



### Personal concierges

If you can't find a personal chef or party planner, call a concierge. No longer appearing exclusively at five-star hotels, concierges are taking their big black books of contacts and going mainstream. This means almost anyone can call their concierge and score seats to a sold-out musical, book travel tickets or arrange for a last-minute baby-sitter.

Karen Marquardt of Holt Renfrew Concierge Services has a hard time describing her job. If you want front-row tickets to Game 7 of the Stanley Cup, Marquardt will call one of her contacts and get you the goods (OK, you might have to settle for second row). If it's a more complicated request—such as a dinner party for 20—she'll act as a personal reference library, digging up the contacts you need. "Basically, I will do anything," Marquardt says. "There's always a way if you're willing to pay." Pay the service providers, that is. Holt's service is free.

Concierge InfoTouche Services Inc. in Montreal gives members (mostly corporations) unlimited access to tourist information, entertainment bookings and extensive event planning. For example, it just orchestrated an elaborate birthday party for one client that involved making a professional video and hauling in popcorn machines. Cost? A mere \$40,000, in addition to the membership fee of \$3,000 a year.

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