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learning curve

a look at education today

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perspectives 5 questions for morris moinian

Principal and Founder
Fortuna Realty Group



1 You just opened the Hotel Hugo in New York's Tribeca neighborhood [pictured], designed by Marcello Pozzi, and have several luxury hotels under development, including three new ones in Manhattan. What else is on your plate?

We have just completed a \$40 million renovation of the iconic Garden City Hotel [with Pozzi], which is the only 5-Star hotel in Long Island. The property has five ballrooms, well-appointed suites, and we've launched a new brand—Polo Steakhouse. We also recently celebrated the hotel's 140th birthday.

2 You also have joined the cycling craze, opening Revolve Fitness (also Pozzi-designed).

Revolve is a family venture that started in DC a few years ago. We wanted to differentiate ourselves by offering indoor cycling classes that felt more like a real bike ride. We're fine-tuning our brand in the New York and DC markets, and we have plans to roll out Revolve across the country starting in 2015. The design aesthetic is clean, simple, minimalist, streamlined. The colors are very simple: black, white, and teal.

3 Lessons learned regarding the hotel industry?

The more I take in, I realize there is more to learn. We take every [customer] comment, whether positive or negative, and turn it into a learning experience.

4 What are today's travelers looking for in hotels?

Luxury experiences in ideal locations. They want to learn something while they travel, and they want to feel like locals. Travelers not only want a lovely welcome, a comfortable bed, and delicious food but to experience the city they are visiting, even if it's just for one day. Just peering over the balcony on Hotel Hugo's rooftop, guests truly feel they are a part of the downtown neighborhood and New York as a whole.

5 What do you look for in a design collaborator?

Our properties are subtle, sophisticated, and high end—not big box hotels, so I work with my designer and find inspiration in antique books, museums, and archives. Designers should also understand how a hotel breathes. [For instance] when designing a room, talk to housekeeping and guests.