

# DAILY NEWS

## MIX & MATCH

A Jewish singles' site combines online profiles with the personal fixup

BY PATRICK HUGUENIN

**T**he archetype of the Jewish matchmaker goes back long before "Fiddler on the Roof" danced her into the mainstream.

Now, Yente's gotten a makeover. She has expanded business and manages thousands of clients. And she's doing it all online.

New Yorker Marc Goldmann, the founder of JRetroMatch.com, was no stranger to matchmaking or to online dating. He just didn't like either on its own.

"I had issues with the sites regarding their privacy, how personalized it was," he says of cruising the Internet for missus material. "How did you know what was fraud? How did you know what was real?"

Goldmann's solution mixed Jewish tradition with Internet convenience. He built a social-networking Web site, beefed up the application process, increased the privacy, and hired just under 50 matchmakers to sort through members' profiles.

In fact, users of JRetroMatch.com don't peruse for themselves. Their potential dates are selected not by a computer-based compatibility test, but by a human being. If they like one of the chosen profiles, they can ask for a date.

Since the site's founding in August 2006, 10 couples have married. More than 1,000 are dating. The key to the success, says Goldmann, is the matchmaking corps.

"In the Jewish community, quite often people are really happy to set other people up," he says. "The problem is they usually have a very small pool per matchmaker."

Not so online. One of the site's top matchmakers, Lesley Silver-Winick, has 250 profiles under her personal command — and that's before she chats with her colleagues to research the site's approximately 7,000 members.

"I always let my members know," says Silver-Winick, "I say, I will search for you weekly ... I'm usually working 30 to 35 hours a week. On Sundays I can put in seven to nine hours."

The beauty of the job, for Silver-Winick, once a social worker for the city of Toronto, is that she can do it from home. She lives just outside Jerusalem, where she moved with her husband and family after the site hired her in December 2006. She calls her Los Angeles clients in the early morning, phones New York in the late evening and serves an increasing number of local and European singles.

And she knows a thing or two about looking for love.

"I actually got married at 40," says Silver-Winick, "so I went through, pretty much, 20 years of dating. I felt that I could relate to a lot of different people."

Some of Silver-Winick's clients may want little to no extra help. Others need help selecting a photo for their profile, or request the occasional pep talk.

"When I make a match, I'll follow up," she says. "If I don't hear from them, okay.

I don't hear from them. If I do, sometimes they'll ask me for advice a little bit. I'm there for them if they want me."

Personal interaction not only lends the site an old-world feel, it also ensures that the members are serious about meeting someone. A membership fee (about \$20 per month) also helps weed out anyone looking for a quick hookup. There's also an application process that includes personality tests, written questions and a personal chat with a matchmaker.

"On JDate.com, if you're just looking for an informal relationship, it's a good idea," says Jacob Kosoff, 26, a client of Silver-Winick who came to JRetroMatch.com after other online dating. "If you're really in for a long-term relationship, then JRetroMatch.com is probably better, because then it's worth answering all those essay questions."



For Kosoff, who joined the site when he was working in New York as a financial consultant, the work paid off. His chatty profile caught the eye of a local teacher, Ilene Harris, also 26. They would become the third couple introduced by Silver-Winick to marry.

"[Silver-Winick] checked in to see how things were going when Jacob updated our status to say we were dating exclusively," says Harris (now Kosoff). "If we had wanted something from her, she would have definitely been available to give a pep talk."

As clients go, Harris and Kosoff were some of the easier ones. In many cases, one of the central challenges is managing expectations, a skill in which the matchmakers are trained by the site's relationship coach, Deborah Grayson Riegel.

"If somebody says, 'I'm looking to date a guy who makes a quarter of a million dollars a year,' and your answer is, 'Sor-

ry, that's not an option,' then you've immediately turned somebody off," Riegel points out.

Instead, she acknowledges the dating criteria before picking them apart to find out what a person looking for a wealthy significant other really expects.



From engagement to aisle: Jacob and Ilene Kosoff, who were introduced by Lesley Silver-Winick of JRetroMatch.com. Below, the company's founder, Marc Goldmann, in the office with relationship coach Deborah Grayson Riegel.



REBECCA MCALPIN

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"Does it mean because you don't want to work?" asks Riegel. "You want to have children? You want to go to fine dining?"

Another hot issue: dating across the age gap. "We get some of the men, especially in their early 50s, especially if they've never been married and they want children, they'll only date women under 40, if not under 35," says Silver-Winick. "Very few women will go over the 10-year age gap, so we will say that and then it's up to them."

The solution, says Silver-Winick, is finding where a client's flexibility lies.

"Someone may prefer someone who's 5-foot-10," she says, "but if I lower it to 5-foot-9, then I can get another 50 matches."

"Or their range is 34 to 41, but I put it to 42 and it brings up a bunch more names."

As for Goldmann, he never got to put his online experiment to work for himself. On the day he gave notice at his management-consulting job to work the site full time, he went on his first date with his future wife.

They were set up by friends. ♦

turn up the heat

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