



Nicholas Gandossi, Opus Vancouver, Stays Ahead of the Curve

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Nicholas Gandossi probably never imagined a short stint at a quick-service restaurant as a teenager would lead him to the hotel industry, but it did. "My first job was when I was 15, working at McDonald's, asking people if they wanted to supersize their fries," he recalls. "I quickly realized I enjoyed hospitality, and I am a people person, but the fast-food industry wasn't the right fit for me."

In 1987, he landed at the Four Seasons Hotel Vancouver where he worked as a valet/bellman. "It was the perfect introduction to learning about service excellence," he says.

Today, the operations manager-turned-GM of the famed 96-room Opus Vancouver is putting a love of service excellence into action, overseeing a team of 68 associates. "Being an independently owned and operated boutique hotel has allowed us to create our own distinctive brand," he says. "Over the years, the key has been to keep the product uniquely stylish and the experience always fresh. As we say in our marketing material, 'We don't do beige.'"

Born in Yokohama, Japan, the 49-year-old hotelier works to differentiate Opus from the pack by staying ahead of the technology curve and understanding the next trend. "Technology is a way of life today, not just a perk," he says. "We've upgraded rooms with lightning-fast Wi-Fi at no extra cost and offer in-room iPads loaded with apps, including PressReader, which allows guests free access to more than 2,300 newspapers in more than 55 languages." Guests can also take advantage of 30 HD channels on Telus Optik TV.

Overseeing a boutique property that is known for personalized service means Gandossi is hands on. "It's my responsibility to lead by example and provide an environment where people feel respected and recognized, which in turn allows them to be as creative and productive as possible," he says. "The difference between a good hotel and an excellent one is consistency. Hotels that deliver on their promise of service to every guest, to the level their brand promises, are the ones that will be successful in the long run."

It doesn't hurt that the Opus team is constantly reinventing. "This past month we completed a full renovation of our lounge area and relaunched Opus Bar," says Gandossi. "It's received fantastic feedback from guests and locals alike. We also recently introduced the Beverage Butler to cater to our guests' cravings — local wine and cheese, tea, fresh macarons and creative cocktails with house-made chips are some of the tempting treats available."

Meanwhile, Gandossi is looking into adding a rooftop restaurant/lounge to the property. "Our guests veer away from cookie-cutter hotels and want to experience originality and style; they're drawn to our unique Yaletown location. Today's savvy traveller expects more than just a comfortable bed in a good location, they want the hotel to be part of the overall experience."