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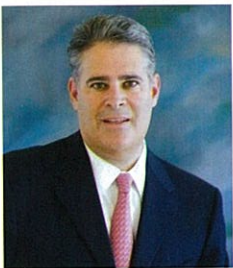




15 *to* WATCH

By Nichole Brophy, Melissa Larsen and Colleen Ringer

From golf course design to green building, the following pros are single-handedly changing the face of the luxury market. A mixed bag of movers and shakers handpicked from the spheres of golf, hospitality, architecture, real estate development and design, these V.I.P.'s are certainly ones to watch in 2008 and beyond.



THE EXPERIENTIALIST: ALAN FUERSTMAN

Alan Fuerstman has come a long way since his first job in the hospitality industry. The former doorman for a chain hotel in his home state of New Jersey is now C.E.O. of Montage Hotels and Resorts, a role that gives him the opportunity to focus on creating unique experiences for his guests.

"[Our] commitment is to an incredible sense of place," he says. And this vision is apparent in each of the stunningly elegant settings he brings to life, with every one of his hotels reflecting the distinct architecture and ambiance of its location. "There is an incredible passion that we as a group at Montage have in creating and operating the resorts, hotels and residences that we're building—it's very experiential."

Fuerstman knows a thing or two about sumptuous resort settings having worked in high-powered positions at some of the world's finest properties, including Las Vegas's Bellagio and Scottsdale's luxurious

Phoenician Resort. But it was years before these posts, when he was working as a bell captain at a new hotel in California, when his interest in the field was ignited. "That was when I really fell in love with the industry and the business," he says. "I was pretty well positioned in understanding the inner-workings of hotels and had a deep appreciation for everything that goes into making a hotel or resort successful."

After working his way up the hospitality ladder, the hotelier decided to strike out on his own; and in 2003, he opened Montage's flagship property in Laguna Beach. Soon, the brand will expand to include properties in Beverly Hills (opening this fall); Deer Valley, Utah; Los Cabos, Mexico; and the Bahamas' Royal Island, all opening in 2010. In addition, each will house real estate opportunities—from condos to estate lots—where owners can revel in the same sense of place experience as hotel guests. **866.271.6953**, www.montagelagunabeach.com. —N.B.