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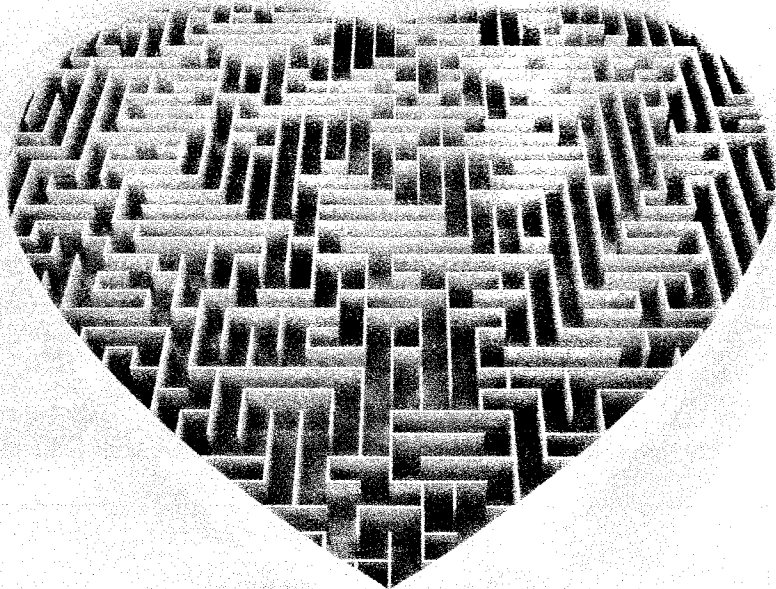
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WHAT DO PERSONAL MATCHMAKERS HAVE OVER YOUR PC?



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FINDING A SOUL mate is often called a numbers game. Match.com, Chemistry.com, eHarmony, and the like certainly have numbers: According to the *International Herald Tribune*, 97 million people visited Internet dating sites last year. But not everyone wants to slog through millions of online profiles, only to discover that their picks are much different in person. That's why personal matchmaking, though seemingly anachronistic, is a thriving industry in major cities across America.

Professional matchmakers use their intuition and extensive social databases to set you up with your true love. Personal consultations, image upgrades, an unlimited number of dates, and even

psychological evaluations are often included in the package.

When one of Rob Anderson's clients said that he wanted "a meatball," Anderson knew exactly what kind of guy he meant (neither match.com nor eHarmony offer a "meatball" checkbox) and then set out to find him. "I went to every cocktail function and searched for

'meatballs,'" he says.

Janis Spindel will often fly to other parts of the world to find a client a potential mate in his zip code (her clientele is all male). Every day of the week she goes on simulated dates with clients to up their games. Always on the lookout for women, Spindel does half-hour-long evaluations of women looking to get a special spot in her database of eligible bachelorettes.

Jennifer 8. Lee, a casual matchmaker for her friends, with a handful of weddings to her credit, once befriended a woman for the sole purpose of furthering her male friend's cause. "That way I could invite him to things that she would be at," she says. Try to get eHarmony to do that!

Unless you're in Lee's inner circle, you should budget a few grand for a matchmaker. Or even more for Spindel: Her packages start at \$25,000 a year and go up to \$500,000. Do you get what you pay for? Spindel claims responsibility for more than 800 weddings.

How much control should you cede to a matchmaker? Spindel will go so far as to select outfits for her clients and make them shave their beards. "When I say 'jump,' they say 'how high?'" she says. Others take a more relaxed approach. "Be yourself. There's a match for everyone," says Shoshanna Rikon, who focuses on pairing Jewish singles. "You just have to be realistic in terms of your criteria." —Kim Mickenberg

AMATEUR HOUR

WANT TO PLAY MATCHMAKER WITH YOUR FRIENDS? THINK FIRST.

GET THE GO-AHEAD in order to make sure your friend is ready for your help, matchmaker Lisa Ronis says. If you're happily paired, "you assume your friends want a relationship, too. Don't make your single friends feel like they have a disease." Lee, who merely "facilitates" introductions, warns against meddling too heavily. "I think it's dangerous," she says, "because what if it doesn't work out?"

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