



No portion of this article may be reproduced without
express written permission of Style Publishing Group, LLC.
©2007 • All rights reserved.



Style Publishing Group
P.O. Box 1676
Frisco, Texas 75034
Phone: 972.335.1181
Toll Free: 877.781.7067
Fax: 214.722.2313

E-mail: info@friscostyle.com
Web: www.friscostyle.com

Ad Sales: (972) 335-1306

Love Online

By Penny Martin

INTERNET DATING is becoming more and more popular among singles over forty. At this stage in their lives, many have been “around the block” more than a couple of times and know all too well meeting quality people at a bar or singles hangout is highly unlikely. They’ve moved on and live busy productive lives. Still, many yearn to find someone special.

Many singles over forty have possibly been through a divorce, raised their children and have vibrant, successful careers. Their lives are full, but maybe not complete; something or someone is missing. Finding a special person with whom to share life’s successes often brings the wholeness they are looking for. Using Internet dating sites is a way for them to control who they meet and when.

“This method of meeting people can end happily! It takes time, patience and good common sense to weed through the people on these sites,” says Tina Corley, an executive assistant in her forties who not only used this means of finding that special someone, but was

successful.

After browsing several different sites, Tina settled on Match.com because they seemed to offer more detailed information on their postings and most of the members had photos. “At that time, they offered their services free to women. Only the men had to pay,” added Tina.

Many singles over forty have lives that are full, but maybe not complete; something or someone is missing.

Tina met Keith Corley, her husband now of five years, through Match.com. After weeding out a few “bad apples,” she noticed Keith’s photo and liked his profile. “He appeared to be down-to-earth and a no-nonsense type of guy,” she

explains. “I contacted him first by email. When he received my email and read my online profile, he was so intimidated, it took him a week to respond back to me. My profile stated I was a strong woman, very capable of taking care of myself and just looking for someone with similar capabilities to share common interests.” Keith finally returned Tina’s email, and after communicating both electronically and over the phone, they decided to move to the next step. “We met in person at a restaurant some weeks later, and have rarely left each other’s side since.”

Tina and Keith turned to Internet dating because they were single parents, with busy jobs and had no desire to go to clubs. For those serious about finding someone special and curious about the Internet dating method, Tina suggests being honest with yourself first. Know what you want and what you are looking for, write an honest profile, and always use good judgment in meeting people for the first time.

“Keith and I both met some

questionable characters on the Internet. Many members lie about their appearance and about their circumstances,” Tina admits. “Talking via email first, over the phone second, and lastly, meeting them in person in a public place is the best approach and seems to eliminate some of the less compatible folks. I met several men who did not work, and some who turned out to be married! Keith had similar experiences. You have to be patient, smart, and trust your instincts.”

Another woman, who doesn't wish to be named for the sake of her children, has been successfully dating one man for three months, but only after whittling through some less-than-desirable, even shady, characters. “Take your time,” she says. “Don't be in a rush. Be guarded. Remember, everyone can be whoever they want to be over the Internet!” She adds, “If you think about it, it's an unnatural way to meet, really. When you're young, it's easier to meet people, but as you get older you have so many responsibilities. There just isn't enough time for lots of socializing.”

Talking via email first, then over the phone, and lastly, meeting them in person in a public place is the best approach.

So, are these matchmaking sites a good or bad idea? “Good or bad will depend on your expectations. If you go



in with none, you'll be okay,” says Rob, (his name has been changed, for he too wants to remain anonymous). “They're just another method of meeting people and you use that service to meet only the people you want.”

THE MODERN MATCHMAKING BUSINESS

Before these Internet matchmaking sites emerged in the mid-90s, a small percentage of online users found love through newsgroups, games and various chat rooms. The creation of these commercial dating industries has brought exposure and millions of paying users ready to sign up.

Some statistics show at least 30 percent of American singles have used matchmaking sites and the overall cost of these personal sites has dropped over the last couple of years. This indicates more and more people will at least try this type of service. According to a survey from the market research firm Synovate, only about 15 percent of Americans have used the Internet to meet a potential romantic interest, but of that 15 percent, 42 percent have met their spouse or life partner.

Synovate surveyed 1,000 people in the United States to understand their online dating perceptions and to learn who has used the Internet to find a romantic partner and the level of success they have experienced. Half of those who said they have gone online to find love did so just for fun or out of curiosity, while 20 percent consider it simply a natural extension of their regular use of the Internet.

“The Internet is the matchmaker of our time,” says Steve Levine, senior vice president and head of technology and telecom for Synovate in North & Latin America. “As it continues to grow and becomes even more integrated in our lives, we should expect to see more people trying online dating.”

A large percentage of online daters believe using Internet dating services help to open up the playing field. People feel they find a better match because they have access to more potential dates. Experts suggest the following when considering an online dating service:

- Check the policies concerning your privacy. You do not want your name or email address sold to other companies.

	e-Harmony.com	True.com	ChristianCafe.com	Match.com	SeniorFriendFinder.com
Number of Members	>2 Million	>5 Million	>100,000	>15 Million	>400,000
Types of Service	Serious Relationship Seekers	Serious Relationship Seekers	Serious Relationship Seekers	Casual-Serious Relationship Seekers	Casual-Serious Relationship Seekers
Approximate Cost	~\$21/month	~\$22/month	~\$7.50/month	~\$17/month	\$8-12/month
Special Search Capability	Yes			Yes	
Free Trial Offered		7 Days	Yes	7 Days	

Graph information provided by online-dating-zone.com

- Search the sites to make sure a large membership of people who live near you is offered.
- Make sure the site you choose has features for evaluating all possible matches. The more key search options offered, the better.

30% of singles have used matchmaking sites and the overall cost of these personal sites has dropped.

PERCEPTION VERSES RESEARCH RESULTS

PEW Internet and American Life Project is another group whose 2006 findings on Internet dating show that despite the remarkable success rate of those who have met a long-term partner via the Internet, many people still view online dating a concept with which they are not comfortable. According to this research, 78 percent of those who have never used an online dating service said they never would resort to giving it a try. Utilizing these sites may still be seen as the domain of desperate, lonely people, but when asked, 68 percent of adults online do not agree and those who do have less online experience.

Perceptions are diverse, but maybe the conditions under which people begin their relationships do not really matter. Online dating services are just

another means to consider when life's circumstances make it more difficult for middle-aged adults to get out there and socialize.

ADVANTAGES:

- Control over whom you talk to and meet. The only pressure is self-inflicted.
- Sense of safety. You decide when to take the next step.
- More chances of meeting quality people. The responsibilities of a career and a home, plus family, which may consist of aging parents and even grandchildren, make it hard to socialize and meet a lot of new people.

DISADVANTAGES:

- Cost of becoming a member. The top sites are costly when you consider it can take months to find a suitable person with whom to begin a relationship.
- Negative stigma surrounding using these sites. There's still reluctance to admitting publicly to using an Internet dating service, even when your search was successful.
- Many members do not represent themselves truthfully. You have to "kiss a lot of frogs" before finding that "prince" or "princess."

Dr. Jeff Gavin of the University of Bath in the UK has conducted another study on this subject. Dr. Gavin, with Dr. Adrian Scott and Dr. Jill Duffield, of the University of the West of England, surveyed people ages 18 to 65, who have

used Internet dating sites. Some of Dr. Gavin's findings include:

- Most people would prefer to be in a relationship than not.
- 89 percent of online daters are between 45 and 60 years old, with 90 percent in the \$50,000 to \$75,000 annual income range.
- On average, women receive more than five emails daily from potential matches, while men receive only one or two.
- 40 percent of men say they are not confident meeting women for the first time.
- More than a third of the women asked do not like clingy men and believe personality is more important than physical appearance.
- Men online are more likely to be more committed than women in relationships that began over the Internet and were more dependent on their 'e-partner.'

People Magazine also conducted a survey of its readers regarding online dating and found of the men polled, 14 percent said sincerity is what they look for first in a partner, followed by a sense of humor and appearance. Of the women polled by *People*, 25 percent said a sense of humor was the most important criteria, followed by sincerity and having nice eyes.

If you are interested in giving Internet dating a try, be honest with and about yourself and have an open mind.

Penny Martin is a freelance writer living in Little Elm.