

How Suite It Is!

W Hotels have carved out their own unique brand identity by combining the ultra-stylish surroundings of a boutique hotel with the functionality and business-oriented services of multinational chains. In so doing, they have proved that hip and comfortable aren't self-canceling terms.



Barry Sternlicht
Chairman and CEO
Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc., NY
Sternlicht heads one of the world's leading hospitality companies with 725 properties in 80 countries and is the creative force behind W.



Theresa Fatino
Vice President, Brand Design & Development
W Hotels, NY
In charge of W's brand image and design direction, Fatino previously served as the lead designer at Pottery Barn.

When Barry Sternlicht, the CEO of Starwood Hotels and Resorts Worldwide, set out to design a new hotel from scratch, he was determined to create one that fixed all of his "pet peeves." He envisioned a hotel "that's memorable, different, warm, no sacrifice to comfort," and so impressive that even weary business travelers couldn't resist calling home to say, "You've got to see this place!" Sternlicht and his wife listed the attributes they wanted it to convey: welcoming, wonderful, warm, witty, whimsical, wow, wired. As it happened, all the words started with W, hence the name.

With W, Sternlicht laid out a brand concept that combined the best of boutique hotels with the business-friendly services provided by more conventional chains.

"We're trying to make it different but we're trying to make it functional," he says. "That was the big gap in what some of the previous boutique owners offered. Before it was art for art's sake, but I wanted

a guest to get a fax and be able to work in the room. I thought there would be an opportunity in the market to do a multinational brand that was more updated and unique. It was design with form and function in mind."

Now in 18 locations, W reinvents itself with each new hotel. The properties range from remodeled historic landmarks to modern glass skyscrapers built from scratch. Sternlicht's vision for the hotels has grown bolder since the launch of the first W almost five years ago. In New York, where the company has five hotels, the newest W Times Square has been described as a "lacquered bento box" of Zen-like textures and natural colors. The ground floor lobby offers a tranquil break from the urban chaos outside: a waterfall cascades over

the elevator, casting rippling shadows on the floor. W San Diego, which opens in December, will have a rooftop beach bar with heated sand. W Mexico City, opening next year, has walk-in shower rooms, each equipped with its own hammock that is

W HOTELS FACT SHEET

Parent Co: Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc.

Principal Officer: Barry S. Sternlicht, *Chairman & CEO*

Business Line: Style Hotel Brand

2001 Revenue: \$300 million

W Hotel Locations: Atlanta; Chicago (2); Honolulu; Los Angeles; Newark, CA; New Orleans (2); New York City (5); San Francisco; San Diego; Seattle; Sydney.

Times Square Facade
 Located in the heart of Manhattan's theater district, W Times Square reflects some of the glitz and glamour of nearby Broadway shows with its "stage-lit" logo signage.

“turned down” just like a bed. In Seoul, also opening next year, guests will be able to take a dip in the hotel’s glass-bottom pool with sharks swimming below.

That commercial theatricality takes its cues from the retail world, says Theresa Fatino, Vice President, W Brand Design and Development. “Barry said, ‘Why is it that there are so many hotels that don’t look good and that have unsavory choices in their bedsreads, their furniture, their equipment? Why has the design approach, sensibilities and practicalities of retail

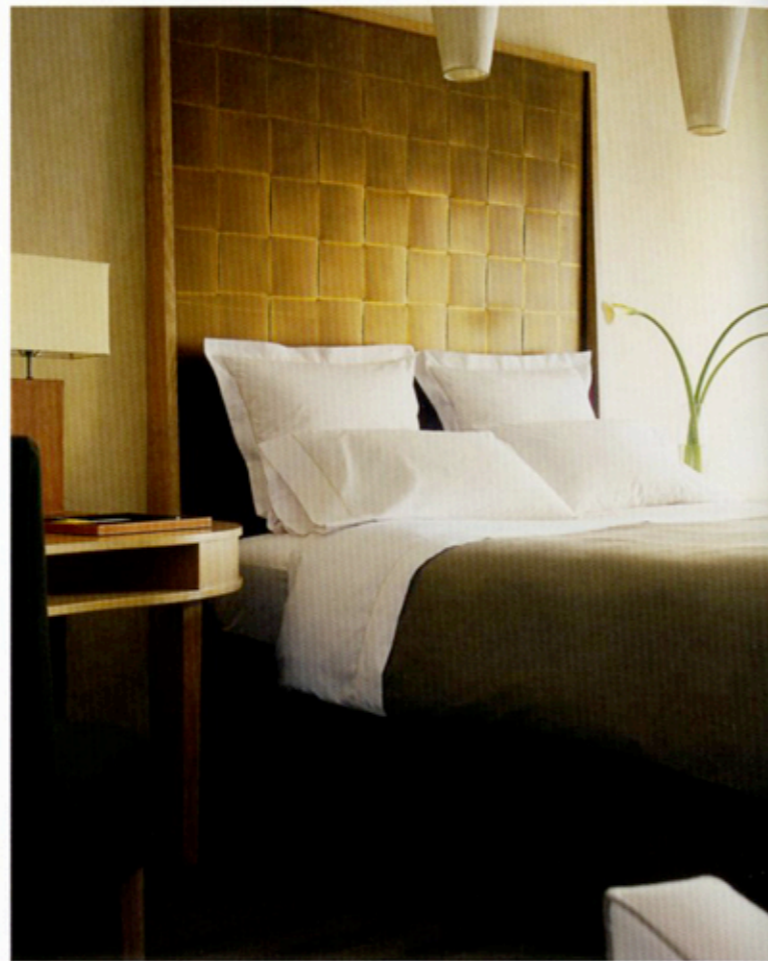


design and merchandising not been applied to the hotel industry?’” Fatino’s design group collaborates with well-known architects, designers and retail specialists to create a new hotel aesthetic. They look at everything from bamboo forests to neon lights,

from feathers and shells, to Warhol paintings. Where most hotels use marble and brass, W prefers wood resin and stainless steel, water and shapes and textures drawn from nature. The result is a fresh look, resembling anything but a business hotel.

Sternlicht says that from a service and hotel standpoint, he knew W could deliver the design, but he didn’t know whether it could deliver the “cool” attitude that goes with it. “That’s lighting, music, the smell of the space, and it’s the service, the people,” he says. As it turned out, it all came together. “I watch the general managers that we hire. They come in looking like they came out of prep school, and a year later, they’re all in black with spiked hair. They evolve into the brand, it’s very funny.”

Sternlicht takes a personal interest in every aspect of W’s design. His point of view has served as the initial basis for improvements to room functionality. “Barry’s a busy business traveler who works long into the night,” Fatino says. “What he discovered lacking from his experience of staying in other hotels is the need for oversized, long, deep desks, king beds, king pillows, a large TV and spacious bathrooms. So he fixed those deficiencies in his own hotels.” W beds are a signature feature across the chain’s diverse properties. W uses pillow-top mattresses with goose-down duvets rather than the usual polyester comforters.



Guestroom
Sternlicht made sure that every bed in the W Hotels had a cloud-like layering of mattress and feather bed, with a goose-down duvet just like the one he sleeps on at home.



Wireless Keyboard
Wireless keyboards in each room allow guests to check email and surf the Net from the TV screen.



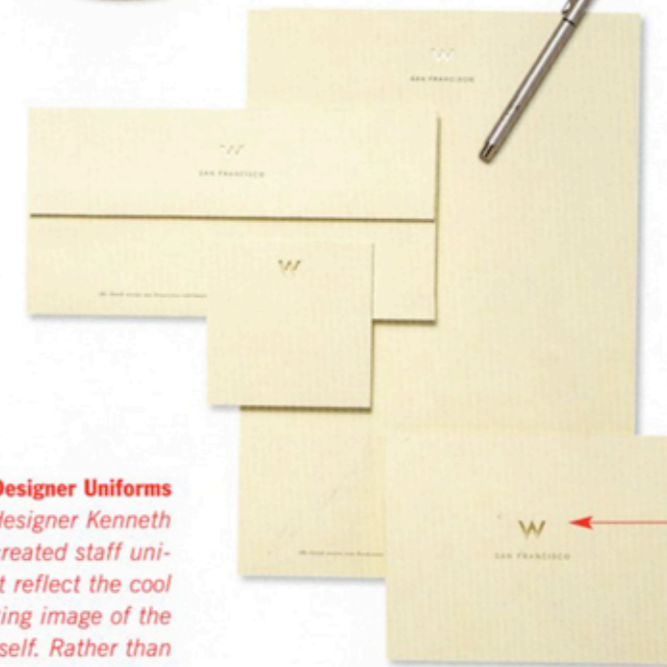
Card Key
Images printed on room keys brand and promote the hotel.

Like Home, But Better

W rooms are designed to let guests enjoy the comforts of home, with a pillow-top mattress bed, cordless phone, large-screen TV and Internet access. They also avoid the usual kind of mass produced art found in other hotels. “I don’t understand why art has to be ugly in hotels,” Sternlicht says. “Scale and texture are two areas of design that are not explored enough, especially when you are trying to surprise people.”



Branded CD
W created its own branded CD of mood music for listening on guestroom CD players.



Designer Uniforms
Fashion designer Kenneth Cole created staff uniforms that reflect the cool trend-setting image of the hotel itself. Rather than the usual embroidered logo, a silver pin presents the company name.



Die-Cut Logo
Die-cuts are a distinctive feature of the W graphic identity and help to draw greater interest in the minimalist look of the W logo



Guest Bathroom
Guestroom baths are as stylish and functional as the rest of the hotel, using contemporary finishes and fixtures.





Lobby "Living Room"
W lobbies (San Francisco W front desk, shown here) aren't meant simply for checking in and passing through. They are happening places where people congregate.

Fatino's group researched vendors from China to Europe to learn about the best sewing and construction of down products. They specified that the down feathers be taken from the breast of the goose, because those are the smallest, lightest, warmest feathers. They put high-thread-count cotton protective covers over the pillows so they have a fresh, clean, cloud-like feeling. To afford the beds, which cost twice the industry norm, W elected to forego the bulky armoire found in so many hotel rooms. As a result, the 27" TV is in plain sight, directly in front of the bed so guests don't have to assume contortionist-viewing positions.

In consideration of business travelers, W made desks big enough to spread out work and included a cordless phone and speakerphone. Three-way switch

arrival, like joining a great party in full swing." They're laid out to create a lot of buzz; they're full of conversation nooks. The general decor, lighting, music, "botanicals," staff uniforms and DJs are carefully selected to create a stylish ambience, she adds. "Living rooms" are set up to create moods that change throughout the day, moving from serene to social to sexy – providing a relaxing respite from the city outside by day, a lively lounge by night. "We use colored gels that alter the intensity as the day progresses to create just the right mood," says Fatino. "Candles and votives are lit every evening for a warm, cozy ambience."

Sternlicht was behind the push to recreate the lobby concept in W hotels. "In my travels in Asia, the hotel was a meeting place. Many hotels had five restaurants

Destination for Locals

While many hotels create "generic" dining and entertainment experiences in an attempt to be "all things to all people," W has partnered with famous names to develop themed restaurants and bars that rival the best in town. Nightclub impresario Rande Gerber's trendy Whiskey Bars are located in W hotels from coast-to-coast, drawing a chic and glamorous crowd made up of both locals and hotel guests.



lighting shifts the mood of W rooms. Fitness centers are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. International magazines are sold in lobby newsstands and local microbrews are stocked in guestroom bars.

Showerheads are oversized – as big as local city ordinances allow. W's bathrooms are a feature of ongoing innovation. In the new W Mexico City, the bathroom is actually placed at the back wall of the guestroom near the window, so it isn't the first thing you see when you come in. Fatino explains, "The guest is expecting more from us and allowing us to be more adventurous with our space planning and the integration of the bathroom into the living room space. It can be a seamless, sexier space. That way when someone is shaving, putting on their makeup, whatever, they can see the TV, their significant other or the view from the room."

Another focus in W hotels are the lobbies, which Sternlicht likes to describe as "living rooms." Fatino says they are designed to provide "a true sense of

in them. They hold thousands of events, there's always action in the lobby. In the United States, they're roadway stops. You go in and out of a hotel as fast as you can. We needed to energize the lobby."

Integral to that effort are W bars and restaurants, which have become wildly popular destinations for locals as well as guests. W is partnered with nightclub impresario Rande Gerber in creating the hotel's Whiskey Bars. Restaurateurs like Todd English from Olives and Drew Nieporent of Nobu and Tribeca Grill have developed themed restaurants for W.

W has also expanded into retail, opening cutting-edge stores. The first one appeared last year with the debut of W's second Chicago location and sells everything from Fabien Baron snowboards, Givenchy handbags and Comme des Garçons leather products to the more mundane travelers' necessities. W stores exude the same modern sophistication as the rest of the hotels' interiors. W's Times Square location,

for instance, has a 540-square-foot store with white lacquered walls, bleached oak floors and ribbed mirror-glass shelves that flip to provide display options. More than a dozen retail outlets are on the drawing board. "Initially, we tiptoed into retail. We worked to show the interest was there. We tested the market very quietly, observed and learned," says Fatino. "We thought retail could further explain the various personalities of the brand, both its quirky side and its chic side."

W offers products through its branded catalogs as well. "We introduced the catalog as a service to our guests because we got so many requests. Guests want the pillow, the candle, the teddy bear they see in the hotel. Now they want the whole W lifestyle," Fatino says. "We also saw retail and merchandising the brand as a way of fulfilling our customers' needs as well as a marketing vehicle."

“We created a brand behind a letter,” says CEO Barry Sternlicht, who has extended the W Hotels concept to 18 locations worldwide.



W's boutique-business concept is a niche complement to Starwood's larger chains, which include Westin and Sheraton hotels. Befitting W's hipper persona, the hotel offers business guests sensory-infused meeting rooms smelling of lemon grass or eucalyptus with decorative rocks carved with inspirational words like "Wisdom" and amusing "toys" for creative stimulation.

For Sternlicht creating the W brand has allowed him to return to his childhood interest. His mother was an artist and Sternlicht himself continues to draw and paint. "I've always been interested in design. One of the reasons I went over to the hotel business was I got a chance to do something I always wanted to do, which was design properties – the creative part of real estate. For me, I love the design side," says Sternlicht. "One of the most fun things about W was when I was assembling the assets that ultimately became the Ws, like

the former Doral Inn, now W New York, or the Marque that's now the W Atlanta, or the Days Inn in Chicago; they were pretty ugly boxes. So we were doing urban renewal at the same time. It was fun to take assets that looked like slag heaps in their original condition and really rev them up, contributing something to the community by making them happening, fun places for people who are happening and fun."

Reflecting on W's success, Sternlicht observes, "I was trying to design more 'class for mass,' but it wound up being a four-star brand, which was inadvertent." Still, he proudly cites a Market Metrix study that measures emotional scores for brands. W rated the highest luxury brand score in its industry, and number one for customer satisfaction too. "For good brands, design is a major portion of the brand. If you don't have a unique design, you have a commodity," he concludes.



Logowear
The W flip-flops not only expose the logo when the wearer is lounging by the pool, it is debossed so it leaves a "right-reading" imprint when wet.



Cool Invitations
For the opening of W Chicago Lakeshore, GWhiz Design Group in New York produced a plastic see-through invitation with glittery blue water inside.



Postcards
Oversized postcards show scenes from the hotel, quote rave reviews from major publications, and promote other W properties.



Promotional Materials
To market its properties, W produces a number of publications, including location-specific brochures that will fit into a No. 10 envelope and a stylish 128-page book with die-cut silver cover that lavishly showcases all of its hotels and services.

Trendy Ads
Created by GWhiz Design Group, advertisements for W Hotels appeal to a young, sophisticated and well-heeled crowd.

