

Has anyone seen my free time?
An Introduction into the Personal Concierge Industry

By: Nicole Matthews, CSEP

When was the last time you felt like everything in your life was in total control? If you have to think about it, it's obviously been too long. For those that have felt overworked, overscheduled, and overspent, there is a growing industry that can help. Have you every considered hiring a personal concierge? You no longer have to be a traveling executive to benefit from the services a concierge can provide. Help has arrived and you can be the first on your block to know about it.

The term "Concierge" originated in medieval times. A concierge or the "keeper of the candles," as they were originally called, referred to the servant who attended to the whims of visiting nobleman at medieval castles. The servant met them at the door with their candles and took responsibility for overseeing to all their needs during their stay. In more modern times, a concierge came to stand for the "keepers of the keys" at public buildings, especially hotels. To most people today, a concierge is the well-dressed man or woman in the lobby of a hotel, standing ready to assist you in obtaining theater tickets, dinner reservations at the best restaurant or fetching a forgotten birthday gift before you board a flight home. It is from these services that the personal concierge industry has evolved.

As more and more Executives traveled for business, they became accustomed to having a concierge at their service. Over time, they began longing for these same services when they returned back to their office; they no longer wanted this luxury to be limited to traveling on the road. The Corporate Concierge niche began to evolve out of the corporations desire to keep their employees content so they would not leave for another company. Concierge services became part of the benefits package and soon Executives (and in some companies, regular employees), from the comfort of their corner offices, found they were able to ask someone to run errands, pick up their dry cleaning, plan their dinner parties and organize the overseas business trip. The administrative fee to have a concierge in the lobby was paid by the corporation, and it became money well spent to keep their employees happy.

Out of the corporate concierge industry came the evolution of the personal concierge industry. Finally a person that can give you back your time! A personal concierge or lifestyle manager markets their services directly to clients who pay them to run errands, buy gifts, plan events, arrange meetings, make travel arrangements, and coordinate concert and theater tickets. Requests are handled as long as they are "moral, ethical and legal" (the pledge of every concierge!) Imagine handing over your to-do list to your personal lifestyle manager:

- Virtual Assistant / Concierge – Arrangements that can be made from the desk of the concierge. i.e. tickets, reservations, etc.
- Personal Assistant / Lifestyle Manager – Arrangements that require leaving the office to accomplish - errand running, personal shopping, travel coordination, event planning.

The personal concierge industry is growing rapidly thanks to the Baby Boomer generation. This "Sandwich Generation," caught between raising children while tending to ageing parents, is more time-deprived than any other generation in history. These families are now turning to a personal

concierge to help shrink an otherwise bulging to-do list. By shifting the responsibility of a to-do list to a personal concierge, Baby Boomers have once again found the priceless gift of time.

The personal concierge industry is available to clients by-the-hour (clients pay a minimum hourly fee plus expenses) or by a monthly retainer (clients pay flat fee for an agreed upon number of hours, plus expenses). A sample listing of services provided, include: travel coordination, event management, errand running, gift and personal shopping, concert and theatre tickets, coordination of private functions and celebrations, hotel and restaurant reservations and entertainment bookings.

Now, what can your personal concierge do for you? Live the life you want. Delegate the rest!

Nicole Matthews, CSEP is the Founder and Principal of The Henley Company LLC, an event management and concierge firm based in San Diego. She encourages clients to live the life they want, by delegating the rest to The Henley Company. The Henley Company doesn't just provide a service, they provide a lifestyle. www.thehenleycompany.com