

The barefoot global elite

Nicholas Frankl, Founder & CEO of My Yacht Group, talks to Nancy Heslin

Anywhere there's a gathering of the 1% of the 1%, Nicholas Frankl is close by, "megayacht in tow". And Frankl, whose My Yacht Group creates unique turnkey luxury hospitality on board private super yachts, has a supreme (and shoeless) guest list, from astronauts to Olympians, and from A-Listers to royalty.

Case in point, five years ago, at My Yacht Group's legendary Friday night bash during the Monaco Grand Prix weekend, the head of a Monaco private bank was on board, as were Lewis Hamilton, Nigel Mansell and, as every year, HSH Prince Albert.

The banker approached Frankl, who lives between Monaco and LA, and said, "Nicholas, I live in Monaco and I can't get hold of these people. I estimate you have at least \$100 billion worth of guests on board and you've only got 100 people."



While Frankl admits he doesn't ask his friends for their bank balances, his My Yacht Group parties bring together an extraordinary variety of like-minded synergistic company, like astronaut Felix Baumgartner, John Lennon's son Julian, Pakistan's prime minister Shaukat Aziz, Denise Rich, Steve Wynn, easyJet founder Sir Stelios Haji-Ioannou, and many others...

Frankl, who turns 45 in July, knows first-hand that the global elite prefer to mix with other successful people, as interesting people beget interesting people. But the real key to his success?

"I'm not selling anything. I'm not asking you to open a bank account or buy a car or a watch. I'm just hosting a really cool group of engaging people, many of who know each other or are just one degree of separation away, and who are used to being the celebrity in the room."

My Yacht Group, which is run by London-born Frankl and his twin sister Annabelle, whom he credits as "the brains and beauty behind the operation", is very consistently reaching these individuals in phenomenal places throughout the world. And all they ask is for people to come to their luxury yacht party, which in most cities other than Monaco, is the only yacht party.

After years in Monaco, MYG expanded to Art Basel in Miami, then the Cannes Film Festival, Pebble Beach Concours, the Austin Grand Prix, Monaco Yacht Show and now Asia with Art Basel Hong Kong.

Few people would know seeing photos of a smiling HSH Prince Albert aboard Frankl's My Yacht Group Monaco party, the long and unique history of their friendship. Frankl, representing Hungary, and HSH competed against each other in the bobsleigh event at three Winter Olympics, in Lillehammer in 1994, Nagano in 1998 and Salt Lake City in 2002.

“We trained together in Calgary in Canada. Prince Albert and I were head to head arch-rivals, and became good friends. There’s a tenacity and drive from athletes that the general populace does not have. Prince Albert was a sportsman like everyone else and that’s what he liked.”

Acknowledging that bobsledders are a character and a breed of their own, especially the “B” Club, like the guys from the Virgin Islands, Jamaica, Trinidad, Armenia and Monaco - “none of us are going to win the gold so it was a great comradery.”

Frankl emphasises that “It’s hard work no matter what level you compete at. I was one second off the pace, which was collectively twenty-five places divided by a second. But my training is the same, my exhaustion is the same, my emotions are the same, as is my drive and will to succeed.”

After bobsled, looking for a new thrill, Frankl went on to test motorcycles and now is a licensed pilot. It’s not, however, the same 56-second rush you get in a bobsled, which Frankl says “is like driving the notorious old East-German “Trabi” - no redeeming elements in this car other than a roof - and drive it down a cobbled street with only 4 inches on either side of the wing mirrors, with very high walls, at 200 mph with square wheels and tight corners.”

Frankl would have loved to have been a Formula One driver. He grew up in motor racing, going to his first race at eight-weeks-old. (Belgian driver and Monaco resident Jackie Ickx correctly predicted in 1971 in Monaco that Frankl’s mother, June, would have twins, which she only discovered to be true two weeks prior to their birth.)

His charismatic father, journalist and author Andrew Frankl, is currently Grand Prix Editor of FORZA. He started off as publisher of CAR magazine, making one of Britain's largest automotive magazines, and has attended over 200 Grands Prix, commentating for radio and television while writing for numerous automotive publications.

“My father knew all the drivers and we hung out with them. For example, Niki Lauda stayed at our house when he was getting started. I wanted to be a F1 driver, but my father was never keen on that because so many of his friends in the Seventies - François Cevert and Ronnie Peterson - were killed.”

As evidenced by his ability to stylishly tuck into a bowl of spaghetti Bolognese while remaining an engaging storyteller, Frankl inherited his father's charisma. With his adaptable social vocabulary like “dude” and “rad man”, Frankl worked with Sky TV and BBC radio and commentating on Formula One (and in 1995 pitched a “Top Gear” show to Sky that back then they wouldn't do).

He was hired in 1996 by Edward Asprey to run a three-year \$50 million Ferrari sponsorship of the Ferrari Formula. “We put together a global hospitality platform and to be honest, I don't think Formula One has ever had another guest experience quite like that, but our problem was that, we assumed wrongly, other guests from other sponsors at the same event would be interested in Asprey products - jewels, diamonds, Ferrari silver models, it never happened. So we created our own private yacht party in 1997 and it was a success.”

The Asprey contract ended and Frankl become this unpaid concierge service for the Asprey clients, while still doing Sky TV. He decided to monetise his “Mr Monaco” status and in 2005 launched My Yacht Monaco and knew just who to invite. When the Prince (who Frankl says has always been “a fantastic and incredibly supportive friend for over 20 years”) and his guests arrived, Steve Soderbergh, the Oscar winning director, who was on board, texted his friends: “This is where it’s happening.”

Contact My Yacht Group about their “Monaco Grand Prix Experience” yacht hospitality and charity events from May 26-29.



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