

## Independent hotels cater to elite business travelers

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Hilton, Hyatt, Marriott (MAR) , Starwood (HOT) and the like - dominate the growing sector of high-end business-center hotels. And why not? Chain-affiliated hotels gain competitive advantages through worldwide reservations systems, popular loyalty programs and slick marketing campaigns.

But in many cities, independents such as The Rittenhouse in downtown Philadelphia continue to compete for the travelers who can pay \$300-plus a night for charm, a clubby atmosphere and a reputation upheld over the decades. The Rittenhouse last year reported its best sales and occupancy figures ever. Nonetheless, general manger David Benton says, "We have to pedal twice as fast to keep up with" branded rivals.

The Rittenhouse and other grand old downtown hotels - The Hay-Adams in Washington, D.C., and The Adolphus in Dallas, for example - compete with the chains on the basis of such things as prestigious locations, lavishly furnished rooms, grand architecture, rich history and ultrapersonalized service.

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