

Marc Staniloff

DEBT DODGING

Don't try telling Superior Lodging Corp.'s Chairman and CEO, Marc Staniloff, his company must have enjoyed a nice boost from travellers who traded down during the recession. "Theoretically, they were trading down, but hotels were chopping rate, so customers didn't have to trade down that far," he says. "If a Marriott, for example, is at \$50 a night, are those guests really going to leave to go to a Super 8? Rate integrity was the biggest challenge. I don't know who starts these rate wars, but they kill you in the end."

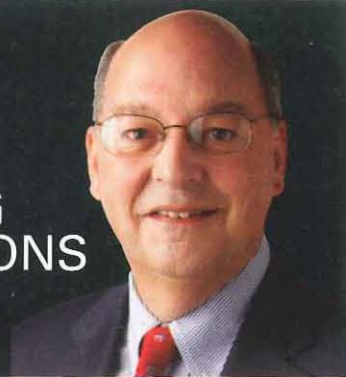
On average, Superior's gross revenue was probably down about 20 per cent in 2009, he says, but there were still a few bright spots last year. His Super 8 and Wingate brands performed

well in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and business in the Maritimes was steady. He also recently opened eight hotels, putting his company among the best performers in the Top 50 rankings.

What was his strategy to get his Calgary-based company through the lean times? "Rethinking investments and levels of debt," he says. "We've rationalized a lot of our hotels by recapitalizing them, and not having as much leverage, and leverage is what's going to kill people." Superior paid down debt on its existing hotels and, "in terms of new properties, we're now saying, 'We don't want the leverage at 65 or 70 per cent, we're going to go to 50,'" Staniloff says. "It makes it a lot tougher to do deals, but at least you can sleep at night." ♦

Philippe Gadbois,
senior vice-president
Atlific

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS



Another company with reason to feel good about its performance in what was a truly awful year for the industry is Atlific Hotels. Not only did the Montreal-based management company celebrate its 50th anniversary last year and earn the nod as *Hotelier's* Company of the Year, it also increased its sales revenues by more than \$19 million and opened two hotels, including the buzzworthy 454-room Westin in Old Montreal.

Much of Atlific's success can be attributed to its strong corporate culture. In fact, many industry veterans view the company as a pioneer in hospitality training. "A lot of our future leaders are with us because they want to learn the best of what the brands have to offer," Philippe Gadbois, senior vice-president, said at *Hotelier's* recent H20 Summit in Toronto. "The key is to identify leaders early, engage them and challenge them. It's not all about money."

Further to its outstanding HR policies, Atlific also created the Key Personnel Development Plan in 2008, to encourage the growth and development of each manager within the company, and it's been a winner since its inception. ♦

TAKE A BOW

IT'S NICE TO BE able to share at least a few success stories as we emerge

from the downturn, so kudos, Monte Carlo Inns — not just for winning *Hotelier's* Regional Company of the Year in 2009, but for showing the largest percentage growth, at 17.65 per cent, of all the companies on the 2010 Top 50 rankings.

How did they make it happen? "They always over-deliver," says John Sotos of Sotos LLP. "Through more services, competitive pricing and their hospitality — and that's what this is all about — they deliver the services of a chain that charges more."

Monte Carlo also refocused its efforts last year, updating some of its properties and providing exceptional service for great value. "Our product and level of service has evolved over the years," says Justin Meffe, general manager, Monte Carlo Inns. "It's versatile and, therefore, meets the ongoing demands of various market segments. Furthermore, we are able to offer customers a value-based product without sacrificing overall customer experience and adversely impacting our bottom line." ♦

