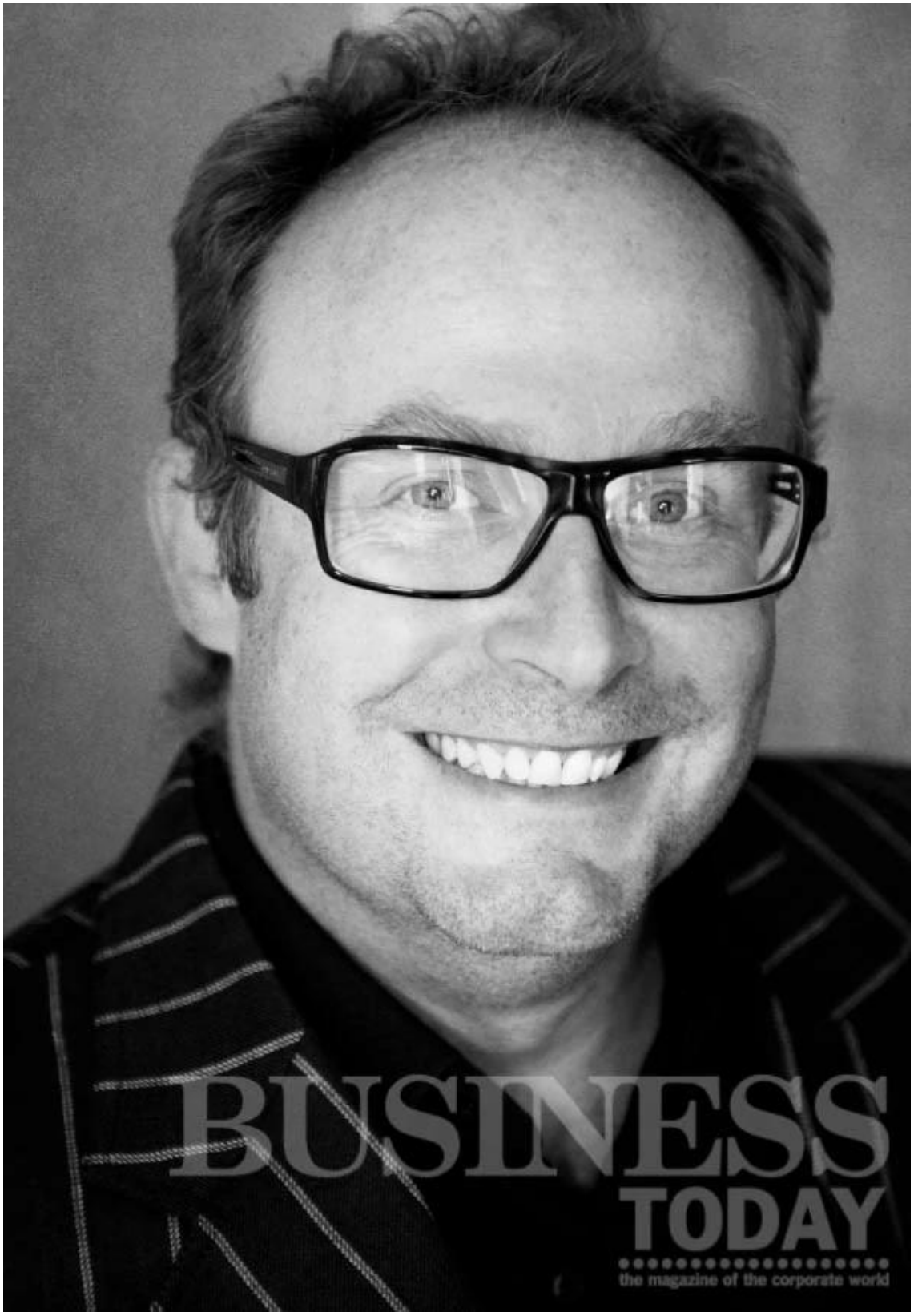
Quintessentially Yours!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Quintessentially is about the art of quintessence and the ultimate in the delivery of service. As the only one of its kind, Quintessentially Lifestyle is a global members only concierge service that offers its members access to a global network. With offices in 78 destinations, Quintessentially Lifestyle entered Sri Lanka in 2013 and has seen its membership grow considerably. Aaron Simpson, Co-Founder and Group Executive Chairman-Quintessentially Lifestyle, and Niro Cooke, Director-Quintessentially Lifestyle, Sri Lanka spoke about the various services provided by the Group and how they could assist their membership through their extensive network.

By Udeshi Amarasinghe

“In 2001-2002 we saw an opportunity that allowed us to fulfill the unique and challenging requirements of the world’s wealthy individuals. And that is why we decided to establish Quintessentially. As the world got richer over time, the number of addressable markets have grown rapidly. That is the reason why we setup this business”, explained Aaron Simpson on the decision to launch Quintessentially Lifestyle with Co-Founders Ben Elliot and Paul Drummond. Fourteen years on Quintessentially Lifestyle is in 78 countries and has expanded to encompass 35 sister companies, where the concierge service remains the core of the Group.

With an employee base of over 3,500 people Quintessentially Lifestyle is available to each member 365 days a year and 24 hours a day, where they address any lifestyle requests. “People that travel want to find out what is hot and what’s not in each of the individual cities we operate in without actually challenging their own connections and network,” explained Simpson. Quintessentially Lifestyle ensures that requests made by members are in-line with the cultural and social norms of the country, ” we are very conscience about that. People have different expectations and different levels of services required in each city. We are a homogenous service company that operates on one system but we are also aware that we are dealing with individuals and as such our services are pesonalised and bespoke,” he further elaborated.

There is actually no limit to what Quintessentially can offer. “Typical requests are in the sphere of travel, restaurants, night life, events such as concerts, sports and practical assistance. But we often have requests for help with arranging kids birthday, or sourcing a gift from Singapore. Our members sometimes give us very short notice but since we have our network we are able to facilitate their requests very quickly,” explains Niro Cooke.

“Since Our Launch In Sri Lanka Last Year We Have Had A Surprising Uptake On Membership. We Knew That We Were Early Into The Market Therefore We Did Not Expect A Large Number Of Members Joining Early On. But By Word Of Mouth Where Members Have Recommended To Their Friends To Join Us, We Have Seen Numbers Grow.”

Already established in India, the next obvious extension was Sri Lanka. “For us doing business in Sri Lanka is much easier than Bangladesh or India. The World Bank has stated the same. We have many of our members travelling to the Indian Ocean region including Maldives and Sri Lanka. We prefer to have our offices in destinations initially and hopefully grow the audience we appeal to eventually,” says Simpson.

The concept though new to Sri Lanka, is quite unique globally as well. “Since our launch in Sri Lanka last year we have had a surprising uptake on membership. We knew that we were early into the market therefore we did not expect a large number of members joining early on. But by word of mouth where members have recommended to their friends to join us, we have seen numbers grow,” elaborated Cooke on the response to Quintessentially Lifestyle in Sri Lanka.

“Niro Cooke is a very good partner. We have known him for a while. Usually in new markets it takes time to get going but we see a strong and growing, active membership that use our services globally. We have a good network in finance and venture capital and we can bring in good investment to Sri Lanka over time,” said Simpson. Since there is a growing number of international members of Quintessentially Lifestyle visiting Sri Lanka and the Maldives, there is a need for the Group to be in Sri Lanka as members would require access to certain places or require assistance for their work. “Not only are they coming here on holiday they are coming here to invest. A lot of members are looking at Sri Lanka as an

investment destination. We are in one of the fastest growing regions in the world. And Sri Lanka is one of the fastest within that region. We are not talking about the large corporates establishing businesses in Sri Lanka, we are talking about individual entrepreneurs and successful businessmen looking at Sri Lanka as a destination," said Cooke. Furthermore, Sri Lanka has a growing group of successful entrepreneurs and businessmen who would "want access to the best restaurants, the best hotels and places to visit. It is not only about restaurants or hotels it is also about access, advice to get to the right event, or to help them to find a gift, or arrange something special for their hosts or partners. As a member we would be able to utilise our contacts and network and provide what is required."

Speaking about the expansion of the Quintessentially Group, Simpson explained that it was partly about control in relation to supply chains. "When we knew we had enough to market some of these services we decided to set up businesses that supplied to those services. The brand is well recognised in big luxury consumer territories and we wanted to use this in a way that was advantageous to both our client base and non-members. Non-members have access to most of our group's companies without being a member of the core concierge club." The companies within the Group specialises in a wide range of lifestyle services from access to fine wines, private jets, property, insurance and luxury cars, to art collections, bespoke gifting, events planning, design, communications and much more.

"We Have Had Only One Failure In 35 Companies. That Is A Fantastic Statistic And As Our Addressable Market Grows We Will Hopefully Capture More Market Share. Each Sector Whether It Be Media Or Retail Or Services Is Growing Rapidly So We Are In An Area That Luxury Goods Companies Are Looking At Very Seriously."

The Group continues to grow by adding about three companies a year, "we have had only one failure in 35 companies. That is a fantastic statistic and as our addressable market grows we will hopefully capture more market share. Each sector whether it be media or retail or services is growing rapidly so we are in an area that luxury goods companies are looking at very seriously," explained Simpson. The sister companies are already in Sri Lanka and their services are offered here as well. "We will see the rest of the group coming in as demand increases. Concierge is actually the core of the business. Once you are a member of the concierge service you have discounted access to all the sister companies,"

Cooke further elaborated.

Quintessentially recently launched Quintessentially Ventures, which is an investment platform. It is seen as having great potential for local entrepreneurs looking to raise capital and for strong international partners to build businesses. “Quintessentially Ventures is backed by very high level entrepreneurs in the UK and it is a social network for budding entrepreneurs. An entrepreneur in Sri Lanka will have a platform to present their idea and raise funds, working alongside entrepreneurs who have already done that. This has already gone live and we have closed about five deals on the platform in the last month,” expanded Simpson. Another area that Quintessentially is moving into is products such as luggage and perfume which have already been launched in the US and UK markets.

“We have such a great team around the world and they came to a London conference recently. It was fantastic to see such a culturally diverse group of people coming together and doing great business. We have built a network globally of exciting interesting members that interact with each other on a global level now. It is the entrepreneurial spirit that is at the core of our business and drives us on a daily basis,” says Simpson on what inspires him.

“I am hoping Sri Lanka will embrace Quintessentially with Niro Cooke, his team and take it to the next level because we need entrepreneurs from every country to interact and network and create a global community of entrepreneurs that help each other to create wealth, which in turn will grow businesses and employment,” said Aaron Simpson concluding on a positive note.

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