



(Pictured): Above, Sheldon G. Adelson
Opposite: Singapore Marina Bay Sands
Image courtesy Marina Bay Sands.

VISIONARY & PIONEER SHELDON ADELSON

BREAKING WITH CONVENTION:
THE SINGAPORE MARINA BAY SANDS BY JUDY SECKLER



Singapore Airlines once ran a series of TV commercials, featuring exotic Asian flight attendants with the tagline “Welcome to Singapore.” The powerful 60-second spots wooed its audience to drop everything and board the next plane.

With the opening of the Marina Bay Sands in April 2010, Las Vegas Venetian and Palazzo hotel tycoon Sheldon Adelson expanded his brand of integrated resorts, magnifying Singapore’s glitter quotient as a desirable destination. The resort sits on

a 33-acre spread overlooking the Marina Bay waterfront and its distinctive silhouette of three 55-foot towers support a beautifully landscaped SkyPark with a 360-degree view of Singapore and the ocean topped off by an infinity pool.

The complex has many of the amenities that Adelson’s Las Vegas Sands Corp. has become known for: two live theaters, convention and exhibition space, a museum of science, upscale shopping, room suites and an ample casino plus a variety of

restaurants run by celebrity chefs.

“Marina Bay Sands, being the ‘Eighth Wonder’ of the world, is a remarkable example of a landmark building. With the world’s tallest park as well as the longest swimming pool, the building has become the iconic structure for the Singapore skyline,” says Wing T. Chao, former Disney executive vice president for Master Planning, Architecture, & Design. Chao has collaborated with some of the most celebrated architects to build thousands of hotel rooms for the Disney’s many global



(Pictured): Above: Marina Bay Sands viewed from the water. Photography by Timothy Hursley. Opposite Above: Roof pool overlooking Singapore. Opposite Below: Wife Dr. Miriam Adelson and Sheldon G. Adelson. Images courtesy Marina Bay Sands.

resort destinations.

Call him a visionary or pioneer now but when Adelson first introduced this concept in Las Vegas, established players in the hospitality and casino world said it wouldn't fly. But then, "can't" is not a concept that exists much in his vocabulary. Instead of vying for the casino business, Adelson gave convention goers a reason to extend their stay without leaving the premises and enjoy a high-end experience.

"I added value by changing the paradigm," the seventy-seven-year-old entrepreneur says. He shares this simple philosophy during workshops with business students repeatedly, and they

don't believe him. "They think it's too easy," he explains. Adelson's formula for success, built from a career overseeing more than 50 businesses, along with philanthropy and strong family ties, has been a game changer.

As a Las Vegas tour operator, Adelson purchased a fleet of chartered planes. It gave him better control over scheduling and enabled him to pass along better service. As the biggest independent tradeshow producer, he concluded that the time was right to turn Las Vegas into an upscale destination for convention goers. Adelson's fearlessness hatched the Venetian and, subsequently, the Palazzo Hotel. Since then,

he's built similar resorts in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and The Venetian Macao Resort Hotel in Macau, China.

When the opportunity in Singapore arose, it was not a slam-dunk. Every company with legitimate credentials was invited by the government to submit a bid. What sold the Singapore officials was Adelson's ability to deliver convention contacts throughout the year, wrapped around a sophisticated cultural and entertainment complex.

For these projects, Adelson provides "the strategic thinking," and makes the presentations, but his team members will tell you that the details don't escape



him. Room furniture, carpet and accents all get his eye. The attractive suites are comfortable and inoffensive because a more extreme design scheme is one where, he says, "you lose a lot of the market."

Adelson hired architect Moshe Safdie, impressed by his design of the Children's Holocaust Memorial at Yad Vashem, to work with on the Singapore project. "He's the most effective communicator of art I've ever seen," says Adelson, whose

office waiting room walls are plastered with striking pieces of modern art. At one point in their collaboration, Adelson showed a two-tower design drawn by Safdie to his circle of friends. The architect reconfigured the design to three towers when they found that the first design looked like a Japanese gate that would be offensive to Singapore citizens. It also points to the modest way Adelson conducts himself. Friends matter and are an important part of his process.

He's never forgotten an important





(Pictured): Left: Moshe Sadfie, Sheldon G. Adelson, Dr. Miriam Adelson, Michael A. Leven. Below: Images courtesy The Vegas Sands Corp.

piece of wisdom his father, a man of modest means, told him so many years ago: "If a little child runs up and tugs on your coat, don't ignore him. He could be telling you that your coat is on fire." Along with honoring his father's words, here's a man with time to kiss and wave goodbye to his younger children when he drops them off to school no matter what's on his plate.

These days, Adelson is most excited about his legacy of victories in medical research. He's changing the paradigm by insisting that all the 200 researchers in the 70 institutions he supports agree to collaborate. Without cooperation among specialists, the rate at which cures are found is much slower, he says. He may have a point. Recently, one of his researchers discovered surprising medical phenomena in certain traditionally unconnected genetic relationships.

His ability to move in new directions extends to the area of senior life. He and his wife, Miriam, opened NewBridge,

on the Charles in Dedham, Massachusetts, in August 2009. The community offers relaxed and comfortable independent and assisted living accommodations, on-site health professionals, and spacious grounds and provides activities and events for residents that encourage lifelong learning and an active lifestyle. Adelson chose to locate their innovative new community in his home state.

Back at the Venetian and the Palazzo, charitable acts also have a place. Adelson hosted "A Tribute to the Troops Day" in November for the fifth time in three years. Wounded veterans enjoy the hospitality and entertainment of Adelson's mega hotels as a show of appreciation for their dedicated military service.

It's all part of a greater plan to live a life in balance. Adelson's world is full of possibilities, not roadblocks. Chao sums it all up simply: "Sheldon is a visionary and he thinks big." □

