

Checking in David Wani



JOEL KIMMEL

FAST FACTS

Title: CEO

Time with company:
10 years

First hotel industry job:
Front desk clerk at the Flamingo Las Vegas

Hometown:
Stony Brook, N.Y.

Hotel must-have:
Fitness center

Best advice he ever got: "See the space, not the trees."

ON APRIL 21, Moxy, Marriott's new lifestyle brand, launched its first U.S. property in Tempe, Ariz. Not only the first of its kind in the United States, the Moxy Phoenix Tempe also represents the beginning of a new partnership between the property's management company, Twenty Four Seven Hotels, and VHI's Save the Music Foundation, a charitable organization committed to supporting music instruction in public elementary and middle schools in the United States. David Wani, CEO of Twenty Four Seven, discusses how Moxy and Save the Music were a perfect fit for each other, and his company.

What was the process of opening the first U.S. Moxy property like? | It was about finding a balance for everyone involved. We needed to be mindful of what Marriott was trying to achieve, keep our owners' interests in check, and make sure costs didn't get out of hand. It was challenging, obviously, but it was also really exciting because we were on the forefront of the brand. In fact, there are certain elements within our hotel that Marriott will likely incorporate in future Moxys. For example, we found a great concrete floor under the old flooring and decided to use that as the floor in our lobby. Marriott really liked the way that came out, and they want to see if they can replicate it in other Moxys.

Another example: Tempe is heavily a corporate-preferred market, but from a brand standpoint, Moxys don't have desks. So in our case, we had to convince Marriott that we needed a desk and a chair. Luckily, we were able to scope out a vintage '50s metal desk, so it fits in with Moxy's whole look and feel. It's not just a desk, it's a design element that serves a great function for our corporate guests.

So you're both the prototype and a trailblazer for future Moxys? | The challenging thing was that we're coming out with a new brand, this is the U.S. prototype, and we're already veering off of the specs with our first hotel. That was maybe a little bit of a hiccup for Marriott, but at the end the day, there's a Courtyard, a Residence Inn, and a SpringHill Suites right down the street, so it was pretty easy for them to do their research and see that those hotels were doing 30 to 40 percent corporate preferred business. Marriott is really smart, and everybody there is highly seasoned. They know what they're doing, and that helped us reach the compromise of including a desk, but also making it a signature piece in the room.

Music is very important to you. How has this impacted the environment at Twenty Four Seven Hotels? | Music is a great unifier and it has become ingrained in Twenty Four Seven's culture. We talk about music a lot, we use song lyrics on our website and in our emails, and many of us have record players in our offices, which helps to create a very open and welcoming vibe. Music also influences the way we think of our company. Consider that one instrument playing by itself may have a decent sound, but it is only once you bring all the instruments together that you really have an impact. We feel the same way about Twenty Four Seven—together as a whole, we're much more powerful than we are as individuals.

So Save the Music is a perfect fit for a charitable partnership? | Absolutely. We are already connected to a number of different charities through our hotels, and we, as a corporate office, support them, but we also wanted to find a single point of focus within the company for giving back. A lot of us were musicians when we were kids, and we all are cognizant of the impact that these lessons had on us. We wanted to make sure that today's kids are able to have that same experience.

Will these programs tie back to the Moxy Phoenix Tempe? | The Save the Music Foundation just rolled out the Keys + Kids program, which places pianos in needy schools. We're currently working with Keys + Kids to put a piano in a local school in Tempe, and the new Moxy will sponsor that. We're going to be promoting our efforts in the hotel through the guestroom TVs and in the public space, but obviously, as a corporate entity, we're also going to be raising funds ourselves. Our plan is that every one of our hotels will partner with a local school. Some hotels may work to provide a piano, but they could also be making contributions to music programs that simply lack the proper funding. It's a great way to give back to the community while also doing something tied to who we are as a company and to our love for music.

BOTTOM LINE

16

Number of properties in **Twenty Four Seven's** portfolio, totaling approximately 2,000 rooms.