

Putting the customer first

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A personal concierge service might be a relatively new concept for the North East's public, but one Gosforth business is certainly making waves in these uncharted waters.

Left the suit at the dry cleaners? Stuck on a choice of gift? Always wanted a minimal fuss holiday? Nothing in the fridge at home? Not got enough time on your hands to do it all? Well now you have!

Clare Rutherford, managing director of Regalo Concierge Service, can help you with all of the above and much more. Based in Gosforth, she enjoys helping people their day to day tasks, people who sometimes find they need an extra helping hand.

The Idea originated through Clare's vast experience as a member of one of British Airways' long haul cabin crews, which naturally involved looking after other people's needs and well being.

BA certainly recognised Clare's ability to display high levels of customer service and promoted her to the Royal and VIP special flights team. Armed with this experience, Clare set about researching the idea and after 18 months, in September 2004, Regalo Concierge Service was officially born.



Clare has found her first year in business more interesting and exciting than she originally anticipated. She compares her first year to that of a roller coaster ride; with an initial rush at the beginning and then steady increase to where she is today. Longevity is what Clare wants for business. However 'concierge' is a relatively new concept for people in the North East and selling the idea has been Clare's biggest hurdle. The North East is still far behind places like London and New York who have already bought into this lifestyle idea. Nevertheless, Clare states she "knows it works and sees it working". It won't be long now before the people of the North East completely embrace the idea of having, in effect their own personal assistants.

Setting up on your own can be hard work and Clare eats, sleeps and breathes Regalo. With a luxury product Clare has to keep on top of what's happening locally and in the economy to stay one step ahead. Leaving the financial security of a full time job to follow a dream has to be Clare's biggest sacrifice, but she has now gained more with a successful business and being based back in her home town of Newcastle. The qualities that have got Clare this far are her customer service background, organizational skills, resilience and the fact that she is determined to go that extra mile to make sure her customers have a memorable experience. Clare also completed two

business courses before she started, which prepared her and helped form her business plan.

Flying with BA also gave her an opportunity to shadow other concierge in America and Asia in her leisure time after long haul flight – this proved a valuable experience. Word of mouth is Clare's biggest business generator, supported with well chosen publicity and advertising. This is perfect for the soft sell approach that Clare favours – she dreads to think of picking up the phone and starting to cold call.

Aspirations for the future include building on the existing personal concierge service before looking at the corporate market. This idea would allow business to hire Clare to arrange holidays, parties, or even to boost morale of employees by giving them the gift of time. However, she will never offer something she could not fulfill to the best of her ability.

Clare's greatest success since setting up last September is the fact that she is still here and she is definitely here to stay.

So next time you are stuck for time remember Regalo Concierge Service – it's not just for the rich and famous!