



National Association for
Printing Leadership
75 West Century Road
Paramus, NJ 07652
(800) 642-6275
www.napl.org

1999

Vol. 1, No. 3

ON THE JOB

Human Resources Information for the **Graphic Arts**

Personal Concierge Services Check In

Bill in the pressroom left the house with his wife's keys, and now she's stranded. Stephanie in marketing is expecting the phone company at 11:00 a.m. to install a second line in her house. Mark in sales recently relocated to start a new job with the company, and doesn't know of a reputable lawn service to hire.

Recognizing that when weekends and lunch hours are consumed by personal errands, work can suffer, some companies are responding by contracting the services of personal concierges.

One such company is 2 Places at 1 Time Inc., Atlanta. "We provide a lot of home services for clients who travel or work long hours," says company president Andrea Arena. "We do the time-consuming stuff, like waiting at the house for the contractor, cable guy, or housekeeper, hiring reputable vendors, taking the car to the shop, and walking the dog."

"Personal errand service is not a perk limited to executives."

Client firms pay 2 Places at 1 Time based on staffing levels. Staffing fees range based on geography—it's more costly in Los Angeles than in Charlotte.

In return, the Atlanta firm provides on-site staff who are trained and insured. Employees pay by the hour for the service, with fees ranging from \$5 to \$10 an hour. "The hourly fee offsets the staffing fee paid to us," says Arena. "An individual would pay \$25 an hour for the same services."

Many Types of Users

Contrary to popular belief, personal errand service is not a perk limited to executives, but a benefit, like health care, that helps everyone.

"Executives tend to be older, their wives are often home, and their kids are out of the house," says Arena. "Middle managers tend to come from dual-income households, and have small children, so the time pressures are great."

Low-level employees also use the

service, says Arena, who strictly enforces a first-come, first-served policy.

"The guy in the mailroom could take precedence over a senior partner," says Arena. "We don't know what level they are at in the company, and we don't ask."

Although Arena's client base was originally management consulting companies—Arthur Anderson and Ernst & Young—in the past few years, she's recently added software and biotech firms to her client roster. And thanks to a Web-based service to be introduced at the end of the year, Arena will begin marketing her services to smaller companies.

"We plan to provide smaller offices with access to a concierge via the Internet," she says, adding that a price for this service has yet to be determined.

"We created our own electronic tracking system so every time we run an errand, our system spits out a receipt that goes to your email," she says. "Attached to that receipt is a feedback form that allows you to comment on the service."

A Recruiting Tool

In a tight labor market, the corporate concierge is a benefit, along with signing bonuses and stock options, that appeals to corporations as a device to recruit and retain employees. Such a service enables a company to have the most competitive benefits program within its industry.

But when the economy cools, when cost cutting is paramount, or when novel corporate benefits come under scrutiny, a concierge service may look expendable. In 1992, PepsiCo hired its own in-house concierge at its headquarters in Purchase, N.Y. Two years later, it canceled the service. Still, employees don't have it so bad. They rely instead on an on-site store, dry cleaners, and travel agent. ■

