



The Distrikt Hotel uses a subtle, non-intrusive design sense and an emphasis on service to please guests.



The Distrikt celebrates local neighborhoods, guest satisfaction in NYC

By **TONI McQUILKEN**

NEW YORK —Launching a new hotel in New York City isn't the easiest of prospects. But for The Distrikt, which opened in February of this year with 155 rooms, everything came together.

The primary focus for the staff from the beginning has been service. They pride themselves on giving some of the best service in the city, which is evident in their high rating on the Web site TripAdvisor.com.

"I get asked all the time why we are a top rated hotel on TripAdvisor," said Jennifer Rota, general manager. "If you read the comments—it's the service. However, the beds, bedding, furnishings and amenities make it possible for our team to shine. After all, if you wake up feeling luxurious, it makes it easier to have a positive interac-

tion with our team members."

One way the hotel makes service a priority is by establishing a connection with guests even before they arrive for their stay. "We applaud the pre-arrival conversations both through email and on Facebook," said Rota. "It allows us to celebrate guests' special occasions with them."

Further, the property goes out of its way to offer, noted Rota, "three-star pricing with four- and five-star amenities." She noted that they specifically focus on guests who typically stay at three- and four-star hotels, noting that, "we feel that those guests are often left out of the true hospitality experience; kiosks have replaced real human interaction; touches like turndown service, free WiFi, upscale bedding and robes are something they can only get at premium prices."

Other than service, the hotel has focused on the technology guests really want. Rota noted that before the property opened its doors, she believed more was always better when it came to tech offerings. However, in talking to guests, she has pared it down to those essentials that really make the difference in how welcome the guest feels. That includes WiFi-enabled televisions, iPod docking stations and Mac computers in the lobby for guests to use.

"After really speaking to the guests, they just want WiFi that works, good computers to check things quickly, a great assortment of television channels and a place to charge up," Rota said.

The design of the hotel sets it apart as well, recognizing the various districts of New York City. "It was amazing to us that no one had ever salut-

ed the neighborhoods of New York," Rota noted. "From the Financial District to Harlem, we salute 10 districts with 31 original collages. Guests are checked into "SoHo" or "Midtown West" and given their address (there are only five rooms per floor) where they find a personalized welcome letter and their welcome gift—a locally baked brownie."

A grid pattern is repeated in various ways throughout the property. In the lobby, a green wall with the pattern carved into it serves as a backdrop to the check-in desk. Guestrooms are done in muted shades of earth tones, "with the contrast of a floral and the grid repeated again in a soft subtle way, [such as] sheers that have a grid, frette linen with the grid and wallpaper with a soft floral etching," said Rota.

But while The Distrikt brings

all the benefits of a boutique property, it has the backing of Choice Hotels, as part of the Ascend collection.

"The owners certainly took a risk with this decision," said Rota, "and it was truly the dedication of the team at Choice that convinced them they could run an independent hotel with the marketing and tools that the big flags can offer. I can't say enough about Ascend. The pre-opening services, the ongoing caring of their management—it was a complete surprise. They applaud our individuality and that really makes it easier to be creative. We are not a cookie cutter hotel playacting at being unique—we are a true boutique hotel that shares the benefits of Ascend with our guests."

The Distrikt is owned by principals Victor Afonso and Scott Schroeder, and is managed by Access Hotels & Resorts.