

## New Louis T Collection targets independent properties

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SINGAPORE—Two veteran Hyatt Hotels Corp. executives who now work for The Getz Group based here are leveraging their hospitality expertise to help the 163-year-old, multi-prong conglomerate make its foray into hotels with the launch of the Louis T Collection.

Cofounders Grant Healy and Adam Simkins serve as CEO and managing director, respectively, of the collection, which recently made its first acquisition: the 82-room Mantra Samui Resort in Koh Samui, Thailand.

While The Getz Group, which has its origins in California, has supported the hospitality industry behind the scenes for many years via its contracting and technical-services companies, teaming with owners of intriguing independent properties to basically create a soft brand is a first.

"There are so many wonderful hotels around the world; so many we want to work with and help preserve," said Simkins. "We see ourselves as a kind of Robin Hood and Friar Tuck working as enablers. We want to partner with owners to level the playing field for the independent hotel such that they're competing with global chains."

"We are building a platform that is in its own space. I'd say Louis T is a cross between a traditional hotel management company and a curated, online distribution partner," said Healy. "We are a new breed in the sense we provide additional services beyond just listing the hotel on a sales platform. We have the ability to cater our services to the ambitions and objectives of each hotel, ranging from providing an intuitive and cost-effective digital strategy and technical and building solutions, to fully managing the property under the Louis T brand."

The collection's eclectic name references Louis Thomas Leonowens, an entrepreneur, adventurer, soldier and hotelier, who spent much of his life in Thailand, where his mother, Anna, was governess to King Mongkut's children (upon whom the novel *Anna and the King of Siam* and, ultimately, the play and movie *The King and I* are based).



Grant Healy  
Louis T Collection



Adam Simkins  
Louis T Collection

In 1905, Leonowens incorporated a namesake company in Thailand that subsequently became part of The Getz Group in 1986. Getz now has 80 offices in 36 countries and business operations in a variety of market sectors including healthcare, consumer products, chemicals, architectural services, food processing, industrials and hospitality, where it includes William Montague, a furniture/casegoods design and manufacturing company and a building-solution arm that supplies building materials.

Simkins indicated Louis T was strategic out of the gate with its first property. "Mantra was a good fit for a number of reasons. First of all, the location was ideal, given Louis' connection to Thailand. We also see strong uptrends: Koh Samui is becoming an increasingly popular destination, attracting tourists from many countries. In terms of

*continued on page 32*



The Louis T Collection recently acquired its first hotel, the 82-room Mantra Samui in Thailand.

### Louis T Collection

*continued from page 5*

business mix, it's mainly honeymoon and family leisure travelers," he said.

"We invested in a Samui-based hotel as a proving ground," added Healy.

"This is where we refine our proof of concept. As an owner-operator, [we] can move quickly and bring about change. [We] can test to see what works and what does not.

"We've already implemented a number of changes in the back-of-house, including updating the employee rest area, office equipment and benefit packages," Healy continued. "We felt it was important to create working conditions that exceeded employee expectations to both attract and retain quality staff. We're currently working on stylizing plans for front-of-house with local designers and in partnership with our creative director and our technical services team. Some improvements that will take place include refurbishing all our guestrooms, extending the pool decking and incorporating a casual food and bar component. The panoramic view of the ocean is breathtaking, and we want our guests to really enjoy the space and views.

Other focus areas include the arrival experience and relocating the all-day dining restaurant so that our guests can enjoy the unobstructed [view]. Overall, we are focused on the guest experience and ensuring every step from arrival to departure is memorable."

Work on the property, which is held under Mantra Property Group Co., Ltd. (also a member of The Getz Group), is slated to be complete in 2016.

"And, with the ability to leverage the group's building materials and project-management expertise, particularly from William Montague, we will be able to execute with a very favorable quality and build cost," noted Healy.

Right now, there are no plans to change the hotel's name or add a Louis T tagline. "This ties into our philosophy of allowing a hotel to retain its individual charm, and a name is part of that," said Simkins.

In sourcing properties to join the collection, Healy indicated he and Simkins are looking to work with independent hotels or small hotel groups "that are distinct whether it is because of the originality of the property or its location. Second, the property understands what we can bring to the table, whether it wants to leverage our technology suite or simply would like us to be its distribution partner."

The Louis T Collection has inked a strategic alliance with a cloud-based hotel management software company, San Francisco-based Frontdesk Anywhere (FDA). "We've already implemented the system at Mantra Samui and have been working together with FDA to further develop it. This partnership strengthens the technology solution we offer to independent hotels," said Simkins.

Healy said the collection would look to have more properties throughout Thailand in the future, and already has opportunities in Myanmar, Japan, China, Sri Lanka, Australia, Maldives, New Zealand and Hong Kong, where he is based.

"Also, with our strong roots in Asia, we're well-placed to help hotels tap into the growing wave of Chinese leisure travelers who are seeking a one-of-a-kind travel experience... For example, at Mantra Samui, we've hired a native Chinese speaker to leverage Chinese social media opportunities," said Healy.

Overall, he noted, "Our guiding philosophy is that a hotel can be more than just a place to stay; it can, and should be, a gateway to the surrounding environment." **HB**