



7 THINGS EVERY ASSISTANT NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT CHAUFFEURED SERVICES

Introduction: Create Value to Make a Difference

For your director, you are the difference maker.

“As an [executive] assistant, you know that you are managing the life of someone else,” says Melba Duncan, author of *The New Executive Assistant* and president of the Duncan Group. “Your role is to put out fires, fill the gaps, anticipate the executive’s needs, and exercise judgment based on those needs.”¹

You provide solutions and show plenty of good judgment, and those skills are essential when making your director’s travel arrangements.

Every time your director travels, you have the opportunity to boost your director’s confidence in you. “Once confidence is established,” notes Robert Pozen, author of *Extreme Productivity*, “[the CEO] should go to great lengths to support and retain such an assistant, who is crucial to being productive.”²

For Duncan and Pozen, a good assistant creates value through good judgment and reliability—and neither considers the executive assistant’s ability to save a few bucks here and there. How come?

Because the cost of saddling your director with an unreliable car service is simply astronomical.

Follow these seven steps to confirm that you’re one of your director’s most valuable assets.

¹ Nicole Torres, “[What Executive Assistants Know About Managing Up](#),” *Harvard Business Review*, December 2014.

² Robert Pozen, “[Managing Yourself: Extreme Productivity](#),” *Harvard Business Review*, May 2011.

#1 Make Informed Decisions Quickly

Not all black car companies are created equal.

Some cater to members of the C-Suite. Others cater to the party crowd. When it's time to select a new chauffeur for black car services, start with your employer's preferences for car type: town car, limo, or SUV. Then determine whether your director prefers:

- a just-the-facts chauffeur, or
- someone able to answer questions about local sports teams, nearby music venues, or dining and shopping options close to their hotel.

Check the reviews of local vendors to narrow your choices, and then dial the number.

The telephone is going to be the most efficient media platform for gathering the information you need.

Five minutes with either the owner or the receptionist will allow you to ensure a solid match between your employer's expectations and the vendor's range of services.

Use the questions on p. 9 to drive this conversation.



#2 Ensure Safe Passage

When you select a car service, your director's life is in the hands of someone you've selected. **It's your responsibility to have a detailed understanding of the car inspection process of prospective vendors.**

Here's a list of items to listen for and, if one or more go unnoted, ask why. If multiple items go unnoted, move onto the next prospect.

At select black car companies:

- Vehicles are inspected daily and subject to routine maintenance and cleaning.
- The chauffeur carries a commercial driver's license and is responsible for:
 - administering a 30-point checklist, designed by the Department of Transportation, to evaluate the safety of the vehicle, and
 - ensuring the cleanliness of the vehicle, ahead of the pick-up of the first client and all subsequent clients.

For alternative transportation services (ATS), including Uber and Lyft, drivers conduct their own vehicle inspections—which, apparently, include neither a mechanical inspection nor a cleanliness inspection.



DID YOU KNOW?

A recent study of vehicle cleanliness found rideshare cars (e.g., Uber, Lyft, Sidecar) to be 35,000 times more germier than a toilet seat.

“In our rideshare vehicles,” researchers noted, “the window buttons were the worst”: more than 5 million colony-forming units of bacteria per square inch.³

In the event of an automobile safety recall, black car services can respond immediately either by a visit to the dealer or by taking the car out of service. Select ATS companies embrace a policy of buyer beware.

“Uber and Lyft have the ability to have zero recalled cars on their platforms,” said Jason Levine, executive director of the Center of Auto Safety. “They both claim to be technology companies yet refuse to use that technology to take this obvious step to decrease the danger to their drivers and customers from unrepaired recalls.”⁴

Risk assessment can be difficult. Sometimes, though, it's not difficult at all.

³ “Driving with Germs: An Analysis of Germs Across Ridesharing Vehicles, Taxis, and Rental Cars,” *Netquote*, accessed August 17, 2019.

⁴ “Center for Auto Safety Calls on Uber, Lyft, Juno, and Via to Stop Using Recalled Cars,” *Center for Auto Safety*, August 13, 2019.

#3 Attend to the Details

Key facts of interest:

- A major U.S. airlines recently cancelled nearly 4,000 flights in a single month.⁵
- Uber drivers are not permitted to set up scheduled rides from the airport.⁶

If your director travels regularly, chances are slim that they will arrive as scheduled at every destination this year. If you attend to the details, you allow your director to attend to business.

High-end concierge services monitor flight delays and make adjustments to pick-up times, as needed. (Some charges may apply.)

They understand that forces beyond your control can make Plan A untenable. They also make it their responsibility to carry out Plan B, and to be in touch with you, and to make your director's travel experience as friction-free as possible.



#4 Ensure Comfort & Productivity

When your director slides into the spacious rear seat of a blacked-out SUV, and the cup holder already contains a chilled, glistening bottle of their favorite water, they will recognize once again your value to the company.

Leg room corresponds with head room, and head room corresponds with mental focus: the more head room your director has, the better equipped they'll be to produce more value for the company.

(Cont'd)

⁵ Chris Loh, "[American Airlines Cancelled Almost 4,000 Flights In June](#)," *Simple Flying*, July 14, 2019.

⁶ "[Schedule a ride](#)," *Uber*, accessed August 28, 2019.

⁷ Daniel Goleman, "[The Focused Leader](#)," *Harvard Business Review*, December 2013.

4 Ensure Comfort & Productivity *(cont'd)*

“Any business school course on strategy,” writes Daniel Goleman, author of *Leadership: The Power of Emotional Intelligence*, “will give you the two main elements: exploitation of your current advantage and exploration for new ones.”

Travel represents a break from the routines of home and office and, in turn, can foster opportunities for exploration. “To sustain the outward focus that leads to innovation,” Goleman notes, “[leaders] need some uninterrupted time in which to reflect and refresh our focus.” The right car, with the right amenities, can deliver just what your director needs to refresh and refocus.



#5 Invest in Security

Trust is a basic human condition. Still, it's better to be safe than sorry, so it's smart to rely on agencies that provide certifications and seals of approval.

Select black car companies vet their employees through comprehensive background investigations. Industry standards for drivers continue to rise, with detailed training in car maintenance, defensive driving techniques, and discretion. These types of companies also screen their drivers for drug and alcohol use.

The chauffeur industry understands the need to offer unique value to its clients. “Encourage and incentivize chauffeurs to get security guard and emergency medical certifications,” advises Martin Romjue, for *Luxury Coach & Transportation*, a leading trade magazine.⁸ Such training can be ongoing, too.

⁷ Daniel Goleman, “[The Focused Leader](#),” *Harvard Business Review*. December 2013.

⁸ Martin Romjue, “[Award Winners Create Practices That Could Work For You](#),” *Luxury Coach & Transportation*, April 24, 2019. Photo credit: “2015 GMC Yukon Denali” by AlBargan is licensed under CC BY-ND 2.0.

#6 Maintain Reputations & Appearances

Physical safety is the first priority, but also consider the safety of your director's reputation. Drivers for select companies understand the imperative of confidentiality, as well as the importance of professional attire: black pants, black jacket, white shirt, and appropriate necktie, for starters. You want your selection of car and driver to reflect well upon your director and your company, especially in the event that your director's hosts are curbside when the car arrives.

**“The better part of valour is discretion.”
-Shakespeare's Falstaff**

Top-quality chauffeurs know that their discretion is essential. Many vendors are familiar with the virtues of signing a nondisclosure agreement and are happy to do so upon request.

Once you settle upon a particular vendor, settle upon a particular driver—most small firms can readily accommodate this request. Providing your director with the same driver for each trip to Cleveland, for example, increases the opportunities for personal attention, limits the number of contacts you have within an organization, and helps ensure sustained discretion.

Select black car companies also understand the value of concierge services for the duration of your director's visit. Knowledgeable drivers, can, for example, deliver groceries to your director's hotel.

#7 One Good Turn Deserves Another

When your director indicates that their driver delivered top-quality service, be certain to let the vendor know. Company owners regularly share such praise with their drivers, and those gestures provide extra motivation to the driver the next time they pick up your director.



“Highlighting an employee’s strengths can help generate a sense of accomplishment and motivation,” notes Christine Porath, the author of *Mastering Civility: A Manifesto for the Workplace*.

“67% of employees whose managers focused on their strengths were fully engaged in their work, as compared to only 31% of employees whose managers focused on their weaknesses.”⁹

Show your executive that you understand the importance of relationships. Find a company that regards this assignment not as a one-time transaction, but as an introduction to a prospective, long-term client. Once you establish such a relationship in one city, you can ensure comparable services in other cities by asking for a referral to affiliate concierges.

⁹ Christine Porath, “[Give Your Team More-Effective Positive Feedback](#),” *Harvard Business Review*, October 25, 2016.

Conclusion: Make a Difference

Provide Value, Secure Advantage

When it comes to chauffeur services, provide your director with comfort, safety, reliability, and discretion.

Arrange travel conditions to allow your director to develop new strategies to the advantage of your company.

Key Questions for Success

1. Please tell me about your screening process for hiring drivers.
2. What can you tell me about your vehicle requirements?
3. If my client's flight is delayed, what is your process for ensuring a timely pick-up?
4. Can you have particular food and drink items available for the pick-up of my client?
5. Can I request a driver with emergency medical certification?
6. What is your policy on disclosure of client information for chauffeurs and office staff?
7. What is the best way for me to provide positive feedback for a job well done?

For More Information

To learn more about best practices in the chauffeur services industry, contact Cleveland Corporate Limousine at 855.867.2270 or clevelandcorporatelimo.com.

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