



At Your Service

Elite concierge services offer members more than just access.

When billionaire Steve Mattlin* travels to Bavaria on a 10-day trip next summer, he plans to have lunch with the president of BMW and test-drive cars at the company's secret test track. Mattlin didn't secure the exclusive arrangement through his business or social connections — it comes courtesy of his well-connected concierge.

"Money and access are not an issue with Mint

Lifestyle clients," says Steven MacGeachy, co-founder of the Los Angeles-based luxury travel and concierge service. "They don't come to us for reservations at their neighborhood restaurant. They come to us wanting reservations at the top restaurant in Barcelona — at places they've never been or aren't aware of."

MacGeachy's customers are looking for a level of access that's truly unique and memo-

rable, or what is above and beyond what they could arrange for themselves. “Typically, it’s not about the client getting [to a place] or staying there. They’ve all done it,” MacGeachy says. “They’ve stayed at the Dorchester. They’ve stayed at the Ritz.”

Dru Jensen-Jones, president of Concierge Concepts International in Jacksonville, Fla., provides “one-stop shopping” for her clients. “They call us for anything and everything they need,” Jensen-Jones says. This includes anything from performing regular housekeeping or pet sitting, to buying sold-out concert tickets or getting quotes for a new roof.

At Your Beck and Call

Do you want a personal chef for a dinner party? Are you looking to charter a luxury yacht, or to take your nephew for a ride in a jet fighter?

Today’s concierge is “the assistant’s assistant at the extreme level,” MacGeachy says. His clients are often billionaires with powerful connections, but securing hard-to-get reservations are not their first priority. “They’re well-connected people who know how to leverage their relationships,” he says of his clients. “They’re also extremely busy.”

Jensen-Jones says the number one reason her clients call on her is to buy more time. “One of our clients called last week from her second home in South Florida to say that she and her husband would soon be returning to their primary home here,” she says. “They asked us to stock their refrigerator with their favorite gro-

ceries, re-engage their newspaper delivery, turn down the air conditioning and ensure their decorator had completed the punch-list of items they had left her before their trip.”

Personal-assistant services can range from these types of mundane, daily activities, to the more specialized. Jensen-Jones ordered and delivered 18 Maine lobsters for a 50th birthday party. For another client, in Atlanta, she arranged grocery delivery for a sick friend 300 miles away.

Sara-ann Kasner, president of the National Concierge Association, a professional association for concierges in the United States, says clients pay her for smaller duties such as having their closets organized, but tasks are just one part of the job. They’re really calling her for the level of advice and expertise she provides.

At a minute’s notice, she says she can plan an anniversary dinner for two or a tenants’ party for 2,500. “The biggest thing we do for our clientele is save them time. We do all the research – we’re one-stop shopping,” she says. “My clients think I walk on water, and I don’t let them think anything else. They can call me for anything.”

Have Concierge, Will Travel

Another important area of expertise offered by today’s concierge services involves travel assistance. Whether you’re looking for a romantic getaway, planning a business trip or seeking an adventure, a concierge service can help take the headaches out of travel. This also is the area that calls for a particularly high level of expertise.

BEYOND JUST THE EXTRAORDINARY

Concierge services are able to fill extraordinary requests. But they also offer their busy clients invaluable help with many of life’s ordinary needs.

EXTRAORDINARY

- Flying in designer couture from Paris.
- Hiring a premier cellist for a private concert.
- Planning a trip around the world with your son.
- Finding the perfect Stradivarius violin to complete your collection.

DAY-TO-DAY

- Picking up your dry cleaning.
- Sending flowers to a loved one.
- Making reservations at an ultra-hyped, impossible-to-get-into new restaurant.
- Sending a get-well telegram to a business partner’s wife.





Photography by Paul Vrant/Getty Images

Steven MacGeachy is quick to point to this skill as a must-have for any modern concierge service, including his own.

For the 250 families that are his clients, MacGeachy uses his influence to create unique experiences and provide expertise in the best the world has to offer. He says he started his business “to cater to the wants, whims, needs and desires of a select and finite number of clients.”

When a client planned a three-week trip to South Africa, he asked MacGeachy to charter a private jet for his family of 11. Instead, the concierge recommended another option: Why not book the first-class cabin of an airline instead? That first-class cabin rental cost about \$200,000, or one third of the price of chartering a Boeing business jet. It was also an option the client hadn’t considered.

“We thought a little outside the box,” MacGeachy says. “Clients, regardless of wealth,

don’t like to be taken advantage of. They want to know they have a sense of value.

“Many people don’t realize that just because something is in a certain hotel guide or boasts a certain number of stars doesn’t mean that it’s necessarily going to live up to your expectations,” MacGeachy says. “When they come to us, they have the benefit of being able to specify verbatim what it is they’re looking for, and having me — someone who has actually been to all of these places — give them a first-hand account of the airlines, the hotels and the restaurants that fit those specifications.”

Jensen-Jones concurs. “We’ve done our due diligence to establish a network of experience and contacts across the globe, and it’s because of that legwork that we are able to deliver anything our clients need,” she says. ■