

# Local Business

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## TRENDSETTER

# Crew Concierge serves workers aboard ships

David Hirsch of Wellington has found niche, supplying needed items for the staff.

By Rebecca Piccaro  
South Florida News Service

When David Hirsch of Wellington worked as a crew member on board a cruise ship for months at a time, he had no place to buy the things he needed.

"There are times when I'd run out of shampoo or soap, or maybe I'd want to grab a six-pack of Coke to last through the cruise, and I didn't have the opportunity to get off the ship," he said.

In early 2000, Hirsch decided to take his experience living onboard and turned it into an informal crew distribution business inshore. A few years later, he officially launched Crew Concierge to supply cruise ships with items the crew would need while living onboard — anything from food to cleaning detergent and toothpaste.

Hirsch's company has grown since it started in 2005, when he used to load the cargo into his car and drive it down to the port. Now, he has trucks that distribute containers around the world, his company services an average of 10 to 17 ships a week and staff has just about doubled in the past year.

Hirsch started out by taking orders online and distributing them with the help of his wife, his folks and his in-laws. It was a team effort to load up his car and distribute the orders down to the Port of Miami.

He now has seven full time employees and two part-timers and serves a total of 40 ships each year. Most request a new stock of supplies every week, depending on the season. Last year, Hirsch said Crew Concierge made about \$2.3 million in gross sales, and he anticipates this year's income to be about \$3.2 million.

And if all goes well, Crew Concierge, which is quickly outgrowing its warehouse space in Pompano Beach, soon will be supplying a pilot ship for the Carnival Cruise Lines. That may double the number of ships Hirsch and his staff service.

"This is a great business to be in, especially being a former crew member," Hirsch said. "I wish I had this when I was onboard the ships, so we're making it happen for them."

Hirsch's original plan was to take online orders from individual crew members. But he soon scrapped the idea. He persuaded major cruise lines to set up a crew store on the ships, and he would supply to them in bulk.



James Labossiere (right), director of operations at Crew Concierge, started working with founder and CEO David Hirsch (left) two years ago. Since then, he has seen the warehouse space fill up and the staff just about double as more cruise lines have contracted for their services. REBECCA PICCARO/SOUTH FLORIDA NEWS SERVICE

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Cruise lines like Royal Caribbean and Celebrity Cruises were some of Hirsch's first customers. Azamara Club Cruises joined just last year and started making space for the crew stores with Crew Concierge as the sole supplier.

"The hardest part for a ship to bring on the crew store is to allo-

cate the space for it," Hirsch said.

Aside from supplying the crew stores, Hirsch takes on special orders from the crew every once in a while. For example, the company recently sent out shipments with the unlocked iPhone 6, TV sets, game consoles, pool tables and pingpong tables.

The ship owns and names the store, and crew members manage the store, opening it a few hours a day.

James Labossiere, director of operations at Crew Concierge, said Hirsch has found a gap in service, and business will keep growing as cruise lines add new ships. More ships means more crew stores will pop up, he said.

"The cruise industry is growing every year," Labossiere said. "New ships are coming out every year."

## SPONSORED CONTENT NEWSMAKERS & SHAKERS

### JOHN BOWERS

John Bowers is a Commercial Lender at 1st United Bank, responsible for Commercial Credit Production throughout Palm Beach County with an emphasis on Commercial Real Estate and Association Lending. A recent graduate of Leadership West Palm Beach, Bowers volunteers for several nonprofit corporations. His professional affiliations include the West Palm Beach Kiwanis Club, the Business Development Board, and the Risk Management Association. He currently serves as a Trustee and Board Member of the Chamber of Commerce of the Palm Beaches.



## WHO'S WHO IN LOCAL BUSINESS

### NEWSMAKERS

#### ENGINEERING



Hiscock

Jeffrey Hiscock has joined ADA Engineering as a senior project engineer in the West Palm Beach office. Hiscock holds a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from University of Florida and specializes in the planning, design and permitting of water management facilities.

#### HOSPITALITY



Mutchler

Tyson B. Mutchler was recently named general manager at BRIO Tuscan Grille at The Gardens Mall in Palm Beach Gardens. Mutchler holds an associate of arts in culinary arts/chef training from Johnson & Wales University, and a bachelor's of science in biology from Ohio State University.

#### OTHER



Graham

Heather Graham joins matchmaking service Revolution Dating, in Palm Beach Gardens, as director of events and social media. Graham will serve as a brand ambassador for Revolution Dating, working to increase awareness of the company's services both online and in the community through outreach, relationship building, and participation in local social and charitable events.



Dick Capozzi

#### REAL ESTATE



Karen Capozzi

Local Realtor Dick Capozzi and his wife, Karen Capozzi, have recently joined Illustrated Properties. Dick Capozzi is a graduate of Dayton University, with a Graduate of Realtors Institute designation.

### FOR MORE LOCAL NEWSMAKERS, D3

#### MOVING UP



Perry

Name: Doretha Perry  
Position: Recruiting, Riviera Beach Human Resources Director  
City: Riviera Beach

#### DETAILS, D2

## WORKPLACE

# Dealing with 'destructive hero' on your team

They perform at high level — with a high cost to company chemistry.

By John Grossmann  
New York Times

The results are always blindingly good. That is why so many small-business owners and chief executives are slow to recognize the dangers posed by employees sometimes known as destructive heroes.

At the building products company Dave Sullivan headed more than a decade ago, it was a top salesman who caused the havoc.

"They're always high performers, otherwise you'd never put up with their behavior," said Sullivan, recalling his first experience with a love-hate-'em genre of employee he is now quick to spot.

"This salesman was threatening his sales manager — 'If you don't do it the way I want, and if manufacturing won't make what I want to sell, I'll leave and take my customers with



Scott McGohan, chief executive of McGohan Brabender, is a health insurance and benefits broker who has had to deal with destructive heroes and recalls that he was once one, too. But the hit to company morale just isn't worth it, some say. MADDE MCGORNEY/NEW YORK TIMES

me."

Over the years, Sullivan has retold this story often, as part of courses and training seminars he has taught for organizations like the American Management Association and Alleron, a nonprofit that offers businesses management sup-

port and guidance. Sullivan, now president and managing partner at the Shamrock Group, a management consulting firm in Denver, does not claim to have coined the term, but he said it occurred to him when envisioning a comic book superhero who vanquish-

es an arch-villain, but in the process leaves a city in ruins.

Also known as brilliant jerks, destructive heroes are egotists, prima donnas, anything but team players. The drain on company morale can be stark. People wonder why the boss is not dealing with such an obvious bad apple. And because destructive heroes typically fashion their fiefs and achieve their results by using go-workers, the abused colleagues may run for the exits.

In his training seminars, Sullivan could count on two things whenever he asked, "How many of you have had a destructive hero in your midst?" About half of those in attendance would raise a hand. And of those, "Almost 100 percent said the same thing: 'We waited too long to deal with it, and it cost us a lot.'"

"Get rid of the brilliant jerk as fast as you can," said Cliff Oxford, founder of the Oxford Center for Entrepreneurs in Atlanta, who has registered the URL www.brilliantjerk.com and is writing a book to help companies deal with such employees (Oxford also wrote about the topic for The New York Times' 'You're the Boss' blog.)

Oxford and others suggest the following: Confront the destructive hero with his or her unacceptable behaviors, get agreement that specific changes are necessary, and set a deadline of several months to make and maintain the turnaround necessary for continued employment. Along the way, they advise, be sure to document the changes or lack of changes that ensue, that way establishing grounds for dismissal and protection against retaliatory lawsuits.

Of course, managing a destructive hero is easier said than done.

"It got to the point," said the founder and president of a West Coast e-commerce crafts supply company with 45 employees and annual sales of \$8 million, "that we had people

Jerks continued on D5

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By **Rebeca Piccardo**  
South Florida News Service

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