

MOBILE

## Ritz-Carlton highlights brand values with Foursquare-backed World Concierge

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By RACHEL LAMB



Upscale hotel chain Ritz-Carlton is stepping up its customer service strategy by introducing World Concierge Foursquare to worldwide consumers. Consumers will receive traveling and city tips from Ritz-Carlton employees for destinations such as Dubai, Miami, Toronto and Berlin by following the company on Foursquare. This is the first time that a luxury hotel brand has extended its exclusive services to a mobile public audience, per Ritz-Carlton.

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**Luxury Daily**

"As an organization, we are always seeking opportunities to evolve the communications landscape for our brand," said Chris Gabaldon, chief marketing officer at Ritz-Carlton

Hotels, Chevy Chase, MD.

"Over the last two years, we have launched brand channels on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube," he said. "Foursquare is a rapidly growing social medium at this time that is populated by many Ritz-Carlton fans and loyalists, so it makes sense for us to be there.

"Both Facebook and Twitter have been successful platforms for us to engage at a deeper level with our guests. This is an extension of that process."

### Ritzy business

Consumers will have access to exclusive tips from **Ritz-Carlton** by following the company on Foursquare, at <http://www.foursquare.com/ritzcarlton>.

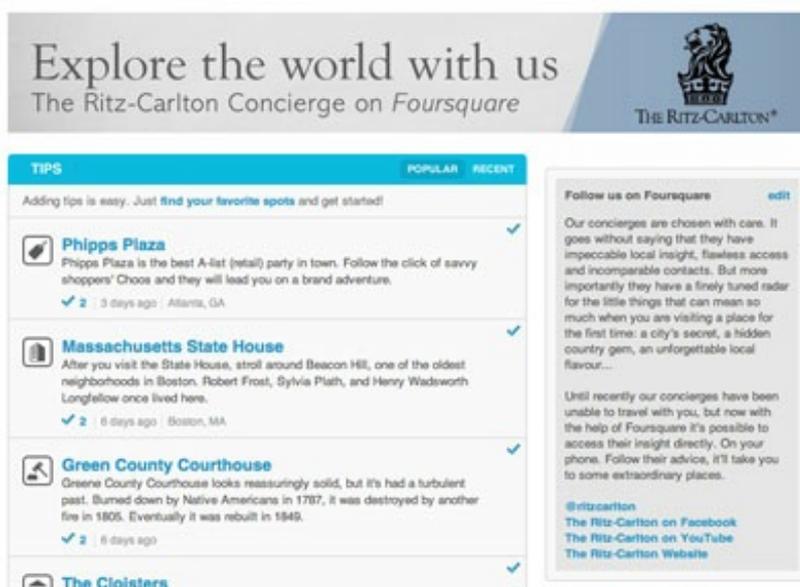
Concierges from all of the brand's 75 properties will be contributing to this initiative. New tips will come out every week.

"We want to be available to travelers at all the touch points they would expect to find us, but in a unique and relevant way," Mr. Gabaldon said. "Because we don't tend to make decisions based on peer-pressure, you haven't seen the Ritz-Carlton jump into the space as quickly as others just for the sake of doing so.

"Instead, we opted to extend our services not only to guests who know us well and expect content of value, but also to the

traveling public at large," he said. "This tailor-made approach is a wonderful way to showcase who we are as a brand, and as destination and travel experts."

Ritz-Carlton is bolstering its customer service strategy by ensuring tips and service that one would find in its hotel properties are available wherever consumers go.



### *Ritz-Carlton is using Foursquare*

This will also ensure that affluent consumers will feel a connection to Ritz-Carlton and could increase the chances that they will choose to stay at one of the properties in the future.

Foursquare also provides individuals with opportunities to check-in and become mayors of different places.

Furthermore, there are often perks and special deals for loyalists and those with mayor titles.

Consumers may be more willing to check-in to and make reservations at Ritz-Carlton properties.

### Squaring off

As an alternative to mobile applications, luxury brands are increasingly using Foursquare to interact with customers.

For instance, brands such as Tiffany & Co. and Gucci regularly update their Foursquare accounts to provide consumers who follow them with local tips and favorite places ([see story](#)).

Many hotel chains are beginning to see the benefits.

For instance, Starwood Hotels & Resorts is rewarding members of Starwood Preferred Guest loyalists by offering free points and free-night awards for those who check in to properties worldwide via Foursquare ([see story](#)).

The Ritz-Carlton Foursquare World Concierge speaks to the destination knowledge that Ritz-Carlton concierges all over the world share with its guests every day, per Mr. Gabaldon.

"The Ritz-Carlton has never confined itself to being a luxury hotel brand," Mr. Gabaldon said. "Rather, we are seen as an authority in travel and luxury.

"Luxury consumers trust us and know that we have a wealth of knowledge and expertise at our fingertips and this initiative allows us to share that with travelers around the globe," he said. "This service is totally unique because it is the first time a hotel company has given expertise and knowledge away outside of the four walls of a hotel.

"Our concierges have always been available to guests, but you have had to contact them at the hotel to get their advice. This way, you don't even have to ask. The wealth of knowledge is being made accessible continuously."

### Final Take

*Rachel Lamb, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York*

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