

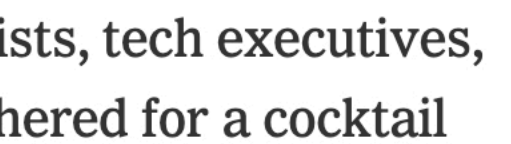
The High-End Matchmaking Service for Tycoons



Amber Kelleher-Andrews, left, and her mother, Jill Kelleher, of Kelleher International, a matchmaking service, at the company's headquarters in Corte Madera, Calif. Annie Tritt for The New York Times

By Dan Crane

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SAN FRANCISCO — On a characteristically foggy evening here, a group of predominantly single venture capitalists, tech executives, hedge-fund managers and philanthropists gathered for a cocktail party in a penultimate-floor suite at the St. Regis apartment complex.

As guests ate oysters, baby lamb chops and perhaps the world's smallest cheeseburgers, they were pitched a multiday, intellectually rigorous singles mixer to be held in January 2014 on [Necker Island](#), Richard Branson's 74-acre Caribbean paradise, "curated" by [Kelleher International](#), a long-running, high-end matchmaking service that is targeting Silicon Valley with particular vigor.

Wearing an Alexander McQueen dress and towering Valentino heels as she sold the idea was the company's 44-year-old chief executive, Amber Kelleher-Andrews. "If we can get interesting single people and match them according to their taste, their likes, their interests and their passions, and get these 30 people on the island at a time, I can't even *imagine* what would happen," she told the group. "Whether it's two girls that become best friends or two guys that become business partners together, or it's a couple that ends up falling in love, I've seen it at TED, I saw it at Sundance and I know it can happen at Necker."

The cost of the trip per person is still being determined, but the base fee is \$45,000 (some of which is deductible because net proceeds go to Virgin Unite, Mr. Branson's charitable foundation), not including the cost of flights and optional spa treatments. It is the luxurious but perhaps logical next step for a new breed of philanthropically minded, well-heeled singles who are already tramping around the knowledge enrichment circuit.

Arjun Gupta is an affable, divorced venture capitalist who lives in Aspen, Colo., and had offered up his San Francisco pied-à-terre for the evening. He acknowledged that at events like [TED](#) conferences, and the [Aspen Ideas Festival](#), both of which he's been attending for years, some participants seek to nourish not just their minds, but their hearts as well.

"I don't think it's a primary objective," said Mr. Gupta, 52, "but as with anything that's interesting and stimulating, it is a large segment of singles. Invariably you do find people hooking up together." He is not yet a client of Ms. Kelleher-Andrews. "She's trying to convince me," he said with a smile.

Jean Oelwang, the chief executive of Virgin Unite, who had flown in from Salt Lake City, stressed that the Necker excursion (which she said would have a business-oriented theme of "future leadership") had loftier goals than providing a backdrop for hookups. "If you look at the relationships that Rosalynn Carter has with President Carter, or that Leah has with Archbishop Tutu," she said, "that deep respect and love has allowed them to be better individuals, but also to make change in the world."

One Kelleher client of seven months, the chief executive of a rapidly growing online start-up who asked to be identified by only his first name, John, to avoid professional embarrassment, seemed excited by the opportunity to promote such change and said he viewed the evening as "an audition" of sorts. Regardless of whether he passed muster, John added, he was just happy to be mingling among such an elite group.

"I wasn't sure what to expect tonight, but bare minimum, it's a very eclectic mix of amazing people," he said. "And dude, I gave a business card to Cheryl Tiegs!"

Ms. Tiegs, greeting a steady stream of sports-coat-and-jeans-clad male admirers, said that though she is single, she was on hand only as a pal of Ms. Kelleher-Andrews. "Trust me, I have enough men calling," she said.

Supermodels aside, in an age in which millions delegate their love lives to the algorithms of Match.com or Okcupid.com, it seems there are still singles who prefer an old-school matchmaker. According to Ms. Kelleher-Andrews, a former actress on "Baywatch" and "Melrose Place" who has been married to Nico Andrews, a champion jujitsu instructor, for 13 years, Kelleher International has 16 offices around the world and receives roughly 1,000 inquiries per month. Of those, she said, about 700 are women, roughly 10 of whom are accepted as clients.

A fee of \$15,000 buys a year's worth of unlimited matches in one city. Once a match is made, Ms. Kelleher-Andrews provides contact information and then conducts a detailed postdate follow-up with both parties. Another \$5,000 will add a second city to the search. And \$150,000 grants access to the CEO Club, which entails an international search, as well as the personal ministrations of Ms. Kelleher-Andrews; her mother, Jill Kelleher, who founded the company in 1986; or Sunya Andrews, 36, one of Ms. Kelleher-Andrews's seven nieces, who's been with the company for more than eight years.

"We have a great guy that just joined who's on his yacht in Capri right now," Ms. Kelleher-Andrews said. "But when he comes back into town, every single office and all the reps in New York and Denver, or wherever, they're all going to be aware of him so they're going to choose the top girls in each of these cities."

There are additional "success fees" for a match that results in either marriage or a long-term relationship, usually defined as one year, though this is agreed upon by the client at the outset of the contract. "It is really an incentive for the matchmakers, and could be anything from a monetary bonus or something else, like an all-expense-paid trip to the wedding," Ms. Kelleher-Andrews said, adding that the company has about an 85 percent success rate, thanks to what she called a highly selective application process.

"A lot of older women we don't take — and they're fabulous, but it's too hard to match them," Jill Kelleher said the morning after the party, at the company's headquarters in Corte Madera, Calif., which was filled with impeccably groomed young female matchmakers (many of whom have marriage- and family-therapy degrees or a background in life coaching, Sunya Andrews said). "We need to find a system to bring in the men."

Ms. Kelleher-Andrews was quick to point out that "[Ready for Love](#)," a recent short-lived NBC reality dating show on which she starred, generated more male referrals than any advertising or press appearances. "Who'd think that men would watch a reality dating show?" she said. "And good men!"

Like any good networker, Ms. Kelleher-Andrews refers to both clients and prospects as "friends." She said her database includes more than 30,000 people, including Monsanto executives and members of the du Pont family. "If I know someone like Cheryl Tiegs — and she's a friend of mine — if I have an amazing guy join the CEO Club and he seems like the type I would introduce to some of my friends, I would introduce them in a heartbeat," she said.

Since Jill Kelleher started the firm with a \$2,500 check from her first client, a lawyer who answered an ad she had placed in San Francisco magazine, the company has focused on higher-end clients, and it was early in targeting the growing male-dominated demographic of Internet moguls, both women said.

"Mom basically existed off the Silicon Valley people when it was just being born," Ms. Kelleher-Andrews said. "People who owned the big companies that were being built, from Sun to Microsoft to Oracle, the big people in those companies can't put themselves in a photo book on a dating service. Most of the employees are the ones looking in those photo books."

Of course, Kelleher International isn't the only matchmaking service seeing dollar signs in Silicon Valley. [Linx Dating](#), a service based in Menlo Park, Calif., that started in 2003, has a reputation for trawling Facebook, LinkedIn and other firms for singles, according to a May [article](#) in Vanity Fair. The [Millionaire's Club](#), founded by Patti Stanger, based in Marina del Rey, Calif., and widely known thanks to its appearances on a [hit Bravo show](#), regularly reaches north for its members.

Asked about the paradox of freshly minted tech millionaires relying on old-fashioned methodology to find a partner, Jill Kelleher expressed some regret about her career path. "I rebelled," she said. "I'm the dinosaur that didn't like computers, and we probably would be retired right now if we'd started Match.com."