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Flexibility, dynamism, and a Dry Martini

Interview by Timo Albiez
with Hanspeter Vochezer



Hanspeter Vochezer (left), federally certified hotelier and butler with worldwide experience in top hotels, offers first-class service thanks to his extensive network.

Dear Hanspeter, you are a butler! How would you describe your profession in one sentence?

Serving is the true luxury! Imagine sitting in an office all day staring at Excel spreadsheets – it would drive you mad. I, on the other hand, create experiences, make people's lives easier, and receive appreciation for it. It's a dream job! And if we're being honest, everyone serves in some way: the lecturer teaching their students, the gondola operator bringing guests up the mountains, even the farmer tending to their animals. Service is everywhere.

Being a butler means you must like people, doesn't it?

Absolutely! And not just that – you need to read them, anticipate their wishes before they even articulate them. Being a butler is like playing chess on an ocean liner. You have to think ahead, react, and adapt perfectly at all times. If you don't genuinely enjoy being there for others, this isn't the job for you.

How did you become a butler? Was there a moment of enlightenment?

Yes, after working in luxury hospitality for several years, I suddenly received an invitation to Palm Springs! I had the chance to work for Gunter Sachs' family and jumped straight into the deep end. I thought my hotel experience had prepared me – but no! Suddenly, there was no «kitchen closes at 11 PM. » If Sir wanted a filet steak at three in the morning, then a filet steak it was! It was a completely different world.

And what fascinated you so much that you stayed in the field?

The dynamism, the challenge! Every day brings new requests and new solutions. You learn to act and react with flexibility. No two days are the same. Sometimes, it's a logistical feat to organize an event from scratch in just a few hours. But that's what I love about it. Occasionally, it's like being in a tunnel – knowing it's full throttle for the next three weeks. That's when you need to channel all your energy.

Is there a particular encounter that stands out in your memory?

Oh yes! Once, I had a client who spontaneously decided they wanted to play ice hockey in the afternoon. Within a very short time, I had to book an ice rink – and, of course, organize players for and against them. It was quite an effort, but in the end, the game went smoothly, and the client had a fantastic time. Another time, I was on a yacht with a client who wanted to catch his own dinner. Unfortunately, luck wasn't on his side that day – not a single fish was biting the bait. As his patience began to wane, I had to get creative: I got a fresh fish from the chef, discreetly attached it to his fishing line – and voilà, the evening was saved! Experiences such as these are truly one of a kind.

Many still picture butlers in tailcoats, standing quietly in a corner. How much truth is left in that image?

Depending on the clientele, that can still be the case, especially with older genera-

tions. But in the modern world, I'm much more than just a butler – I'm an organizer, confidant, crisis manager, and sometimes even a life coach. The art lies in being present without being intrusive. Additionally, you often take on a coordinating role – leading household staff to create an optimal living situation for the client.

What are three essential skills every butler must master?

1. Flexibility – There's no routine! Every day brings new challenges. This is probably the most demanded skill.
2. People skills – Who wants small talk, and who prefers absolute discretion? You must figure that out immediately. It's also about quickly understanding a client's quirks and habits and anticipating their needs. Your feelers are always switched on.
3. Organizational talent – If the boss suddenly decides to host a dinner for 20 guests tonight, you need to pull it off in two hours. Plus, language skills are invaluable. I speak three languages – unfortunately, I've forgotten Thai and Portuguese after all these years – but it has opened countless doors for me.

You're also an etiquette coach. Isn't that a bit outdated?

Not at all! Etiquette isn't about being a strict disciplinarian like Miss Rottenmeier. It's about impact, posture, and respect. We can't not make an impression! Good manners offer advantages in life – whether in business or in private. I own an ori-

ginal copy of «Knigge - über den Umgang mit Menschen» from 1788, which I've read three times. I'd say 80% of its content still applies today. Interestingly, the book only has a few lines about table manners!

What can the business world learn from a butler?

Discipline and solution-oriented thinking! In our world, «no» isn't an option – only alternatives. And embracing a role and performing it professionally. Every CEO, banker, or anyone working with people could benefit from this mindset. It's all about finding solutions. You address the problem and focus on resolving it. No silo mentality! This quality is also what makes graduates from hotel management schools so sought-after and versatile.

If Hanspeter Vochezer were a cocktail, what would best describe you?

Probably a classic Dry Martini! This drink is straightforward, honest, and packs a punch.

And if you were a party?

A sophisticated mix of fine wine, excellent food, and the most interesting people. Free of constraints but full of style! That's true art de vivre. I love hosting parties and inviting people into my home. It makes me happy!

Do you have a life motto that guides you?

Definitely! «Perfection is achieved not when there is nothing left to add, but when there is nothing left to take away. » This

applies to my profession, staging a perfect evening, and life itself.

Hanspeter, what does your day look like when you're not on duty?

I enjoy good food, travel often, and appreciate life's little things. I love discovering new cultures and connecting with extraor-

dinary people. And, of course, I let myself be pampered from time to time!

Finally, if you could have a superpower, what would it be?

I'd love to be a king who makes fair judgments – free from lobbyists and power games, making truly just decisions!

Thank you for this highly entertaining conversation! And to our readers, if you'd like to learn more about this truly fascinating and rewarding profession:

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