

At Your Service

Corporate concierge Andrea Arena earns big bucks by sweating the small stuff



JUST A GOFER? Arena replies: "I'll answer to anything, as long as the clients keep calling"

ANDREA ARENA has been called many things—a gofer, a little elf, even “a wife with no strings attached.” She prefers “concierge” but is quick to add: “I’ll answer to anything, as long as the clients keep calling.”

And call they do. Arena’s Atlanta errand-running service, 2 Places at 1 Time, has grown to 41 offices with 63 employees across the U.S. and Canada. With clients such as Deloitte & Touche and Motorola, revenues hit \$5 million last year, up from about \$3.1 million in 1998. That’s big money, considering that Arena’s specialty is sweating the small stuff. Her concierges take care of everything from the mundane—grocery shopping, taking the car for a tune-up—to the bizarre, such as the time an employee picked up chilled fertility drugs from a doctor and raced them to an executive who was ovulating. “Our clients entrust us with everything,” the 33-year-old former hotel concierge says.

Such services are fairly common today. But they weren’t in 1991, when Arena scraped together \$5,000 and launched 2 Places. After two years as a banker, she knew how killer hours left little time for personal chores. Meanwhile, corporate downsizing was putting more demands on workers. A few local errand services targeted individuals, but no one was going after the corporations themselves. In 1993, Arena landed her first big contract, at Arthur Andersen’s Atlanta office, and her client list has been growing ever since. She charges \$6,000 a month for a full-time, in-house concierge.

Much of Arena’s current success stems from record low unemployment, which has led employers to offer novel perks. As the market has gotten hotter, so has the competition. Arena, who has financed her company’s growth through cash flow, remains unfazed.

In April, she inked her biggest deal yet—a contract with Ceridian Corp., the nation’s largest provider of employee-assistance programs, to market her services. “Andrea’s a pioneer in the industry,” says Ronnie Bragen, Ceridian’s manager of work/life products. Nine of Ceridian’s clients have already signed on. If it keeps up, Arena may have to become a client herself.

—ECHO MONTGOMERY GARRETT



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