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High flier's new job is to save clients' time

Mariella swaps the boardroom for organising lives

By JONATHAN RENNIE

A FORMER corporate bigshot has turned her back on the boardroom to help other people run their lives.

Mariella MacLeod, 41, who was marketing director at a major fashion label, has given it all up to launch her own concierge business.

The concept, already huge in the USA, sees Mariella and her team take care of aspects of their clients' personal lives, whether tidying the living-room or buying a car.

But unlike other services, where the fee is dependent upon the task, Mariella's clients pay per hour, so if it takes two hours to tile a bath-



Who wants to take a day off work waiting for the fridge to arrive?

room or update an iPod, the charge is the same.

But jobs can be much more complicated.

Mariella has just project managed a house renovation for one client and organised a holiday for another - from booking the flights to packing the toothbrush.

Based in Bearsden, her firm Dickory Doc counts politicians as well as professional footballers among its customers.

Mariella, who used to head Malta's Junior Chamber of Commerce, said: "The idea of the concierge business isn't



■ Mariella knows people don't like mundane chores

Picture: Andy Buchanan

new. It is well established in North America and in London.

"I'm originally from Malta and had never really seen the need for the service - until I moved here four years ago.

"In Malta, most people stay with their parents until they are much older, the average age is 36. In Britain it is 24.

"So instead of having a family to help you with things,

many people are living alone and working all day so are unable to carry out tasks.

"Waiting for a fridge to arrive means taking a day off work. Who wants to waste a day's holiday doing that?"

In the US, membership of groups such as the National Association of Professional Organizers has increased 10-fold to more than 1100 mem-

bers in less than a decade, and the concept has filtered down into other areas.

The Royal Bank of Scotland offer a "PA" with certain accounts - a 24-hour-a-day service for organising things such as birthday presents and buy concert tickets.

Mariella said: "It is a matter of time before concierge services really take off here."