

Creative Spirit

Alan Fuerstman, founder and CEO, Montage Hotels & Resorts, on designing a blend of comfort and elegance for the luxury collection.

WHAT WAS YOUR VISION IN DEVELOPING THE MONTAGE BRAND?

I saw an opportunity to create a new luxury brand of hotels, resorts and residences, focused on the discerning traveler and offering an unpretentious environment and culture. Each property is intimate, with a unique style or theme, and exudes comfortable elegance. Our brand is designed to attract a steadily increasing segment of travelers — affluent families who are transitioning from older legacy properties to something that's more contemporary in nature yet still offers top-quality services and amenities.

Other properties under development include Montage Deer Valley in Park City, Utah, scheduled to open in 2010, and an oceanfront resort and residences with a championship golf course coming soon in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MONTAGE LAGUNA BEACH AND MONTAGE BEVERLY HILLS? DO YOU EXPECT A CROSSOVER OF CUSTOMERS?

Montage Laguna Beach is a warm, comfortably elegant residential-style oceanfront retreat, whereas Montage Beverly Hills is an urban oasis with European inspiration.

Our core customers are virtually the same at both properties, but they select Beverly Hills for business or to enjoy urban experiences such as shopping and entertainment, while they select Laguna Beach for resort holidays and meetings.

GIVEN THE CURRENT ECONOMY, HAS YOUR GUEST PROFILE CHANGED? WILL YOU ALTER THE MONTAGE APPROACH TO ADDRESS THIS SITUATION?

Our guest profile has remained relatively constant. We are not immune to the economy, but we are fortunate to be located in more robust luxury markets. In this environment, our guests' expectations are the same. They have a passion for luxury services and amenities, and we will not diminish any of these offerings. Much of our success has been fueled by



word of mouth from past guests. Their experiences compel them to return and to tell their friends.

ELABORATE ON YOUR CAREER IN HOSPITALITY AND WHAT LED YOU TO DEVELOP THE MONTAGE BRAND.

My first experience in the hotel business was in high school as a part-time doorman at a Marriott hotel, where I learned the importance of every employee in making a hotel successful.

I was president and managing director of The Phoenician resort in Scottsdale, Ariz., and later handled ITT Sheraton's Luxury Collection properties, St. Regis Aspen and St. Regis Houston. I then joined Bellagio in Las Vegas as the vice president of hotel operations.

My 30 years in the hospitality industry managing some of the finest hotels and resorts in the world, coupled with an entrepreneurial spirit, inspired me to start my own company. ■■■