

“May I Help You?”

Why a first-class concierge service is the essence of luxury residences.

Words: Leong Boon Hoe

WITH THE PROLIFERATION of concierge services at condominium projects, dwellers of these high-rise residences have come to expect services that make their lives easier and elevate their lifestyles. However, in the luxury residential sphere, the role of the concierge elevates the idea of service to the nth degree.

Services range from making housekeeping arrangements, transportation, reservations and watering of house plants, to pet feeding, dog

walking as well as yacht and private jet chartering. Hence a luxury residential project becomes more than just about its design and finishes, offering a variable menu of services that includes the warmth of a friendly greeting when tenants and owners return home.

The origins of the concierge may be traced to the medieval Latin word *conservus*, meaning ‘fellow servant’. Others claim that it means ‘keeper of the keys’, as the Middle Ages saw concierges chiefly



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responsible for said keys, as well as being the *comte des cierges* (count of candles) – maintaining the lighting and cleanliness of estates (as well as ensuring the candles – being the only source of illumination – didn’t present a fire risk). In time, this mastery of the domain bestowed them with a keen sense of navigation and deep reservoir of the home’s secrets.

As society came out of the Middle Ages, the concierge’s role moved beyond homes – becoming as important in varied settings, from government offices to even prisons, where they performed wide-ranging duties such as supervising domestic staff to overseeing inmate records. In Paris, particularly, the concierge kept a small apartment on the building’s ground floor and was the point of contact for receiving deliveries and mail, keeping communal areas clean and supervising the comings and goings of its inhabitants and guests. As leisure tourism became more common

This level of sophistication in the discharge of a concierge’s duties also makes them the glue that binds stylish lifestyles together at luxury residences. In an ideal world, the concierge exudes authority, excellent people skills and is able to resolve issues with professionalism and efficiency, improving resident satisfaction and, in turn, property desirability.


In an interview with SC Global, which has developed its reputation as one of the finest developers of luxury accommodation in the region across 25 years, I found that it has successfully imbued a top-level concierge into all its projects. This makes perfect sense for the affluent clientele it serves, who recognise that they are buying into a community as the premium, instead of considering the home as a mere commodity. SC Global’s in-house concierge and property management firm, Seven Palms Resorts Management, continues to maintain the standards, image and quality

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by the late 19th century, the hotel concierge became the all-purpose multilingual personal attendant, greeting guests and recommending local attractions.

But what truly contributed to the rise and global adoption of this profession was the creation of Les Clefs d’Or (known also as The Golden Keys) in 1929. The first such concierge association was formed on 26 October 1929 when Pierre Quentin, concierge at Hôtel Ambassador in Paris and 10 other concierges from the other grand hotels of Paris realised they could operate more effectively as a team rather than individually. By joining forces, they could make their services more useful and indispensable. Today the society’s name is Les Clefs d’Or – Union Internationale des Concierges d’Hôtels. The word ‘concierge’ appears in the name to strengthen the brand recognition of Les Clefs d’Or International as a society of professional hotel concierges. In the present, this association boasts 44 member sections represented in over 50 countries and with close to 4,000 members.

of all its properties. Its concierge teams offer a comprehensive suite of services, taking cues from the British Butler Institute in the UK, which has been engaged by the group in the past decade to provide training.

As the concierge profession matures in Singapore, we can expect more and more property developers to adopt a serious approach to providing quality concierge services in their buildings as a means of product differentiation. Every developer can build with brick and mortar. But the truly outstanding buildings often come with soul in the form of first-class service. I look forward to the day when I step into a luxury development and am greeted by an eloquent “What can I help you with today?” instead of a mere “May I help you?”. 

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