



Gentlemen's Tonic



Maya

» Lisa's typical clients tend to be high-net-worth individuals aged between 35 and 45 who are looking for a lifestyle makeover: "Urbanity is very personal, so I always start with a one-to-one informal chat with the client. This involves a needs assessment and image analysis, where I look at colouring, body shape and different fashion styles that might suit them." She has raided a few wardrobes in her time – with far more compassion than Trinny or Susannah, you will be pleased to know – and afterwards takes her clients on a specially-tailored shopping spree where she has privileges at various luxury boutiques.

For between four and five thousand pounds a year, Lisa's clients can benefit from a year-round image consultancy service where they can literally ring up and ask "What do I wear to the polo?" But her expertise extends beyond personal styling; as well as kitting out bachelor pads with plush furnishings and high tech gadgets, she gives dating advice, arming her clients with some fundamental do's and don'ts. With such a personalised service, it's no wonder Urbanity has been described as "a wife and best friend without the hassle."

In today's corporate world of long working days, getting a slice of the good life without the extra stress is evidently becoming more paramount. However, there is inevitably a competition element involved that mirrors the rivalry felt on the trading floor, where men feel pressured to portray a certain image of 'being in the know' both inside and outside the boardroom. Being seen to be able to do certain things and have access to exclusive goods is just as important, and nothing is a greater indicator of exclusivity than London's

nightlife scene.

Since William and Harry have made cavorting around the capital's elitist private members' clubs something of an art form, these drinking haunts have become the only places to be seen. However, given their notorious restricted access, an increasing number of 'work hard, play hard' high flyers are now turning to luxury club-concierge services to get them into the right establishments.

One such service is Innerplace, which provides its members with premier access to exclusive bars, fashionable restaurants and members' only night clubs in both London and New York. The creation of ex-Merrill Lynch banker Tim Badham, VIP Red membership will set you back £2,000 plus a £400 joining fee, but will secure you the best tables at London's hot spots, even at short notice, and cut out waiting lists and queues. "It's more like an introduction service", asserts Tim. "These days you can't be known at every chic place you want to go to. We aim to provide quality for both our client base and the establishments we work with." What's more, members can enjoy exclusive benefits and privileges, including hotel and spa upgrades, VIP concerts and film premieres.

"Our clientele is quite varied", explains Tim. "Standard membership of £25 has a broad range of people, whilst Red members tend to be top City directors, traders and hedge fund guys in their late 30s to early 40s." Like the other luxury male services, Innerplace focuses on a personal approach; Tim meets all prospective members (usually by referral), and clients can either request

specific bookings or ask for expert recommendations, especially when entertaining clients. "We've tried to create a unique club feel with members' parties, newsletters and a new website. It's about getting a select group of like-minded, discerning people together and meeting their expectations."

What can we deduce about men from all of this luxurious spending and reliance on exclusive services? Some fundamental differences between the sexes, apparently. Olivier Bonnefoy encapsulates the idea quite nicely: "For centuries men haven't had the opportunity to indulge themselves like women have. I like to use the analogy of a mirror; give a man the chance to look at himself and he will."

There you have it: men have always secretly been vainer than women. Now, with various new platforms promoting the male self image, they finally have the means to express themselves and their idiosyncrasies. In the words of L'Oréal, they're worth it too, you know... ■

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