



Ask Gail

by William D. Frye, Ph.D., CHE

Another great article from *The Rooms Chronicle*® the #1 journal for hotel rooms management! ***Important notice: This article may not be reproduced without permission of the publisher or the author.*** College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Niagara University, P.O. Box 2036, Niagara University, NY 14109-2036. Phone: 866-Read TRC. E-mail: editor@roomschronicle.com

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Dear Gail,

Where can we find information about developing a concierge program at our hotel? There are no other hotels in our city that offer concierge service and we have not been able to find anything in writing devoted exclusively to learning the craft.

Dina B.
Augusta, ME

Dear Dina,

The process to becoming a world-class concierge is more of a long-term professional commitment than a passing avocation. Well established concierges are the epitome of the hotel service model, able to deliver the seemingly impossible, exercise the highest level of discretion, and make it all seem effortless. True concierges are well connected, able to call upon an extensive body of knowledge in order to answer questions and fulfill requests, have the temperament to withstand extensive pressure as a result of seemingly impossible expectations emplaced upon them by others, and most importantly, have the personal desire to help other people. Being a concierge is much like being an artist; however, your tools of the trade are not brushes, pencils or clay, they are personal relationships, trust, rapport, and a working knowledge of just about everything any guest could possibly need assistance with. It is artistry in motion and a little bit of science.

The most authoritative written source I can recommend to becoming a concierge is to read the book The Art & Science of the Hotel Concierge: Connecting Guests to Experiences Around the World. Written by veteran concierge Holly Stiel, with Lin Ivce, this 295 page book provides a complete overview of the profession of a hotel concierge, focusing on service issues and opportunities that have shaped the concierge profession. Included are illustrative true stories, immediately implementable tips, and occupancy hazards, collected from concierges and service experts from all over the world. This comprehensive text includes topics such as:

- *The qualities needed to be successful and enjoy one's role as a hotel concierge.*
- *Ways to develop positive relationships both inside and outside the hotel.*
- *Handling guest requests—from the routine to the outlandish—with skill and artistry.*
- *Using creativity to solve problems.*
- *Turning complaints into compliments.*
- *Using today's technology to the fullest to organize the desk and serve guests with a personal touch.*
- *Staying calm under fire.*
- *The benefits of involvement in Les Clefs d'Or and local associations.*

The 2011 book is available from the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute for \$30.95 for AH&LA members and \$60.95 for non-members. To order, visit www.ahlei.org or call 800-752-4567 or 517-372-8800.

Les Clefs d'Or USA is another valuable source of information. Their purpose is to foster the professional development of concierges in the hotel industry by promoting tourism and the highest standards of service for hotel guests. Literally meaning, "keys of gold", Les Clefs d'Or USA members are committed to:

- *Uphold the professional and ethical standards of the association.*
- *Coordinate, promote, and assist the activities and interests of fellow members.*
- *Mentor individuals entering the concierge profession.*
- *Promote and improve the technical skills of the profession.*
- *Foster friendships and communication networks within the USA and abroad.*

Pictured below: Les Clefs d'Or members can be readily identified by their crossed keys lapel pins. Among other requirements, it takes a concierge a minimum of five years service working in a hotel lobby to "earn their keys" and membership in Les Clefs d'Or.



- Respond to the needs of fellow members quickly, courteously, and professionally.
- Uphold the motto, “In Service through Friendship”.

Les Clefs d’Or is the only national association of professional hotel concierges in the United States. Les Clefs d’Or USA has more than 650 members across the United States. Together, members of Les Clefs d’Or USA represent over 100,000 hotel rooms nightly at more than 250 four- and five-star properties across the country. There are currently 36 local concierge associations operating in most of the metropolitan areas throughout the United States.

The conciergerie, with its roots in France, was (and still is, at least in Europe) a largely male-dominated field. Not in the USA, however, where Les Clefs d’Or concierges are 70% female, 30% male. Salaries vary widely from hotel to hotel, and from region to region, between \$20,000 and \$50,000 annually. Their website is www.Lcdusa.org. ✧

(If you have a specific question related to a hotel matter, please email your inquiry for Ask Gail to: editor@roomschronicle.com. We endeavor to answer all questions pertaining to operational matters and management practices but cannot respond to specific inquiries related to a hotel’s financial performance, litigation matters, or complaints received from guests.)