



THE FRANKLIN REPORT

RECENT PRESS CLIP



CLIP

FINANCIAL TIMES WEEKEND APRIL 28/APRIL 29 2001

HOW TO SPEND IT

Home companion

By Paul Sullivan
Published: April 25 2001 16:24GMT | Last Updated: April 26 2001 16:24GMT



When Elizabeth Franklin, a mergers and acquisitions banker, sat on Lehman Brothers' staffing committee, it was her job to decide the bonuses for junior bankers, and to ask the question that would add, or subtract, that crucial nought: did a senior banker want to work with the junior again?

It's a simple litmus test, one Franklin remembered when doing up her Park Avenue apartment. The interior designer she had hired to build a set of cabinets did a third of the job, then left without finishing or returning the \$50,000 she paid him.

There's generally a feeling that the people you employ are above accountability, she says. They just waltz in and out. And without a staffing committee, what do you do?

Franklin got angry, contacted all the people on her Christmas card list, who in turn gave her their Christmas card lists and so on, and asked those people to rate the suppliers they used for refurbishment and other services.

The result is the Franklin Report, an austere purple book that lists 27 categories of house services - from architects and interior designers to suppliers of paint and wallpaper, and furniture repair - and aims to hold such purveyors accountable for the work they do, or don't do.

The book is a frank, word-of-mouth guide, which includes comments that range from the cutting (It wasn't sure which was going to take longer,

the gestation of my baby or the delivery of my sofa) to the slightly odd: an excellent worker and a master of intercoms.

More so than other survey-driven guides - such as the Zagat restaurant guides, which this resembles - the Franklin Report tries to interview the respondents, preserving that word-of-mouth feel. Franklin says she tries to contact 80 per cent of respondents in an effort to throw out people who are crazy housewives.

Purveyors are rated on a scale of one to five for quality, cost, value and recommended, which is the determining factor of whether the vendor gets listed. Akin to bank research reports that avoid cell ratings on stocks, the Report omits negative recommendations.

Those vendors who receive less than a 3.5 recommend rating (that is, beneath both on my short list, would recommend to a friend and very satisfied, might hire again) are simply not listed. On the website, however, there are about 2,500 vendors, as opposed to the 1,000 in the book, which includes those with lower ratings. Illustrations of providers' work are also visible on the website.

The guide has already sold almost twice what Franklin expected for the whole year. She is now planning a report for Chicago, followed by Atlanta, the Hamptons, Los Angeles Dallas-Houston - 20 cities in total. Those Christmas cards really can pay off.

The Franklin Report - New York City 2001, published by Allgood Press (\$22.50) is available from www.amazon.com and leading bookstores, or from (toll free: +1 866-990 9100, in NYC: +1 212-639 9100).

