

DRAWING ATTENTION

Harry Christakis wouldn't let a global meltdown draw him away from the hospitality business

BY J.D. NEY • PHOTOGRAPHED BY JOHN HRYNIUK

When Lehman Brothers disappeared and the business world temporarily followed it over the edge of despair, you might think that any architectural firm heavily involved in drafting and designing for the hospitality industry might be next in line. However, drawing the roadmap for his company through a difficult recession is nothing new for Harry Christakis, principle with HCA in Toronto.

"I opened the practice in 1991, right in the middle of the recession," recalls Christakis. "Everyone was saying, 'What are you doing?' but really, that's the best time to start, because, hey, if it doesn't work out, you can always blame it on the economy," he quips.

Almost 20 years and several economic cycles later, the notion of the successful firm somehow failing seems far-fetched, given all it has achieved, particularly in the busy Toronto market. With venerable names like The King Edward Hotel, Park Hyatt and a pair of Westins, the firm's CV reads like a who's who of the Toronto scene. In fact, Christakis also has several major projects ongoing in the city, at various levels of completion.

Paul Verciglio, general manager of Toronto's Park Hyatt hotel, is one such client, and he can't speak highly enough of the firm and its namesake principal. Verciglio says Christakis' combination of hospitality know-how, coupled with an ability to listen, makes him an excellent partner.

"Harry has worked on a number of projects at this property, even dating back to when we made the conversion from the Park Plaza, [which opened as a Part Hyatt in 1999]" he says. Verciglio was also very pleased with the work Christakis did on the hotel's Stillwater Spa, which has been named among the top 10 urban spas in the world. "Harry has a wonderful eye for detail," Verciglio continues. "He does a lot of

*PRINCE'S HARRY:
Architect Harry
Christakis relaxes
inside Toronto's Westin
Prince Hotel, where
he recently redesigned
the interior.*

