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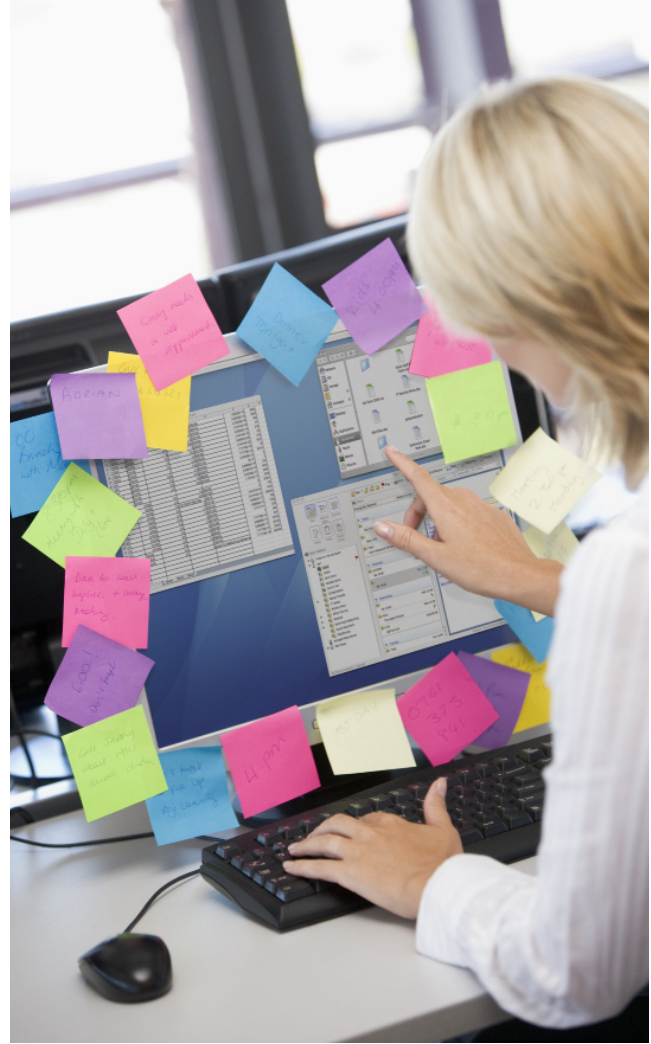
Pick up our June “**Know Your Worth**” issue for advice on:

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WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY CONCIERGE

PERSONAL CONCIERGE, CHEF AND OTHER ASSISTANT SERVICES HELP PROFESSIONALS KEEP A WORK-LIFE BALANCE – AND THEIR SANITY.

BY DEBRA LIPSON

Pick up the dry-cleaning, drive the kids to practice, cook dinner, walk the dog, shop for groceries, exercise, clean the house. The professional woman's to-do list is ever expanding, while simultaneously decreasing her free time. How can you juggle a career, family and personal life?

For some, the answer lies within local personal assistant services. Far beyond a babysitter coming in for a night or housekeeper stopping by once a week, these figures help organize your life into manageable compartments.

Concierge companies offer a wide range of services and supply time-ravaged clients. Jancy Walker, founder of Chicago's Girl on the Go (www.chicagosgirlonthego.com), provides clients with anything from



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"TODAY'S WORKING WOMAN IS STRETCHED SO THIN. WE ALLEVIATE THE HEADACHE OF THE PERSONAL 'TO DO'S' THAT WEIGH SOMEONE DOWN."

**Pam Sherman, founder,
Chicago Anytime Assistants**

running errands (\$35/hour) and home organization (\$40-\$50/hour) to house sitting and child watching (both \$100/hour). "My job is simple," she says. "Save people time on things they don't want or don't have time to do."

Maximizing free time is key at Chicago Anytime Assistants (www.chicagoanytimeassistants.com), another concierge service targeted to aid hectic, professional lifestyles. "Today's working woman is stretched so thin, with endless commitments to work, family and friends," adds founder Pam Sherman. "We alleviate the headache of the personal 'to do's' that weigh someone down so they can focus on what's important to them."

Ms. Sherman's business includes personal concierge, errands and moving assistance as well as household management services in 10- and 20-hour bundles (\$35/hour). Kimberly Wood, a partner at US Leader – Implemented Consulting and a Chicago Anytime Assistants client for several years, explains that she and her husband travel extensively for work, leaving little time to restock the kitchen or drop off dry cleaning. With the help of Ms. Sherman, "We can relax and enjoy ourselves on the rare times we're home instead of taking off work when we need repairs or other tasks done," she says.

Of course, those groceries aren't going to cook themselves. Personal chef and meal delivery services such as EatFit Chicago (www.eatfitchicago.com), Home Cooked Catering (www.homecookedcatering.com) and Plated Creations (www.platedcreations.com) solve this problem. By stocking fridges with healthy, pre-prepared meals, families can dine and spend time together knowing they're consuming nutritious food. "I work full-time and it's a lifesaver knowing I have healthy meals in my fridge," attests Melva Cohen, a physician and EatFit Chicago client for two years. "Having meals delivered to my home means I don't have to worry about preparing a meal in the evening, nor do I have to take out unhealthy fast food."

Rounding out the little black book of professional helpers are more focused services like dog walking. Chicago Dog Walkers (www.chicago-dogwalkers.com), for example, covers Rogers Park to Streeterville for \$14 an hour. "Our services help balance an individual's social, professional and home life," says founder Marc Matlin. "We give peace of mind."

With our planners overflowing and to-do lists seemingly endless, personal concierge services, meal delivery and other businesses reduce stress and let us check off one more thing on that list. "At the end of the day, it's all about prioritizing," adds Ms. Sherman. "It's more important to prepare for a work presentation or spend time with friends and family than it is to be waiting at home for Comcast. But it still all has to get done." ■

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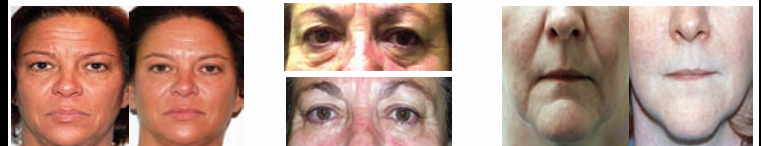


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