

Life&Style

To-do lists done now

by Helen Kirwan-Taylor

THE saying, "If you want something done, ask a busy person" is patently untrue. Busy people are by definition too busy to do all those little things that make a house run smoothly, which is why they need people like Jo Lim, of Buy:Time, a new lifestyle-management service. Lim, 26, and Claire Brynteson, 33, the founder of the company, know what busy is: they used to work at Goldman Sachs, where 14-hour days are considered the norm.

"When I was working in the City, all around me people were saying there weren't enough hours in the day," says Claire.

OK, I don't work at Goldman Sachs — I'm a freelance writer — but I do have a three-foot stack of unopened bills. My to-do list is simply undoable. So the concept of Buy:Time — just dial a number and they do the rest — seemed perfect. "We don't run around getting mandarin tea bags for Madonna," says Lim. "We're more practical than that."

Buy:Time does not require a subscription: you simply call up and

Are there not enough hours in your day? Then call in the time-saving experts

ask them to organise theatre tickets, arrange an appointment at the dentist, or run your building project for you. It's not cheap. You can hire Buy:Time for £35 an hour, but most people buy a block — 10 for £290 or 20 for £500.

Clients vary, from well-heeled pensioners who need someone to run errands to investment bankers whose Palm Pilots need fixing. Most clients hand over their house keys and let Jo and Claire get on with it.

On this particular morning, my to-do list was sufficiently long to stress out even Jo. The unpaid bills were the first thing we had to tackle. "Do you want to send a note with them?" she asked. Do people write personal notes to their fishmonger? "You'd be surprised," she said. The bills seemed a doddle, until Jo realised I couldn't remember the last time I had paid any of them. "I always



At your service: Buy:Time's Jo Lim helps Helen Kirwan-Taylor find time for other things by collecting her clothes to take to the laundry

make sure to file bills and check that there are no duplicates," she said smugly.

But the bills were just the start. My printer was broken. "We use ITLab," she said, writing a note to herself, saying: "Printer fixed priority. Client hysterical." The engineer was duly booked for the following morning.

Every year I mean to do something adventurous with the children at half term, and every year I end up pushing them out of the door with anyone who will take them. Unlike many other personal-services companies, Buy:Time has at least an inkling of how its undeniably posh clients live. Jo knew better than to suggest a week in Devon with horses and wellies.

"October half-term ideas," she wrote in her notes, "Forte Village, Sardinia. There are lots of kids' activities, and a spa." Smart girl, I thought: start with mum's needs and work backwards.

So, yes, you can get organised when you have a handy helper who will do almost anything, from taking the rubbish out to feeding the goldfish. Suddenly the thought of buying Jo every weekday afternoon from three to seven and during half-term and, well, most mornings, seemed like an overwhelmingly good idea. There's only one catch: what will the husband think? "We don't usually have any resistance in that area," said Jo. "Most husbands just want their wives to be happy." Sigh.

TIME-MANAGEMENT FIRMS

www.buy-time.co.uk; 020 7490 7934.

www.my-bestfriend.co.uk, 020 7537 7458. From walking the dog to organising holidays.

www.cushiontheimpact.co.uk, 020 7704 6922. Everything from moving houses to researching.

www.yourconciierge.co.uk, 08700 761 961. A fantastic and affordable service.

www.tenuk.com, 020 7479 3333. On-hand management consultants.

www.courtoure.co.uk, 01908 521094. Solutions to work/life balances.

Julia Slay