

Suddenly he thinks
he's a sunbeam



Ben Elliot, seated, with the Quintessentially team, from left, Kate Hagar, Luca Del Bono, Samantha Would, Lucia van der Post, Aaron Simpson and James Reatchious

First-class fixers

What to do if you're rich enough for a gilded life but far too busy to organise it? Simple: join a club that takes care of all the tricky details for you. By Celestria Noel. Photograph by Andrew Hayes-Watkins

Lifestyle-management companies began life in America but have taken hold in this country over the past few years. For a price they will take on all your personal admin, leaving you free either to work or play. They will stay in to receive deliveries, deal with plumbers or emergencies, remember birthdays, buy presents, organise parties and holidays, and perform unusual services, such as getting a client entered in the world poker championships. A typical member might be a City type or perhaps an American relocating to London; these services are increasingly used by companies as a perk or incentive for senior executives to relocate.

The first to enter the field was Ten UK, which last month swallowed up two of its rivals, Liberate and Entrust, to become the biggest player in the corporate market. The latest newcomer is Quintessentially, launched a year ago. According to Ben Elliot, co-founder

and marketing director, Quintessentially aims to offer members something extra – no less than the best of everything. He is the sort of well-connected golden boy – think Mr Darcy or maybe Flashman – whose charm and confidence will either make you swoon or feel quite sick. And his social reach is impressive: his mother, Annabel, is Camilla Parker Bowles's sister; he moves in high society, but has also been linked to TV presenter Cat Deeley.

Elliot is using every weapon in his considerable armoury to persuade us that we all need to buy into his vision and share his address book. After an hour or two with him you can quite happily believe that Quintessentially is indeed essential. So far 2,000 members have signed up for the service. They include the Irish fashion designer Louise Kennedy and Puff Daddy. Many are from the USA or Europe.

Away from the charm, though, what does this company – which is part club, part magazine –

have to offer? Is it just another bolt-on status symbol for the very spoilt who cannot organise their own lives? Elliot says that while it is aimed at the money rich, time poor, Quintessentially is not the same as other lifestyle-management companies. 'At £400 [a year] we are a quarter the price of some of them, and we can save our members money by offering them a huge range of benefits. We are not trying to offer the most expensive but the best – we have found some wonderful tea, for instance, but in the grander scheme of things also saved a huge amount of money for a group travelling to Parrot Cay.'

The Quintessentially team includes Aaron Simpson, the managing director, Lucia van der Post, the editorial director, and James Reatchious, who deals with corporate membership. Financial backing is in place with Dresdner Kleinwort Wasserstein and two subsidiaries of GUS (Great Universal Stores). The club offers a concierge service and a