

Hampton Flexes Its Hotel Marketing Muscle

Nov 8, 2011 6:29 AM, By Carlo Wolff

New Miami hotel offers a clue to brand's direction

-  **BOOKMARK** (<http://www.addthis.com/bookmark.php>)



The airy Brickell Hampton lobby features local art.

For Phil Cordell, innovation is a guidepost. As global head of focused service, Hampton brand management, Hilton Worldwide, it's up to Cordell to execute the company's elastic vision. The 15-story, 221-room Hampton Inn & Suites Miami Brickell Downtown embodies it.

Developed for \$36 million by [Bernard Wolfson \(http://www.hoihotels.com/commit.html\)](http://www.hoihotels.com/commit.html), Hampton's key man in southern Florida, [the hotel \(http://www.hamptoninnmiamibrickell.com/\)](http://www.hamptoninnmiamibrickell.com/) is set to open formally on Nov. 10. It's green—low-flow shower fixtures, LED lighting, adjustable HVAC, dual-flush toilets, water recycling—and open. Wolfson expects the property to be certified at least Silver LEED next year.



Phil Cordell says listening is key to Hampton's success.

There are no doors in the Perfect Mix, Hampton's name for the business center/limited-service bar/check-in/lobby on the sixth floor. It's appealingly eccentric, almost Kimptonian in its deep-backed seating and foreshortened mirrors. It's artistic, reflecting Wolfson's refined taste for the modern in the painting and sculpture. And it's customized, attesting to the brand's flexibility, which is based on the listening Cordell so values. Among the Hampton mantras: Great brands are built from the inside out, informed by insights from the outside.

Hampton displayed the Brickell Hampton and its own processes Oct. 18 and 19, showcasing a property poised to shake up the local market. This is the first moderately priced hotel in a luxury field: At an introductory rate of \$179 for a basic suite, and with free breakfast, it undercuts the nearby J.W. Marriott by \$100 at least, Cordell said. And even though the per-key construction costs for an Inn & Suite exceed those for an Inn by \$7,000, the former fetches an \$18 rate premium. Rates are \$139 to start now, with deluxe suites \$50 higher. They go up to \$229-\$289 in January.



Hampton is serious about being green.

A typical unit features an entry area with a one-cup coffeemaker and a sink. The suite consists of a space with a divan in modernist Empire style that opens to a bed, a work-ergonomic chair, a desk with outlets easy to hand, a high-definition TV to the left of the long desk, and a window. Beyond the desk is a king-sized bed flanked by modern, sleek

night tables. The décor is suffused with nature motifs, from the rosy, tree-decorated headboard to the carpeting, a soothing green with a design evoking a snowflake and a leaf burst at the same time. The well-lit bathroom contains a special touch: a “Jessie bench” Wolfson installed at his wife’s behest so women don’t have to stand to do their makeup.

Beyond Domestic

Hampton’s big push is Europe, its key targets Germany, Italy, Poland, Russia, Romania, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, the United Kingdom and Ireland. There, rooms are smaller, there’s more emphasis on f&b, and a limited bar will be common (the one at the Brickell Hampton is a special dispensation for Wolfson, who argued it’s necessary for his foreign customers).

Cordell said this is the first year there are more Hampton development approvals outside the U.S. than domestically. Europe, where two- and five-star products rule, is the focus, and Hamptons must fit their locales. The approach must be “sure-footed,” be it in Europe or Asia, he said.

“As we think about Hampton, we have been able to grow into Canada and Mexico,” but in Europe, “we knew the last thing we could do is pick up either Hampton or [Hilton] Garden Inn and just drop them in.”

Cordell suggested Asia is largely premature for Hampton. While it’s a vast market—China, particularly—the product is all over the place. Costs of labor and construction costs are lower, so developers have built inconsistent “trophy” product. As western brands enter that market, “you have to completely re-engineer your product and the experience so it’s no more ego palaces, it’s appealing to the market in a model that is profitable for an owner.” China offers a huge opportunity, but may be the market the “least mature from a guest-base perspective.”

Staying Fresh

Hampton executives spent the afternoon of Oct. 20 demonstrating a mindset defined by openness. Kurt Smith, vice president of product quality and innovation for Hilton’s focused -service brands, said these steps were involved: listening, ideation (the new term for “brainstorming”), generation, testing, evaluation, refinement, launch and measurement. These steps were involved in Hampton’s current rollout of hot oatmeal with various toppings throughout its 1,850 properties, he said. They also figured in the Perfect Mix, which includes a business center (Wolfson noted that “Generation Next,” a blend of X and Y, carries numerous devices and thinks a business center is a Starbucks).

Ron Swidler, vice president of Chicago-based [Gettys Hospitality Design & Development](http://www.gettys.com) (<http://www.gettys.com>), led a far-ranging in-the-round ideation of trends at the end of the day, batting around ideas on everything from new, creative partnerships to nurturing affinity groups for Hampton social gatherings. Such meetings are part of the face-to-face feedback Hampton engages in with owners and operators in regional meetings.

All this attests to Hampton’s decision some eight years ago to switch focus from suburbs and interstates to urban markets like the financial district of Miami, where the Brickell Hampton aims to stake its claim. (There are a dozen Hamptons in Manhattan, Cordell said, noting rates up to \$679 a night there.) As Cordell noted, Hampton’s being part of Hilton also enables cross-selling, which will generate more than \$1 billion in revenue this year.

The “trust points”—free Wi-Fi, a big white bed, free breakfast—will be universal, but the flavor will be local. Now is the time to innovate, time for the industry to come out of

hibernation, Cordell said. Occupancy and rate are growing, leisure has been “incredibly resilient,” and discretionary business travel is returning. “We talk about being change-ready and future-focused,” he said. “In challenging times, strong brands win.”

Related Stories

[More Rooms and Retail at Miami/Brickell Hampton](#)

http://lhonline.com/development/retail_miami_hampton_0422/index.html

[Is a Building Boom on the Horizon?](#)

http://lhonline.com/news/is_hote_building_boom_on_horizon_0804/index.html

[What Makes Hampton Hotels a Success?](#) (http://lhonline.com/top-reads/hampton_hotels_success_1210/index.html)

http://www.facebook.com/share.php?u=http://lhonline.com/news/hampton_marketing_green_design_development_guestroom_technology_1_Flexes_Its_Hotel_Marketing_Muscle?TB_iframe=true&height=500&width=900 (#)
http://www.linkedin.com/shareArticle?mini=true&url=http://lhonline.com/news/hampton_marketing_green_design_development_guestroom_1_Flexes_Its_Hotel_Marketing_Muscle&source=BLOGNAME&summary=EXCERPT?TB_iframe=true&height=500&width=900 (http://digg.com/submit?phase=2&url=http://lhonline.com/news/hampton_marketing_green_design_development_guestroom_technology_1_Flexes_Its_Hotel_Marketing_Muscle&bodytext=EXCERPT?TB_iframe=true&height=500&width=900) (http://delicious.com/post?url=http://lhonline.com/news/hampton_marketing_green_design_development_guestroom_technology_1_Flexes_Its_Hotel_Marketing_Muscle¬es=EXCERPT?TB_iframe=true&height=500&width=900) (http://www.google.com/bookmarks/mark?op=edit&bkmk=http://lhonline.com/news/hampton_marketing_green_design_development_guestroom_1_Flexes_Its_Hotel_Marketing_Muscle&annotation=EXCERPT?TB_iframe=true&height=500&width=900) ([mailto:?subject=Hampton Flexes Its Hotel Marketing Muscle&body=http://lhonline.com/news/hampton_marketing_green_design_development_guestroom_technology_1_Flexes_Its_Hotel_Marketing_Muscle](mailto:?subject=Hampton_Flexes_Its_Hotel_Marketing_Muscle&body=http://lhonline.com/news/hampton_marketing_green_design_development_guestroom_technology_1_Flexes_Its_Hotel_Marketing_Muscle))

Acceptable Use Policy (<http://www.penton.com/Pages/AcceptableUsePolicy.aspx>)

Like 1 person liked this.

(#)

Add New Comment

Image

Post as ...

Showing 0 comments

Sort by Popular now [Subscribe by email \(#\)](#) [Subscribe by RSS](#)

http://lhonline.disqus.com/hampton_flexes_its_hotel_marketing_muscle_51/latest.rss