

Six-figure job: Spouse seeker

Increasingly popular, professional matchmakers can collect handsome fees to find clients 'the one.'

By Jeanne Sahadi, CNN/Money senior writer

NEW YORK (CNN/Money) – When it comes to finding a partner, there may be a lot of fish in the sea.

But what if you don't have time to swim with every school, or you live in over-fished waters? Or maybe you just have a hard time with the whole bait-and-tackle thing. In any case, catching the right one can be tough.

Enter the high-end, professional matchmaker. Matchmaking is an old profession with a decidedly modern twist: Databases, ad campaigns and a culture of singles who don't have built-in social networks.

The matchmaker will interview clients about their desires, screen potential partners according to a client's specifications, make several introductions over a year or two, and fine-tune the search as more information comes to light about a client's nature and preferences.

Clients who pay for premium service don't have to trek to the matchmaker's office for that initial interview. The matchmaker will fly to them. They also will conduct a media search on the clients' behalf, which includes placing ads about them in top city magazines and then screening the people who respond.

What qualities make a good matchmaker?

Amber Kelleher-Andrews, COO of the California-based [Kelleher & Associates](#), which bills itself as matchmakers to the rich and famous, notes you "have to have a sense of business, some luck and a ton of intuition."

Of love and money

Building a successful business that can charge that much requires years of groundwork. You'll need to develop a deep database of viable candidates and a reputation for successful matches and ethical practices.

You have to manage your clients' expectations, too. "You can't manufacture what it is they're paying for – you can't make up the perfect person," Kelleher-Andrews said.

Both Chatfield and Kelleher-Andrews say they don't accept money from potential clients if they don't feel they can make matches for them.

That's not the case with every matchmaking firm. The field is not regulated, and hence is an invitation to charlatans out to make a quick buck.

Turning away potential clients who don't rank as "viable" also has to be handled gracefully.

So does dealing with clients who may still harbor bitterness from previous relationships.

Then there's the constant juggling act of bringing in new clients, making matches for current ones and maintaining a strong renewal rate for clients who like the service but have yet to find the right match.

The hours can be long. Kelleher-Amber says she works up to 14-hour days, which often include evening events.

Depending on how much competition there is in your area, how smartly you build the business and how much exposure you get, it might take anywhere from four to 10 years to make a six-figure income as the proprietor of a matchmaking firm, judging from Chatfield's and Kelleher's experiences.

You also may be able to earn six figures by working for a matchmaking firm, where you may be paid a salary plus commission based on the business you generate and the matches you make. ■