

# SAN FRANCISCO Business Times

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## PROFILE ■ 16

W Hotel G.M.  
Michael Pace  
speaks without  
reservation.



## Executive Profile

**MICHAEL PACE**  
GENERAL MANAGER,  
W HOTEL  
SAN FRANCISCO

**Background:** The W has 404 rooms, 262 employees and revenue just under \$60 million a year. Prior to W, Pace spent nine years at Kimpton.

**First job:** A restaurant in Italy right after hotel school.

**Education:** Grew up in Malta, hotel school in England.

**Residence:** Novato.



### Business strategy

**How's business:** We saw business come back in the fourth quarter (of 2009), but it's a different mix. We have high occupancy, but a lot of individual guests and small groups, which we're bringing in to make up for not having conventions or big groups.

**Biggest challenge for your business at the moment:** The ridiculous rate discounting that goes on. There are a few big hotels that really dumped rates, which pulled the whole city down. Our rates are at levels below 2002.

**What's going to change at your company in the next year:** We're planning a major renovation of what we call the living room — the lobby.  
**Goal yet to be achieved:** To put two wind turbines on the roof and to be the first commercial building in San Francisco to generate our own clean energy.

**How will you know that you've achieved it:** They will be hard to miss as you come down Third Street.

### Management philosophy

**Guiding principles for good management:** One: passion. Two: defining a clear vision with your team. Three: be relentless in your pursuit of perfection.

**Best way to keep competitive edge:** When you sit back and think you're OK, you lose your edge.

**Why people like working for you:** Beside my crazy socks? I know I am very competitive, very creative. I love to have fun at work and I'm very, very passionate. That's my biggest driving force, and I want to get everyone passionate with me.

**Mentor:** Jim McPartlin. He worked with me at Kimpton and was the San Francisco W (general manager) and opened the Hollywood W. Also my wife. She keeps me balanced and in check.

### Judgment calls

**Best business decision:** Hiring the right people. I personally interview every potential employee of the hotel.

**Hardest lesson learned and how you learned it:** Work-life balance. When I got married 15 years ago, I was working in Malta. My boss at the time, though we planned the wedding eight months out, reprimanded me for getting married in the busy season, in May. Especially in hotels, you're operating 24 hours a day and you've got to be able to balance.

**Toughest business decision:** Challenging someone very well connected at a high level at the corporate office for something I believed in, and realizing that your challenge may be seen as risky or not loyal to company.

**Biggest missed opportunity:** To stay in Malta and become part investor in a new hotel being built.

### True confessions

**Like best about job:** The energy it gives me.

**Like least about job:** The reports.

**Pet peeve:** When we miss at service basics and let the guests down on really small details.

**Most respected competitor:** Four Seasons Group.

**First choice for a new career:** Architect.

### Predilections

**Most influential book:** "The Celestine Prophecy."

**Favorite cause:** Environmental sustainability.

**Favorite movie:** "Cinema Paradiso."

**Favorite restaurant:** Ristorante Umbria.

**Favorite way to spend free time:** I'm a big gardener.

**On your iPod:** Hip-hop. The more oomp-oomp, the better.

**Automobile:** Porsche Cayman.

— Sarah Duxbury ■