

**Start a business providing  
services for busy people!**

FabJob Guide to  
**Become a  
Personal  
Concierge**



**JENNIFER JAMES**

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 The World of the Personal Concierge

Do you love to feel needed and appreciated? Are you a true “people person” with boundless energy? Are you known in your circle of friends as the one with all the answers, or who always saves the day? Do you get your greatest happiness from helping others?

Welcome to the world of the personal concierge — the ultimate helping career. These friendly problem-solvers know how to get anything done, quickly and professionally. They assist busy and wealthy people who are short on time, and who have tasks or projects they need to get done.

Personal concierges do some things hands-on, but they also have a vast network of reliable, trusted connections they can call on anytime. These organized individuals can juggle many tasks at the same time, and they always keep their cool. If this sounds like you, read on to discover how you can earn a great living running your own personal concierge service.

## 1.1.1 What a Personal Concierge Does

A personal concierge takes on any tasks that their clients are too busy to get done themselves, such as grocery shopping, running errands, or getting the car serviced. They generally charge a rate of anywhere from \$15 to \$85 an hour, depending on the local market and the services requested.

Just 15 years ago, concierges were simply the gatekeepers and service people associated with expensive hotels and posh apartment buildings. But today it's not just the extremely wealthy who have a need for occasional assistance with day-to-day living. Everyone from dual-income families to single parents to traveling executives can be totally time-strapped, and willing to pay for what is known as "lifestyle management."

Personal concierges are not butlers, nannies, or housekeepers; yet they may help their clients locate these services. Unlike personal assistants, who often work for only one person and may even be available to them 24 hours a day, personal concierges service a number of clients for a few hours a week. Unlike executive assistants, a personal concierge deals less with office work, and more with helping manage personal lives.

Are you the type of person who gets bored by routine? Well as a personal concierge, you'll never have two days exactly the same. Things you may do or arrange for clients include (but are far from limited to) the following, all of which are covered in this guide:

- Grocery shopping
- Buying gifts
- Planning trips and booking travel
- Obtaining concert and event tickets
- House-sitting
- Occasional pet care
- Planning dinner parties and other gatherings
- Finding and hiring reliable contractors

- Getting cars serviced
- Delivery and pick-up services
- Assistance in relocating to a new town or city
- Handling mini-emergencies

Since every client will have his or her own unique to-do list, the types of services that personal concierges offer are quite varied. The touchstone used in the industry is that if the request is illegal or immoral, the concierge will not oblige. Otherwise, it's "anything goes," and the best personal concierges are known for their resourcefulness, as well as their commitment to clients' privacy.

While personal concierges can find full-time work with corporations, hotels, and other companies in competitive industries, this guide focuses on starting your own personal concierge business. This doesn't mean you can't target both individuals and corporations as clients, just that you'll be your own boss, set your own hours, and decide what services you will offer.

## 1.1.2 The Marketplace Today

Personal concierge is a relatively new career, born out of an ever-growing need for more free time. "A common misconception is that concierge services are too expensive, and that they're only for the rich and famous. Today *everyone* is busy, overworked, and doesn't have enough time to do even the necessary things on their 'to-do' list," says Delmar Johnson of the Concierge Place.

There's never been a better time to break into this market. Consider that:

- In her book *The Overworked American*, Harvard economist Juliet Schor revealed statistics that showed that in the last twenty years, the amount of time Americans have spent at their jobs has risen steadily.
- The Families and Work Institute reports that more than half of U.S. employees surveyed felt "overworked at least sometimes" in the last three months.

- According to a 2006 survey by Salary.com and America Online, employees waste about twice as much time at work as their employers think. Running errands outside the office accounted for 7.6% of this lost productivity.

Enter the ultimate time-saving solution: the personal concierge. In 2002, *Entrepreneur* magazine included concierge and errand-service businesses in their annual list of top-ten start-up ideas. And according to estimates from the International Concierge and Errand Association, this type of service has now become a \$1 billion industry worldwide.

“Concierges are everywhere now, in hospitals, malls, apartments and condos, colleges, corporations, and on and on. There has been extraordinary growth in this industry and it continues to grow,” says industry insider Delmar Johnson.

## The Individual Client

Your typical client will have more money than time, and consider time more valuable than money. According to the International Concierge and Errand Association 2006 Industry Future Watch survey of its members, the average client earned anywhere from \$50,000 to \$500,000 per year, with most (47%) falling in the \$100,000 to \$500,000 range. The fact that few of the members surveyed had clients over the \$1 million per year income bracket may come as a surprise to those new to the profession. Another finding of interest in this survey, which may help you in determining your client base, is that the average age of most clients was between 31 to 45 (about 55%), followed by 46 to 55 year-old clients (35%).

But these clients won't necessarily have the need for a full-time personal assistant. In fact, the most requested services by individual clients were general errands and household management, representing a combined total of about 54%. Single parents with professional careers, two-income families with a combined income of \$80,000 or more, wealthy divorced people (usually men) who formerly relied on their spouse to run the household, and busy executives who travel a lot all fall into this category.

You can also choose to target clients who may need concierge services temporarily or on an ongoing basis, such as new mothers, the conva-

lescings, or seniors. Where people used to call a sister, a son, or a grandmother, family networks are not what they used to be, and a personal concierge is the new solution. Other trends working in the favor of personal concierges include more and more people:

- Feeling stressed
- Being overwhelmed with purchasing choices
- Wanting to feel special
- Preferring to choose services based on referrals
- Seeking closer family ties
- Starting their own businesses
- Getting divorced
- Using similar “niche services” like personal chefs and personal shoppers
- Striving to achieve work-life balance

“People have longer commutes, longer work hours, and their kids’ schedules are booked solid,” confirms personal concierge Jill Burstein. “Many middle-class families have somebody clean their house these days because they understand the value of their time. Oh, and the gas costs! [Hiring a personal concierge] will become very commonplace once people see that it is cost-effective.”

Of course, some concierge businesses do have celebrity clients. This can be anyone who is a television or film star, stage actor, author, sports star, musician, politician, and so on. Even business executives can be celebrities (think Bill Gates or Donald Trump), so this type of client can include a very broad range of people with an equally broad range of needs for personal concierge services. Remember, too, that not all celebrities are A-listers like Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie. Many less well-known celebrities also need personal concierge services.

Like your other individual clients, celebrities have a wide range of needs and so require a wide range of services. Whether it’s helping them remember birthday gifts, making travel and entertainment arrangements, or running errands, you may become the person a celebrity’s personal assistant calls on when certain services are needed.

## The Corporate Client

Businesses are also turning to personal concierge services in an effort to attract and retain employees and clients. The Fortune 500 companies started this trend, and now many progressive-minded CEOs are adding what are known as “work-life benefits” to their compensation packages, which include access to a personal concierge service. The “corporate concierge” specializes in providing concierge services to this niche market.

Having a personal concierge available saves employees from taking time off work to run personal errands, and allows them to more fully enjoy their time off. The effective impact on productivity (and reduced stress levels) is a no-brainer. Condominiums, office buildings and membership groups are also seeing the value of adding concierge services to their list of amenities, in an effort to attract members, tenants, or buyers.

While the best corporate markets are in cities with booming economies, any business with a branch near you may require someone local. Your location may lead you to target clients based on local industries, such as filmmaking or high-tech. Because the personal concierge is such a new concept, there are no hard and fast rules. You are free to take your business in any direction you believe there is a market for. In this guide you will learn how to market concierge services to both individuals and corporate clients.

### 1.1.3 Benefits of this Career

*“I just like helping make life easier for people. I also like the thrill of the hunt. So if I am asked to find something, I am just tickled to death when I do. I like giving some folks a sense of independence, and easing the time burden for others.”*

— Jill Burstein, personal concierge

The benefits of a career as a personal concierge are tremendous. In addition to the “cool factor” of working in a new and exciting industry, rubbing elbows with wealthy or powerful clients, and getting treated like a high roller yourself on occasion, here are some of the benefits most commonly associated with this profession.

## **Flexibility**

As a personal concierge you can work from home, scheduling your errands and other work around family life or other commitments. In emergencies you may need to respond to clients quickly, and sometimes you'll have deadlines that require long days. But a career as a personal concierge definitely offers more flexibility than most.

## **Helping People**

How can a powerful executive who makes decisions all day long not know what she wants to give her mother for a birthday gift? It happens, and you are the one who can step in and help. "The most rewarding parts of the job are the relationships with clients I have formed," says Bev Riggins of Midwest Concierge Service.

More than once in this career you'll hear clients tell you that you worked a miracle, that you saved the day, and that they don't know what they would do without you. You will be trusted and appreciated by your loyal clients, and you will see firsthand the difference you make. You will give couples and families time to spend with each other. Your helping hand and gift of time, albeit indirectly, may save marriages, let children feel loved and important, and even save lives by reducing stress.

## **Great Income Potential**

Personal concierges charge hourly rates of anywhere from \$15 to \$85 an hour, and sometimes more. Corporate concierges charge additional fees per employee, and you can earn bonus income through commissions and referral fees from vendors. Once your business is well established you can expect gross revenues of \$50,000 to \$100,000 annually, and if you hire employees and open additional locations, earnings exceeding \$1 million are the established precedent.

## **You Can Start Right Now**

Working as a personal concierge does not require special training or certification. Instead, you'll build on skills you already have. Like other service businesses, your start-up costs are minimal compared to other businesses. You can work from home, and if you have access to your

own computer and cell phone, you already have the equipment you need to get started.

## 1.2 Inside This Guide

The *FabJob Guide to Become a Personal Concierge* is designed to help you launch into your new career by providing industry information, how-to guidelines, helpful hints on finding clients, and advice on starting your own personal concierge service. It will teach you how to take your natural talents of household management and organization, and turn them into a real way to make money.

Following this brief introduction, Chapter 2 goes over *How to Be a Personal Concierge*, breaking down the main tasks you are likely to perform in this career. From shopping, to running errands, to planning parties, to booking contractors, to booking travel, to helping people move to a new town or city, this section has you covered with helpful hints and insider advice.

Chapter 3 (*Developing Your Skills*) is all about those important first steps of preparation: discovering the common skills needed in this business, developing your own skills through research and experience, and considering the schools available if you decide to further your education before setting out on your new career.

Chapter 4 leads you through all the steps necessary in *Starting a Concierge Business*: figuring out how much money you'll need on start up, writing a business plan, choosing a name, and getting legal matters like insurance and business registration arranged. This chapter also includes important information you'll need for setting up your office, keeping track of your business finances, and a look at the subject of franchises.

Chapter 5 (*Running a Personal Concierge Business*) helps you refine your business concept, and figure out how you will operate from day to day. It explains how to do a client consultation, what to include in your contract, and different models for setting your fees (with some real-life examples). It also tells you how to set up strategic partners with vendors and other service providers, how to hire help when you need it, and give you on-the-job strategies for success.

Chapter 6 (*Getting Personal Concierge Clients*) sets you up to land that first client, with techniques to evaluate the local market, choose a niche, and select the services you'll offer. The section also covers developing your website and other marketing tools, three proven ways to use publicity to boost awareness of your business, referrals and word of mouth, networking, and how to target and approach the corporate clients in your area.

The guide concludes with some words of inspiration and a handy list of websites you can use to continue your research. Throughout the guide you will find samples and questionnaires you can adapt for your business, as well as encouragement and ideas from a number of working personal concierges who have kindly shared their advice and experience with you.

The information, resources and advice offered on these pages will save you hundreds of hours of research, so that you can start earning money more quickly. You'll avoid the common pitfalls, and make business decisions like an expert. Get ready, because armed with the inside knowledge this guide provides, you could be landing your first client in a very short time from right now!