

THE FIXER!

What is it like doing high end luxury events? What does a concierge company do? *Judith Mwobobia* finds out from Irine Kasyoka, the proprietor of The Lady Concierge.

PHOTO: COURTESY

Irine Kasyoka may be just 30, but she has years of business experience in her bag. The founder of The Lady Concierge Company comes across as a calmly confident woman raring to go and sure of her brand. Already making waves in the world of luxury events and concierge, she is not about to stop. On a warm balmy morning, we sat down over ice-cream as she explained what her company was all about.

I run a five year old Concierge company. It basically caters to wealthy, demanding, high-end clientele. Our work is to make the lives of our clients simpler by being their social personal assistants and fixers on a daily basis. In the course of our tasks, we discovered a delivery gap on planning of bespoke high-end events thus the conception of our company's event chapter.

The concierge side of the business can get pretty interesting. I have gotten all manner of requests; from paying bar tabs when the client overspends and has no spare cash around, putting them into cabs to get them safely home, helping wives mask the fact that they can't really cook when mum-in-laws come visiting, bailing people out of jail, handling affairs gone wrong, writing political speeches, among others. We are your quintessential fixers.

I am on call 24 hours a day. Some clients put us on retainer while walk-ins pay in advance or put up a deposit before a service is rendered. I have an all-female staff of five. The nature of our job needs attention to detail, great natural instincts and a great personality. These qualities I think are better honed in women hence, the all women team.

The need to branch into high end, spare-no-cost event planning came about three years

“Gaining the client's absolute trust is a challenge. And once you have it, they want exclusivity such that they don't want you to advertise your services. This means we can't do any marketing and that is a challenge to the business

ago and since we already had a ready market in the clients we catered to on a daily basis, it took off almost instantly. From weekend to weekend, we plan birthday parties both adult and child-themed, usually with a twist here and there, where the client either needs said party held out of town or an entire club leased out for the festivities.

We plan a bachelor or bachelorette party for a person in high office who would rather keep these plans confidential. We host and coordinate dinners for business entities as well as do the odd Embassy or political affiliate dinner where protocol must be observed. We plan destination weddings for expatriates or Kenyans travelling home only for the duration of their wedding. We get requests to plan high teas, baby showers and bridal showers by busy but socially invested women. We take on cooperate dinners and product launches too.

We sign confidentiality agreements with our clients on what we can and cannot disclose about their status, earnings, any sightings or information we are made privy to, whilst we serve them, as well as photography permissions.

One great thing about my job is the travelling, but my ultimate joy is seeing the expression on a client's face as they watch an event they entrusted to us unfold. That moment tends to overwhelm any

planner who is invested in their clients' events interests.

My first client as an event planner was a politician. The assignment was a dinner in honour of the Deputy President three years ago. The event was such a success that no one could guess it was our inaugural task into event planning. In all truth, it didn't dawn on me the actual significance or the magnitude of the assignment till a couple of weeks after the event.

I lost the battle on work-social life balance. I am pretty much all about my work. I can afford the privilege because I am a single girl. My mum has been my greatest cheerleader and mentor. She is my voice of direction, caution and rebuke for me as a woman and a business person. My elusive downtime is spent gardening, reading, journaling or travelling.

My personal principle is that a woman should be two things; who and what she wants to be. There is nothing more freeing than living out your existence by your own rules.

Advice to anyone afraid of getting into business? Take the plunge. You just may surprise yourself at the yards you cover. Either way, swim or sink, you'll be miles ahead of the onlooker. ■

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