



White Paper

# Unmasking our Potential:

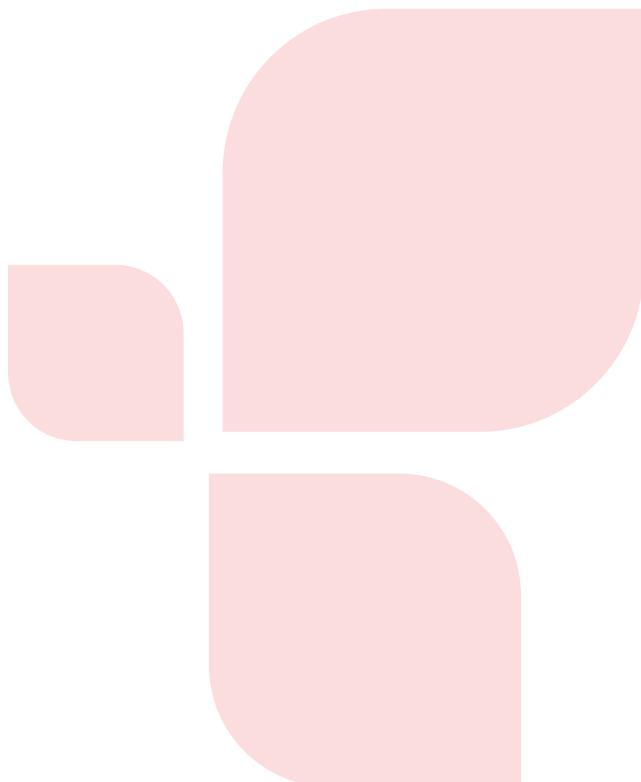
## Reflection on the Concierge Role in the Hospitality Industry

by Jerome Jeannest

# Introduction

Les Clefs d'Or USA (LCD-USA), a chapter of Union International des Concierges d'Hotels, is a worldwide not-for-profit organization composed of forty five countries around the world. Les Clefs d'Or promotes the travel industry and is dedicated to represent and foster education to its professional hotel concierge members. LCD-USA holds a yearly conference that serves as the annual business meeting, sales and marketing forum, highlights features of the destination cities to promote the travel and tourism industry, networking opportunities and educational symposia. This year's theme was "Unmasking our Potential."

Mr. Kirk Kinsell, Chief Executive Officer of Loews Hotels came to the LCD-USA Congress by invitation from Chef Concierge Robert Watson. He was invited to share his opinion and views from an executive standpoint onto the role of the concierge in a world of technology with fast paced actions and need. He also touches on the omni-presence of online travel agents that now offers information and concierge-like recommendations based on travelers and consumer reviews. Mr. Kinsell shared his views and opinions in his talk "Reflection on the Concierge Role in the Hospitality Industry" (July 14th, 2015 at the Les Clefs d'Or USA Congress in New Orleans, LA).



# Reflections on the Concierge Role:

## Make Connections



The best way to achieve any goal is by making connections. We do this by reaching out across departments within our hotels, across functions, across neighborhoods and our communities, and with each other," Kirk Kinsell. Many guests know that to find out about anything the hotel concierge is the best source. For that reason, the concierge must maintain communication across departments, have knowledge of restaurants and other outside amenities, and be aware of events within their communities. The concierge, being an integral part of the hotel, must foster their relationships with colleagues to build strong connections within departments, which in turn provide better internal guest services. They should also cultivate relationships with vendors, restaurant hosts and other gatekeepers of events and venues. Making these connections will help a concierge be helpful, efficient and successful in assisting guests at their hotel.

## Teamwork

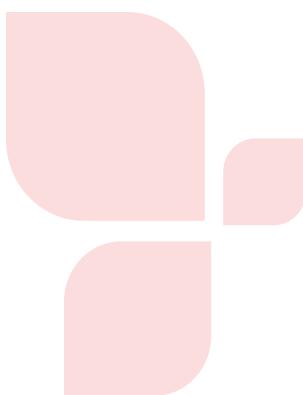
The most valuable player isn't the individual performer, it's the individual who makes the rest of the team better," Kirk Kinsell declares. Often tasked with a variety of arrangements to make, itineraries to prepare, and accommodations to finalize the concierge is only as successful as its team. A group of professional bell persons, valet persons, housekeepers, front desk agents, and other personnel support the concierge's interest in assisting guests of the hotel. Together, a hotel staff working as a team can accomplish so much more than a concierge alone.

It is important to leverage and communicate across the "T." The "T" stands for team and trust. All departments in the hotel are looking to the concierge team for help, guidance and knowledge. Communicating and keeping the team spirit is essential. Team and trust are the ingredients to positive teamwork and spirit within the staff of the hotel. It creates greater efficiency and a sense of belonging. This sense of team and trust also creates longevity of employees within the company. With great team spirit and trust comes greater confidence within the company, leading to greater results and a greater flow of communication with internal staff and guests.

## Develop Skills

If you don't look forward, you're falling back—there is no sitting still. Guests are constantly demanding more in an ever-growing world of easily accessed technology and information. With a continually changing local and global dynamic, competition and technology a concierge need to continually invent and reinvent themselves. It is not sufficient to simply stick to the needs of the day-to-day operations. Concierge must keep interested in new technology, embrace it, and even utilize it as much as possible to enhance guest services and satisfaction.

Past success is no guarantee for future success. Re-invention is the key. A concierge must continue to stay innovative and not limit themselves to the traditional sense of the hotel concierge job description; providing guests with information and advice about locations and services inside and outside of the hotel, providing directions, making reservations or travel arrangements, purchasing tickets, or arranging storage for packages and luggage. A concierge must go above and beyond their traditional roles. This could mean going to the airport to meet a client, providing items or services beyond a guests expectations, or creating an unexpected experience. Providing services outside the anticipated creates lasting relationships and loyalty from guests.



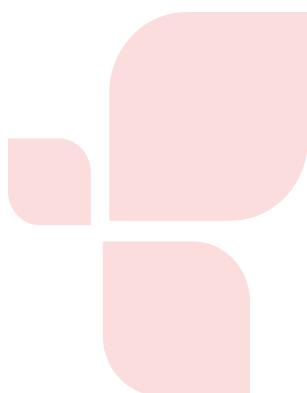
## Expand Knowledge

Knowledge is built by fulfilling surprising and unusual requests over the years. Along their career the concierge will face requests that they would not have imagined or thought to research without the prompting of a guest. The information garnered over the years will only serve to expand a concierge's knowledge. Going to seminars, congresses, and continuing education courses will develop other concierge expertise and knowledge. The concierge can never stop learning, developing, and seeking new information because the guest requests and challenges will never stop either.

You cannot shrink your way to success—there are no shortcuts. One can only get where they want to be through hard work and spending time with guests and colleagues. Mr. Kinsell specifically pointed out that concierges are very loyal to their company and hotels, with very little turnover. Concierge tend to stay and it is this perseverance that the concierge proves their worth and build knowledge. With this longevity and tenacity, the concierge brings success to its department and hotel. In Mr. Kinsell's opinion, there is no other way—spending years and experience behind the desk of the concierge is the only way to a successful concierge career.

## Driving Results is Key

Don't confuse intention for action or results. It is all about performance and keeping your commitments. A concierge is action-driven and result-driven. Therefore making decisions and acting upon them are crucial to a successful concierge and its team. Making projection and having intentions are not cohesive to a productive and efficient day. The thought must be immediately followed by an action or the intention will remain just that. Mr. Kinsell pointed out that one must keep to their promises and ensure the job is done.



# Conclusion

Mr. Kinsell covered aspects of the concierge role within the hotel. He emphasized the importance of making connections and keeping them within the company. He talked of the value of creating and building a strong and structured team. He discussed the importance of staying focused and relevant through education, experience, and staying informed on new technologies. He also pointed out that avoiding shortcuts will give the best results and lead to a prosperous and fulfilling career.

Many travelers book hotels largely with Online Travel Agents (OTAs) and yet, there is a crucial mechanism OTAs do not have over hotel concierge. "Concierges are the masters and creators of dreams come true. They have more contact with the guest than anyone else," according to Kirk Kinsell, "if a guest wants to know anything that is going in or out of the hotel, they ask the concierge."

Mr. Kinsell re-assured the assembly that they are in fact, very safe in their role to the future, "Concierges are the face and brains of the hotel business." He encouraged delegates to remember this, to know in their guts that they are la crème de la crème,



As ambassadors to the world, they can never be replaced by kiosks. Don't worry about that. Not even good front-desk agents can replace a concierge, because they don't have the time to interact on such a personal level, nor do they have the resources or the connections to their communities."

# References

Kinsell, K. (2015). Proceedings from the Les Clefs d'Or USA's 2015 National Congress in New Orleans, Louisiana: Unmasking our Potential. New York, New York: Reflection on the concierge role in the hospitality industry.

# About the Author

**Jerome Jeannest** was born and raised in Medis, a town in France's Cognac region. Jeannest studied at Charente Maritime and earned his degree of Higher Consular certificate in commerce and management.

Jerome began his hospitality career at the Michelin Four Diamond Hotel De Crillon in Paris under the guidance of renowned Chef Concierge Christian Feron. He spent several years at the Hotel De Crillon, starting as a page and leaving as a concierge in 2001. In a prime location near the seat of French government, the Hotel De Crillon afforded Jeannest the opportunity to attend to diplomats and heads of state.

He entered the United States hospitality in 2001 where he joined The St Regis Los Angeles. He was appointed Chef Concierge in August 2002. Through his career, Jerome also worked with Hotel Nikko de Paris, InterContinental Hotel Group, Sofitel Hotel Group, the Palazzo Las Vegas, The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas, The SLS Beverly Hills and currently the Downtown Grand of Las Vegas.

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