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Sky Talk with Mr. Steven Kratchman, Architect, Founder and CEO of [Steven Kratchman Architect, P.C.](#) in New York City

The firm Steven Kratchman Architect, P.C., was founded in 1999 by Mr. Steven Kratchman, AIA, an architect and urban designer who previously served as Senior Project Designer for the urban redevelopment team that transformed an abandoned New York City urban harbor area into the now world-renowned Chelsea Piers waterfront complex. Since its inception, the firm has grown from two architects to a professional staff of 15, who work on commercial and residential projects, including multi-family residential, single-family residential, historic and landmark properties, private clubs and sports facilities, educational institutions, new from-the-ground-up buildings and restaurants. These projects can range from kitchen and bath projects to major, multi-million dollar developments and conversions. In addition to creative, practical and cost-effective solutions, a focal point of the firm's practice is green, energy-efficient design, especially new technologies with a payback of 3 to 6 years.

Could you please tell us about your latest project? My firm has recently completed several projects in the greater New York area, including the vertical expansion and conversion of a two-storey brick store front building to a six storey high, French limestone-clad townhouse mansion on the Upper East Side, the conversion and expansion of an aging hotel in Long Island City, Queens on the bank of the East River to a modern, boutique hotel with many balcony views of Manhattan, the conversion of vintage, midtown office building to a 12-storey luxury condominium with added Penthouse floors on East 36th Street, and the modernizing of three urban, private sports clubs in Manhattan. We also recently celebrated the completion of our work adding a thematically designed modern wing to a historic pre-Revolutionary-era private suburban home just north of New York City, and we recently completed several midtown office lobby as calling card re-designs, including the lobby of the famed, former, "New Yorker" magazine building on West 45th Street.

What is the best part of your job? My firm designs buildings that represent the broad, everyday fabric of this city. The thrill of being an architect and doing the kind of work my firm does in here New York City is the challenge of developing a clear understanding of the overall structure of the city and then the special context

of each of our buildings -- each block, each street, each Plaza and each neighborhood.

What is the worst part of your job? I am trying to build a company that delivers architectural services with a format that is repeatable and consistent. This hasn't been tried before in the world of architecture. So, the struggle for the most part is re-educating experienced architects and also educating new graduates to work differently than most of them were trained in school.

How do you see the present trends in air travel? I am excited by new airport designs and how some airlines are paying more and more attention to design considerations, both in their terminals and in their aircraft interiors. Air France and Lufthansa are the first that come to mind.

How do you see the future of air travel, near term and beyond? I would like to see the emergence of some more market-driven, low cost carriers. More Jet Blue-type carriers would be great. And, at the same time, I would like to see the emergence of a better quality of business class service, especially on domestic flights here within the US.

In your opinion, what makes a successful airline? In my opinion, the keys to success are a service mentality, hospitality and paying attention to detail, to the passengers and their individual needs. Virgin Atlantic, in my opinion, accomplishes this very well.

How important is innovation? Innovation is very important, especially in regard to on-board features, such as bigger, better and more comfortable in-flight seating, and more entertainment options.

How important are promotional and marketing gimmicks? To me, gimmicks are not really important and they don't really interest me. I prefer real incentives, such as better prices and the opportunity for upgrades.

For how long have you been a frequent flyer? Since the 1980's.

Do you remember your first flight? Yes, I flew from Saint Louis to Kansas City, probably on TWA or Braniff.

How often do you travel? I travel at least once every three to four months.

Do you travel the most for work or pleasure? About fifty-fifty.

Do you have a preferred destination or region? National or international? France, and more recently Cancun in Mexico.

Do you have a favorite airline, alliance, frequent flyer program? Air France, Virgin and Jet Blue, because I can earn miles with my credit card programs and use the mileage credits for upgrades.

What class do you usually fly? I often book Economy and, when I can, I then upgrade to Business Class for long flights.

How often do you fly low cost airlines? I fly them mainly within the US.

What are your favorite aspects of the trip: Airport, lounge, flight, and hotel? I really enjoy the airport lounges, especially the ones with innovative architecture and design features. I find airports such as Paris /Charles de Gaulle and Lyon, France, really delightful to the eye and also very passenger friendly in their design.

Do you have a favorite airport, car rental, hotel chain? I am a Hertz Number One member and I enjoy the W Hotels.

How do you feel about the new security rules? I don't mind them in principle, because today they are a fact of life and security is important. Yet, I don't enjoy partly disrobing in public and then being rushed to get aboard my flight while making my way through an obstacle course of plastic trays and conveyor belts.

What are the most annoying things for you when you are traveling? Any aisle seat, People walking by and bumping you. Any seats near bathrooms. And, noisy passengers.

What do you have in your survival kit when you travel? I travel with my cell phone, a camera, reading material, music, clothing, snacks, and something to drink, and most of the time with an armful of books and periodicals.

What is your primary news source when you travel? Quite frankly, I try to close my eyes to the news, because that is often what I wish to escape from when I travel.

Do you have an oasis, a place to go you cannot live without? Europe always appeals to me.

This interview was conducted by Aram Gesar, editor of AirGuide Magazine & AirGuideOnline.com.
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