

The Ins and Outs of Matchmaking

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Executive Director and cofounder of the Matchmaking Institute™, Lisa Clampitt, spent years pairing her friends together for fun before deciding upon matchmaking as a career. Lisa was formerly a social worker, connecting people in need with the appropriate services to help them. Lisa found great joy in helping others, but there were far too many unhappy endings. Lisa wanted to find a job where she could use her social work skills as a means to a higher level of satisfaction—both for her clients and herself.

Lisa made the transformation from social worker to matchmaker by creating a personal coaching program at an already-established match-making company. Via this company, she began to receive press as a “relationship expert,” and after only two years, realized she could easily start her very own matchmaking service.

Lisa quickly discovered that when it came to finding love, money was no object. Human beings will sacrifice almost anything for love because love means happiness—and we all want to be happy.

Getting to Know Your Client

As a matchmaker, you will be selling a highly desired product. The challenge will be finding clients confident enough to seek the help you are offering. Despite the plethora of self-help books on the market—dieting, spirituality, moneymaking, self-empowerment, etc.—people have a hard time seeking help when it comes to relationships. It's as if society wants us to believe that love is a personal issue to be handled on our own. Lisa knows otherwise and urges her clients to approach finding a mate as they would approach finding a job—without shame and proactively. This includes seeking all the help you can find.

Always remember,
you are a matchmaker,
NOT a therapist.

Lisa says “The sad thing about it is that a lot of times, people think, ‘God, I’m a loser if I’m single.’ They say to themselves, ‘If I say I need help, that means I’m an even more of a loser . . . so, I like being single.’ Some people feel healthy and great being single, but the majority want to find someone . . . and I feel passionately that most people would benefit from having a matchmaker in their lives to help them succeed in finding a satisfying relationship.”

It will be your job to encourage clients to open up and help them learn more about themselves in order to discover who their best match will be. By working with you, singles will be given the opportunity to date safely. Clients will be screened by you before ever meeting their potential match. This enables you to pair the people whose wants and needs are most compatible. As a matchmaker, you not only gain satisfaction upon cultivating the perfect match, but during the dating process you will watch your clients learn and grow, eventually making better decisions for themselves.

Lisa learned early on that it is important to encourage your client to

examine *why* he or she is single. Ask them if they feel that they have been proactive in their search. In what ways? What is their “type”?

Lisa recalls a woman stating that she goes out all the time and there are just no good men out there. When further questions were asked, it became clear that every time she went out she went with a group of women, which made it virtually impossible for her to be approached by a man. She then indicated that when she is out with her friends she does not like it when men approach her.

It is your job to help clients discover what hasn't worked in the past so that together you can agree on resolutions for the future. Lisa explains, “The reality is, even the most self-aware people can use some introspection on who they are and who they choose.”

Encourage your client's proactive behavior:

There is no downside to being friendly. It is important for both men and women to be emotionally available and **APPROACHABLE!** Encourage them to smile, say “Good Morning.” What can it hurt?!

Find out about your clients' dating patterns

Lisa also emphasizes the importance of noticing patterns. For example: Does your client always date the “bad guy”? Or, does your client always date the “model-type”? Why are they doing this and what are they really looking for in a date? Encourage your clients to set high standards for themselves and reassure them that if they are truly open to finding someone, they will!

However, do be aware of those clients with the never-ending shopping list of requirements: He must be at least six feet tall but under six feet two inches, have an athletic build but not too much muscle, make over two hundred thousand a year, have all of his hair, hold a graduate degree from an Ivy League school, be social, drive a high-end car, have

his own friends, be a good cook, wear designer shoes, etc. It is most often the clients with the longest lists who carry the most personal insecurities. It is then your job to turn it back on them, to ask them if they're looking for love or if they're building a firewall. Which of these requirements are acting as cover-ups for their own insecurities?

Everyone has a story from their previous relationships. Ask your client's for theirs: Was it love at first sight? Were they friends first? Did opposites attract? What did their ex look like? How and why did it end?

Then ask them about their dating habits: How are they on a date? Do they tend to talk about themselves the entire time? Are they able to reciprocate and listen? Do they drink too much on the first date? Do they generally sleep with someone on the first date?

Gathering as much information about your client and maintaining an open and honest policy is imperative to your ability as a matchmaker. The more you understand about your client's dating record, the better you will be at providing improvement.

Choosing your clientele

Most people who seek your services will be looking for serious relationships. There will be those few, however, that are simply looking to pass the time. They aren't serious about finding Mr. or Mrs. Right, but they are interested in using your services for entertainment purposes.

Lisa firmly believes that matchmaking is very much about your personal values, and the ways in which you feel you can (and want) to help someone. So, ethically, you have to decide if you feel comfortable taking on a client who is looking to pass the time and wants social fill-in rather than a long-term relationship. Whomever you decide to work with, you must clearly communicate your clients' relationship goals to

their matches and match them accordingly.

As a general rule, before taking on any client it is wise to decipher whether it makes sense for you to work with this person. Ask yourself: Will I be able to get along with this person? Will they value my services? Does this person make me feel comfortable? Is this person open to change? Will this person work with me or against me? Would they be an asset or liability to my company?

Upon meeting potential clients, think about placing them, much like a staffing industry would place a hopeful candidate. Do you already have their match-type in your database? Are their requests reasonable? How much time would you estimate you'll have to spend matching them? What do they have going for them? Will they be an easy sell to potential matches?

Being at the top of your game—advising and coaching

Make sure you know what's out there. The world of dating is constantly changing; new rules apply, old traditions change, expectations fluctuate. As a matchmaker, people will look to you for advice; you will become an automatic authority on dating, relationships, and love. Make sure that you can provide dating tips, fashion advice, and etiquette training when necessary.

This means educating yourself in the ways of dating, relationships, and love. For example: *He's Just Not That Into You*—you've read it. *Dating for Dummies*—you could have written it. *Hitch*—seen it.

Many people that come to you will need help in all areas of dating—finding a date will only be half of what they will need. Lisa suggests that it might behoove both your clientele and your business to offer a personal coaching/image consulting package in addition to your matchmaking services.

“You may call it personal coaching, image coaching, or even wardrobe consulting, and cover everything from first-date tactics to hairstyling. Some matchmakers even provide references to cosmetic dentists and plastic surgeons. This type of package is for someone who may not have a clue, and this is your way of holding his or her hand, saying, ‘Whatever you need, I can provide.’”

Matchmaking as a Business

Before dealing with the how-to’s of matchmaking, there are a few key ingredients that mustn’t be overlooked.

Niche market

Ask yourself

- Have you chosen a particular niche market?
- Have you decided upon an appropriate price structure?
- Do you have an idea for your business model?
- How do you plan on building/maintaining your database of clientele?

Let’s start with finding a niche. Choosing a specific niche allows you to maintain a focus within your database of clientele. It also serves to attract a more like-minded group of singles, making it easier for you to match, and for them to choose. For example, if a woman has a specific financial requirement, why would she go to Match.com, when she could seek your services knowing that, you as a matchmaker prequalify the information you are given, so that her number one requirement is already satisfied?

Age groups are an excellent way to narrow your business and still maintain an open market. There are also those matchmakers who enjoy paring singles based upon their hobbies, professions, even their nonprofit interests! When choosing a niche, it is important to consider your working area. Are you near a predominantly gay, retired, or young community? Do you prefer working with only female clients? Are you trying to appeal to a certain paying class? Asking yourself these questions will help you determine the ease in which you can create a client base.

Price structure

When deciding upon a price structure for your new business, you will have to determine both the advantages and disadvantages of your surrounding geography and demographics. Generally speaking, if you live in a smaller town, you probably won't be charging as much as you will if you are living in a larger city such as New York, Los Angeles, or Miami. Research your community to figure out what other services you will be competing with, and with whom you'll most likely be working: How many singles are in your area? What are their ages? (Check with your local Census Bureau.) What services are they using? Look in your local Yellow Pages under dating services. Are there any dinner clubs or singles events offered in your area? Check your local newspapers, and utilize the Internet, i.e., Craigslist.org, Singlesonthego.com, etc. What income level will you be dealing with? Based upon the services already offered in your community, what is the average price singles are willing to pay? Do you want to beat that price or up the ante?

Lisa states, "The singles industry is booming—it will never dry up because there will always be single people looking for love."

What service are you offering?

When creating your business plan, consider your niche and price structure as well as a specific outline of the services you will be offering: How many dates/potential matches will you be providing? Will your services be monthly, bi-monthly, yearly? Will you be implementing a coaching program? Will both your male and female clientele pay, or will you cater your services to one gender? Will you be providing events or singles' parties?

Naming the business and setting up office

Before putting your business plan into play you will need a name, phone line, website, and business cards. Perhaps the most important of these is a name. What is the name of your business? It should not only be catchy, memorable, and inviting, but cohesive with your target market. Next, invest in a separate phone line for your services—toll-free is always best. And business cards are a must, as networking is how you will obtain the majority of your clients. Building a website can be a bit pricey, but is now a necessary tool for all businesses.

As a matchmaker you can get away with not having an office. Work from home, and meet your clients at a café or coffee shop. Lisa knows a successful matchmaker who still doesn't have an office. She meets her clients in a café and charges a good deal of money for her services. But if you are meeting in a public space, make sure to arrive early so that you secure a comfortable space to meet your client. Also, make sure to keep your eyes peeled so they don't have to search you out. You want their first meeting with you to be as comfortable as possible.

Getting started

Your matchmaking business begins as soon as you find your first client. You can start as soon as you have one person interested. Take

them on as your client, and look for matches specifically for them. As you search, you will automatically be building a database for both your current and future client(s).

However, it is important to understand that when matchmaking professionally, you must reach outside of your personal network of friends—otherwise you won't be making any profit.

Establishing a database

This is where your database comes in. Once you've exhausted every personal connection you have (this includes your friends, friends' friends, family, in-laws, your in-laws' in-laws, your doctors, bankers, hairstylist, etc.) it's time to network. Networking is basically another word for socializing—it involves talking to people, exchanging business cards, and getting your name out there.

The best way to do this: parties! Get yourself invited or throw them yourself. Join special interest clubs in your community, become a member on the board of a nonprofit organization, attend grand openings of stores, restaurants, hospitals, and art exhibits. Any type of event with the words reception, mixer, or mingling attached is an opportunity for networking.

As a matchmaker, networking will always be a part of the job description. Event planning is a great business tactic in the beginning, but it may be wise to eliminate it from your business plan once your database grows to a workable size.

Lisa's Advice: Think of a potential client, one that you feel will be fairly easy to match. Decide what you'll be charging and then think of friends you may have, neighbors, anyone you know who may be interested. If you can find two potential matches for your client, you've successfully started your business!

As Lisa explains, if you do both matchmaking and events, people will choose to go to your event rather than pay for your services. Matchmaking is more important than throwing events. At events people meet people based on chemistry and looks. But when they hire you, they are making the proactive choice to find someone that is much more appropriate for them for long term compatibility. If you can turn a partygoer into a client, then you will be a fabulous matchmaker.

Income

The business of matchmaking can best be compared to the real estate business. Great real estate agents can make a lot of money if they are highly motivated, personable, reliable, and very good at what they do. On the other hand, if a real estate agent is not good, does not work hard, and is not organized, they may make very little money. The business you create is only as good and successful as you are. It takes hard work, motivation, and commitment to grow a new business. As a matchmaker you have to have the ability to sell a contract, to understand the type of market you're working in, and to balance your overhead expenses.

Hint: Some people choose to throw a party themselves. This way they can avoid the 'you don't know me, but I'm a matchmaker' spiel, and automatically become known as the host of a fabulous party. This will increase your exposure as well as your database.

For example, a good real estate agent working in New York City has the potential to make a lot of money, but the overhead may be quite high. Whereas an agent in Iowa also has the potential to make a lot of money—for Iowa. It depends on what you will be charging. What will be your profit margin? What will your overhead cost?

Ask yourself: Do I want an office? Do I want a staff member? How can I make enough money to cover my overhead and make a profit? What extravagances do I want in my life?

Try to keep to a tight budget in the beginning. It is important not to overspend. Put profits back into the business so it can continue to grow.

Lisa states, “Like any new and growing business, you will have to work very hard your first couple of years. But if you’re good at what you do—selling, accessing new clients, and networking—you can make a good living.”