a strong presence at the time, and with global distribution being so important these days, we really put a focus on it. I was involved in the re-engineering of all the hotel web sites

and re-design, hired a director of e-commerce and a web design person to work specifically at the corporate office and really took it to the next level as far as electronic marketing goes. We employed both personnel and dollars to make sure that we caught up as quickly as possible. Now we have a full complement of e-commerce and IT people back at corporate who focus exclusively on that discipline. I'm glad to say I was a part of it, and that it's working well.

**What's the best luxury amenity you've seen anywhere?**  
When it comes to amenities, I'm a pretty basic guy. I love a nice, cozy bathrobe and a nice pair of slippers when I get back to the room. A nice, comfortable bed is also crucial. I think that gets overlooked sometimes. In today's world, you really need a quality bedding product to compete.



[Left] Peter Rockwood at the Platinum's topping-off ceremony.



[Opposite Page] A view of the Platinum Pool.

[Left] The Platinum sits at the corner of Flamingo and Koval.

[Above] Stir Lounge, a spot for cappuccino and cocktails.

**Your favorite cocktail?**

A Maker's Mark Manhattan, on the rocks. My dad was a Manhattan drinker his whole life, and when I became of age, I was able to share some good, quality time with him over a Manhattan.

**Your favorite item on the Platinum's menu?**

For lunch, it would be the Ridiculous Grilled Cheese, with six different kinds of cheeses that the chef makes with a pesto sauce that is absolutely ridiculous. For dinner, it would have to be the Scotch and Sirloin, which is a sirloin steak with a flight of four different Scotches from around the world. And the Green Eggs & Ham for breakfast. Unbeatable.

**Your favorite show or attraction in Vegas?**

My favorite show to date is the Cirque du Soleil production of the Beatles show, LOVE. That was terrific, and one that I would take friends and family to see. No matter how many times I get asked to go see it, I'll be there front and center.

**Your favorite movie?**

The Godfather (Godfather 1). Every year, three times a year. Can't get enough of it.