



GERBER GROUP

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Gerber Group's SCOTT GERBER

A surprise request from hotel developer Ian Schrager 27 years ago leads to a refocused career merging food and drink with smart design



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Scott Gerber fell into a career in hospitality and nightlife by accident.

Deep into commercial real estate, brokering for high-end brands like Dolce & Gabbana and Hermès, he and his brother, Rande Gerber, were in a meeting with Ian Schrager (among his projects are Studio 54 and, most recently, Edition Hotels) when, to their surprise, Schrager asked them to open a bar at one of his hotel projects. It was 1991, and that same year Gerber left real estate to found Gerber Group with Rande (and their brother Kenny), bolstered by their success in opening their first venue, The Whiskey at the Paramount Hotel in New York, designed by Philippe Starck and David Rockwell, under Schrager's tutelage. Eight years ago,

Rande exited the Gerber Group to concentrate on the liquor business, due to federal laws that prohibit from owning a bar and a liquor company. Scott continues as principal and CEO of Gerber Group.

Born and raised on Long Island, N.Y., Scott Gerber has witnessed the Manhattan market's shift toward on-trend bars, lounges, restaurants and hotels, each with vivid identities. "Everybody's a boutique hotel, even if you're really not," Gerber said. What he likes best, however, are the social trends residing in each, whether it's a ground-floor eatery or lounge, or a rooftop bar.

With each new deal he brokers for Gerber Group, Gerber enjoys working alongside architects and interior designers to bring a concept to life, merging food and drink with smart design. In fact, he said, Rande was the face of the company while he worked behind the scenes—and loved it. "I was really just the business guy. In the beginning, nobody really knew I was involved in the business and I was happy about that," he said. What's it like working with a sibling? "It was nice to have somebody to bounce stuff off of," said Gerber, also pointing out another benefit: "When you have a difference of opinion, you get over it and move on."

Today, Gerber Group owns and manages 10 venues, in Atlanta, New York and Santiago, Chile. From Whiskey Blue's glass elevator whisking guests up to cabanas overlooking Atlanta's Buckhead neighborhood to The Roof on top of Viceroy Central Park New York, the group's brands exemplify cool and hip. "We've been doing a lot of rooftops lately, which I love," Gerber said. One of the latest projects involved restoring the Campbell Apartment in New York City's bustling Grand Central Terminal, maintaining its historic grandeur while also updating its look. It opened in May of last year.

Gerber is most proud of the company he founded being around for 27 years—and counting. He's also thrilled to add that the brands are still relevant, which is not always the case in hospitality. "We're aware of trends, but we don't want to be trendy," he said.

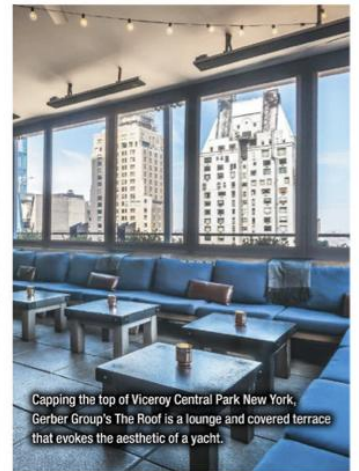
The Gerber brothers co-developed many of W Hotels' nightlife spots, beginning in the early '90s, at a time when boutique hotels "were a little off the grid" for business travelers, Gerber said. But even then, the brand's



Whatever/Wherever mantras were in rotation. This included delivering faxes to guests' rooms. "We basically created the beverage program," Gerber said, "and helped [the former Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide] create the brand."

Despite all the growth, one of Gerber's challenges has been to balance a life of leisure with a day job creating those concepts. At first, going on vacation was a challenge because surrounding him were ideas for new nightclubs, from the drinks list on down to the fabrics used for seating. "You really can't escape that," he said, joking that his wife would chide him for tuning in too hard and fast to a venue's lighting and branding.

Over time, he has learned to separate the two parts of his identity. "I do book time out of the office to go out on vacation," he said. "It doesn't mean I'm checking out, [however]. Gerber still likes to check in with the office



Capping the top of Viceroy Central Park New York, Gerber Group's The Roof is a lounge and covered terrace that evokes the aesthetic of a yacht.



The seasonally driven menu at Kingside, which is located on the street level of Viceroy Central Park New York, highlights small plates, sushi, pastas, fish and meats with an emphasis on sharing.

even while away. To further strike a balance, Gerber works out daily "for my head," he said, and relaxes at home with his wife and three children most nights. "I'm not in the bars. I try to limit it to one or two nights [out] a week, maximum." He looks for inspiration by flipping through magazines and also hitting the road with his family. "I find inspiration when I travel to places... but it could be anywhere," he said. Gerber's philosophy when designing a concept is to "take a piece of this and a piece of that," rarely relying upon one source of inspiration.

Expansion is continually on Gerber's mind—both geographically and into various different concepts. "Right now, we're exploring opportunities in Los Angeles; Washington, D.C.; and New York City," Gerber said, hinting at between five and six deals that are in the works. **HM**



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