

Providing a Royal Airport Travel Experience

An Interview with Ron Gorfinkel,
Founder, Royal Airport Concierge Service

EDITORS' NOTE Born and educated in Israel, Ron Gorfinkel moved to Washington, D.C. in 1998 to assist with governmental security projects. He has been involved with several business development efforts, and for a period of time was a principal in a regional security consulting company. Gorfinkel and his business partner Raphael Cattan entered the high-end travel service and support business in 2006 with the creation of Royal Airport Concierge Service.

COMPANY BRIEF Royal Airport Concierge Service (www.isroyalusa.com) was established in 2006 to assist high-end travelers with the challenges of increasing airport complexities and overcrowding brought about by post-9/11 security needs. Their current clientele come from all sectors including corporate, private, and entertainment, as well as those seeking first-class support. The mission of the company is to provide a seamless travel experience for clients unaccustomed to waiting in long lines or enduring crowds and airport chaos. Royal Airport Concierge Service assures personalized, 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week support to accommodate the travel needs of its clientele and has representatives at major airports around the world to provide support services such as transportation, luggage handling, and local concierge assistance.

How was Royal Airport Concierge Service conceived?

I come from a protective security background where, if you find yourself actually facing a problem, you have already failed. A lot of advance work and preparation were required before an event or before a person arrived in order to eliminate any surprises. I took my experience from this world and brought it into the travel service world. I prepare at that level of detail for people who are looking for high-end travel concierge service at the airports. The goal is to provide our clients with a civil experience at airports in the U.S. and worldwide.

How do you structure the experience you're offering your clients?

We start with offering transportation to the airport. Although we subcontract this, we coordinate everything. As a one-stop shop, we're going to take our clients from the door of the hotel in New York, for example, all the way to the door of the hotel in Dubai. So the clients only have to deal with us.

Our greeters arrive at the airport a good



Ron Gorfinkel



Raphael Cattan

two hours before clients for two reasons: to make sure that the clients are really confirmed on the flight and to make sure they have seat assignments. They meet the clients right at the curb and the clients will then only have to deal with our agents. The porter unloads the bags from the car, checks IDs, and then takes the bags straight to check-in. The boarding card has already been secured, so very quickly the clients are escorted through security, to the lounge, and to the gate for boarding. We make sure that everything is OK each step of the way.

At the other end of the flight, our representative will be waiting at the gate. If there is a connecting flight, we inform the airline's personnel for the connecting flight about the clients that we're looking after so the clients can have the best chance at making the connection if time is really short. If there are any problems, we handle them. But the whole idea is to make sure that there are no problems during travel.

When the clients reach their destination airport, we are there to escort them. Everything happens in the background for the clients. The clients don't have to stand next to the carousel waiting for luggage. We collect it and put it in the car with a driver who already knows their final destination. Everything is smooth so there is no drama.

Is there a primary focus on the corporate market, or do you also serve the private individual traveler?

We're targeting the high-end leisure, corporate, entertainment, and government markets as well as families. You'd be surprised, but when a family is traveling with children, they often need someone to assist them. But the majority of the clients are from the corporate and high-end leisure markets.

How do you promote and market the brand?

We understand that the best marketing is great customer satisfaction – that is the most important for us. We do not market via the newspaper or through ads, because our service is not for everyone. We target the people who are assisting the client – the chief of staff, the personal assistant, the secretary, the travel agent, the travel coordinator, or the in-house travel agency – and build trust with them by acting as the part of their team with a long arm at the airport and a concern for their boss that is no less than their own. We strive to be part of their team and to operate as their local representative at airports worldwide.

Is this a membership-based service or is it based on individual trips?

There is no membership fee. It is based on individual trips, or we'll work out a package price for clients planning to take a number of flights over a certain period of time.

As the business has grown, has your role changed or evolved, and is it challenging to be involved in all aspects?

I used to know every client's name and background. Unfortunately, and I really mean that, I don't have the chance to know all of the clients as well as I used to. My role as a CEO is to put a vision out there and make sure that good business practices are implemented around this vision. Today, when someone is asking about VIP service, about airport meet-and-greet, or about airport assistance, our name is there. So what we need to do now is to make sure the business practices are working and that we understand the needs of the people that we're working with.

People are traveling 24 hours a day, seven days a week. How challenging is it to turn off the business? Can you ever get away from it?

I love what we do. It's 24/7 and we operate 24/7 across all different time zones. But technology has brought a great value into what we're doing. During any 24 hours, we have people departing and landing in all areas of the world. We have a file that we're updating on a constant basis on each client. We can go online 24 hours a day and see the service taking place in any part of the world. So that's great, and of course, the BlackBerry is God's gift for communications. My partner in this business is also a gift. Raphael is very committed. We're both young and energetic. There is no limit on our hours, and for us, 3 AM is just another time of the day. ●