



THE SUPER CONCIERGE

When it comes to getting exactly what you want, without having to lift a finger except to move it a few times over your BlackBerry keys, Indispensable is the worldwide answer. The man providing the global magic is the savvy Concetto Marletta, reports **Scott Adams**.

ALTHOUGH BASED IN LONDON, Concetto Marletta never goes anywhere without his 'little black book', which is the backbone of his luxury concierge company Indispensable. The service can be put into action anywhere, and Marletta can look after the needs of his clients from whatever part of the world they, or he, may be in. "Today's technology allows me to carry all I need for work with me in my pocket," he explains "The basis of my service comes from my long established contacts who can open doors to provide people with precisely what they want, down to the last letter." To access Marletta's talent and know-how it is essential to pay a yearly membership fee. His services are then charged for by the hour.

Marletta can solve the finer points of requests; including elements that perhaps the client hadn't even thought of themselves. Last year, before the World Cup in South Africa, he received a call from a gentleman who was desperate to get tickets to some of the key football matches which had been sold out months before. When Marletta got back to the footy aficionado a few days later, the client was delighted to discover that everything had been taken care of, from the private jet, to the luxury villa complete with butler, chef, 24-hour security and, of course, the coveted tickets to the big games.

What has become the backbone of Indispensable began some 20 years ago when the debonair Italian was a young man working in London's five-star hotel Claridges in Mayfair. His journey into the world of über-luxury changed his life and brought him into contact with many high-profile personalities, including multi-national CEOs, stars of film, music, opera and theatre as well as members of some of the world's most prestigious royal and aristocratic families.

In an amusing anecdote he tells how, while working at Claridges, one of Europe's queens was staying at the hotel. After her departure for the airport Marletta was phoned by her esquire. The man was frantic, explaining that the royal had left something extremely important in the suite she had been occupying. Not wanting to raise the alarm, Marletta went personally to investigate, thinking that perhaps some valuable jewels had been left behind in the safe. The precious item was in fact a plate of sandwiches with the queen's favourite filling which she hoped to enjoy during her flight home. Marletta organised for the sandwiches to be rushed to the airport and were onboard when the plane departed.

THE HIGH-profile guests also discovered very early on that Concerto's personal qualities of sincere warmth, discretion and professionalism were what made their time in the hotel so hassle free. He simply became indispensable to them. The management at Claridges realised the extraordinary talent that the then, 26-year-old Italian had and subsequently created a special role for him, that of Guest Relations Manager.

It was through his work looking after the requirements of the highly discerning guests that Marletta began to compile the information which would go on to become one of the most envied 'black books' anywhere in the world. It originally contained the contacts to get the best tables at exclusive restaurants, hard to get opera tickets, access to private jets and most importantly the trust of the people who could really make doors open.



DORCHESTER COLLECTION

Marletta is so indispensable that he has a unique working arrangement with London's The Dorchester hotel. He has retained his role as Guest Relations Manager and runs his own business.

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Marletta learnt the tricks of his trade working as a concierge in London's best hotels.



If you want front row seats at a Versace haute couture show in Milan, Marletta can make it happen.

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Marletta has even managed to get two seats at the Academy Awards for a wealthy client.

“During that time,” he recalls, “I met a wide cross section of people, but I was always eager to help in whatever way I could.” His affable nature meant that he was just as happy giving a hot shopping-tip to a young couple who had just arrived in London, as he was organising a prestigious private dinner for 10 served with the host’s favourite wines in one of the hotel’s glorious suites.

LITTLE BY little the guests at Claridges came to treat Concetto as their personal concierge and would never make a move without requesting his help or advice. Such is their dedication to this remarkable man that, when he transferred in 1998 to the Mandarin Oriental hotel on Hyde Park in London, many of his clients moved with him so as not to lose his services. The very same happened when he finally took up his present position at The Dorchester in Mayfair. “Some guests have been following me happily from hotel to hotel for some 20 years,” he says.

“Of course, many of the young people who I helped out years ago, with quite simple things, are still with me today. They have moved to greater heights and now have more sophisticated needs, which quite often surpass their immediate requirements while staying at the hotel.

Marletta tells the anecdote of one high-profile client and his fiancé who were soon to be married. Desperate to find the perfect pre-nuptial gift for his beloved, he conferred with Marletta. The client had already lavished his wife-to-be with a sports car, diamonds, designer dresses and much more, and couldn’t imagine what he could give her next. Marletta’s ingenious mind went to work and he came up with the perfect solution. Knowing that the young lady adored Versace’s haute couture, he made a phone call and subsequently presented his client with two front row ‘money can’t buy’ tickets to the designer’s catwalk show in Milan.

His high level of creativity and knowledge has proved an essential tool



Marletta has one of the world's most famous 'little black books' that allows him to look after the needs of his Indispensable clients.

over the years. He explains that the concept of luxury for many people is changing. "Whereas once I would get many requests for very showy experiences, today I find more and more people are looking for a place where they can relax away from the crowds and perhaps get spiritual," he explains. "I've sent clients to Bhutan, Kerala and 'secret islands', where they can unwind or do personalised yoga or meditation courses".

In 2010, after seven years as Head of Client Relations at The Dorchester, the sophisticated Sicilian was beginning to get itchy feet and was wondering what other opportunities and challenges were out there. His work with the hotel's guests had long expanded past in-house requirements. "My work was not just about my clients and The Dorchester anymore," he remarks, "it was also about their families, friends and colleagues." Marletta realised that he had become an important part of these people's lives and decided to start his own concierge company. But when he told the manager of The Dorchester that he planned on leaving, his employer too found him indispensable, and came back with an unusual offer. As a compromise, Marletta

now spreads his time between being Head of Client Relations at The Dorchester and running his own business. The guests at the hotel and his clients are quite often one and the same. So what did he call his new company? Indispensable, of course!

Marletta's business philosophy is simple. He does not mind how demanding a client is, and he thrives on what could be categorised by others as impossible, which is borne out by a story. Earlier this year one of Europe's wealthiest men was keen to attend the Academy Awards ceremony in Los Angeles with his wife. For this prestigious event there are no ticket sales and the only way to get past the red carpet doorman is with an official invitation. Marletta explains that getting the invitations and finding a suite in Los Angeles, when there are no rooms available, required him to extend himself and work almost 24/7. "The studios book out all the best hotels 12 months in advance," he explains. As always, he was eventually able to find accommodation, and two invitations were sent to his clients so that they would be able to live this magical moment.

HIS LATEST project is massive, and

will keep him busy for most of this year.

In late 2010 one of the Middle East's royal families got in touch with him with news that their daughter was getting married. Marletta, after passing on his congratulations, was stunned to discover that the family wanted no one else but him to organise the wedding in its entirety.

"This is of course a massive job, but I love a challenge," he says. His multi-faceted task will include the arrangements for the three-day-long engagement party and particularly all the clothes that the bride-to-be and her fiancé will wear. "I'm looking at using about 10 haute couture designers from around the world for the various dresses and ensembles," he confides. "The young lady has requested that all her outfits be original pieces, which have never been seen before anywhere, not even on a catwalk." The wedding, which is scheduled for later in the year, will also require more clothes for the bridal party, a spectacular wedding dress and a multitude of arrangements for the ceremony and post-nuptial celebrations, a cruise and the honeymoon. Will Concetto Marletta be able to come up with the goods? Of course! To date he has never disappointed a client. ■