COMMUNITY

Amber Kelleher-Andrews of Kelleher International: "People put their love lives into perspective"

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By Candice Georgiadis, Founder of Digital Day Agency



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As *a part of our series about women who are shaking things up in their industry, I had the pleasure of interviewing Amber Kelleher-Andrews.*

A true romantic at heart, with a deep passion for people, Amber Kelleher-Andrews lives her dream job as CEO of the global matchmaking firm, Kelleher International. Under Amber's stewardship, Kelleher International is the leader in a booming singles industry and is responsible for thousands of marriages, with 87% of their clients ending up in long-term relationships or marriage. Kelleher is continuously expanding to meet the demands of busy, successful singles and has been awarded back-to-back top global matchmaking awards since 2010. Amber's knowledge of human relationships combined with a healthy dose of intuition lends to her straightforward approach of listening and asking questions to get to the heart of each person.

One of her most rewarding endeavors to date is co-hosting leadership gatherings with Sir Richard Branson benefiting organizations like Virgin Unite and WildAid. The gatherings are intimate groups curated to include the world's most influential thought leaders, field experts, entrepreneurs, and changemakers all in one place to collaborate and make a positive impact on the world. Not only are these gatherings responsible for raising millions of dollars for charity, but they also encourage business as a force for good globally, becoming incredible idea and partnership incubators.

Amber is married to her husband of over 20 years, Jiu-Jitsu Gold Medalist Nico Andrews, and together they are raising their three children in beautiful Montecito, California.

Thank you so much for doing this with us! Before we dig in, our readers would like to get to know you a bit more. Can you tell us a bit about your "backstory"? What led you to this particular career path?

I grew up in the entertainment industry. My mother and father were successful models in the 70s and my step-father directed numerous top-rated made for TV movies. I had a brief career in the entertainment industry myself as an actress and model and appeared on a handful of shows like *Melrose Place, Baywatch, Married With Children* and *Wings*, as well as some national commercials and feature films. I was fortunate to work with some esteemed directors such as Tony Scott, Roland Joffé, and Roman Coppola.

My mother started our professional matchmaking firm Kelleher International in 1986 after she saw how busy executives and people, like those in Hollywood, struggled to find true love connections. Having inherited her romantic heart, I joined her at the company in 1995 as CEO and have never looked back, helping expand the Kelleher business to over 13 locations, including New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Dallas, Miami, and Scottsdale, London, Stockholm, and more.

Can you tell our readers what it is about the work you're doing that's disruptive?

My mother, Jill Kelleher, was the first disruptor back in the '80s when she put commercial Matchmaking on the map here in America. She saw the opportunity to move away from the "bar scene" and wanted to give single men and women who truly were looking for love an opportunity to meet at a venue other than a "meat market", which at the time was your local gym or singles party. Before computers and cell phones Kelleher gained an advantage immediately over random encounters because it worked, and my mother knew how to personally match her clients on morals and values which led to marriages and success. For over 30 years, our family business remains the global leader of exclusive, high-end matchmaking, which has become a billion-dollar industry.

We work with a select group of clients each year, connecting them with our global network of high-income, educated, and successful singles that have been personally vetted by our own matchmakers. Our clients are the world's most successful people who, until this day, still do not have time to go through standard dating practices.

As opposed to dating apps showcasing their personal lives, our clients desire more discretion when it comes to looking for love. As successful and as accomplished as they are, Kelleher offers highly personalized and discreet matchmaking for these individuals that they are not able to find anywhere else.

We all need a little help along the journey. Who have been some of your mentors? Can you share a story about how they made an impact?

I have been the CEO of Kelleher for over 25 years, but I feel like I learn something new every day. Working with people and matters of the heart keeps me on my toes. It is not the same as making widgets or manufacturing a tangible product. People are different from one human being to another, and we all take in information uniquely. My clients have taught me patience, the keen ability to listen, not to jump to conclusions, and to trust my gut. They are my mentors, and I am theirs. It's a wonderful career path for me to be on because it never gets old. I am a hopeless romantic and I love love. I have also had the blessing of working side by side with my mother who has been the single most important mentor in my life. She has a deep intuition and appreciation for psychology and matching.

My mother has always told me "there is a lid for every pot" and she proves this each and every day with her inner personal skills. She has taught me how to cut through all the noise of business and get down to what makes the human heart soar. We look at the passions and accomplishments of our clientele and help them continue to make an impact in their exciting lives but with a twist. We guide them to a place where love is at the center of everything that they do, and this takes one's life journey to all new heights.

In today's parlance, being disruptive is usually a positive adjective. But is disrupting always good? When do we say the converse, that a system or structure has 'withstood the test of time'? Can you articulate to our readers when disrupting an industry is positive, and when disrupting an industry is 'not so positive'? Can you share some examples of what you mean?

Having been in the dating field pre computers and dating apps has given me a unique perspective on what has made a positive and not so positive impact on dating. At first, I believed anything disruptive is good. Disruptive ideas bring change and change helps expansion and brings about new initiatives. Any industry can and should welcome improvements. That said, while dating apps were initially disruptive by placing our love life into our own hands, providing easy ways to connect with a massive amount of singles, it has not always been a positive experience for everyone. For the majority who are serious about finding true love, it has proven to be overwhelming. With so much choice readily available at our fingertips, it has dumbed down our senses and made it challenging to be discerning.

In a nutshell, if you are single, you are swimming in a turbulent red ocean, and if you can't float you will sink in no time. I believe too much choice has contributed to depression and handicapped many who "throw in the towel". The men and women that I speak to about their online social lives tell me that they have simply "given up" finding it increasingly difficult to sort through all the chaos. It's interesting that personal matchmaking (a thousand-year-old profession) has stood the test of time and remains at the top of this pyramid.

My family business, Kelleher International, for example, is a destination for those who have graduated from Tinder or Bumble and are tired of the misrepresentation. Matchmaking is for those who are unwilling to compromise or put their personal lives out on display to be judged by so many strangers. Sometimes when it comes to love and spending a lifetime with someone, less noise is best, and the more still it is for you, the more you can hear and smell and taste and feel. All important components of falling in love.

Can you share 3 of the best words of advice you've gotten along your journey? Please give a story or example for each.

I was way ahead of myself 10 years ago and was ready to conquer the world with disruptive ideas. I am more of a visionary than anything else, but I revel in making these visions and new ideas come to life and was ready to change the path for matchmaking in 2010.

Ready to make a big business leap, several of my business mentors gave me very sound advice at the time to **"stay the course"**. I was told to **"dig deeper"** and also to **"make what you do stronger than ever, before you go changing it".**

At the time, I was so frustrated because I really felt we had already been the trailblazers of the industry. It had been 20 years and I felt it was both time and our responsibility to keep moving the ball and leading the way. But every time I went to make a move, I was told to have patience.

Twelve years later, in retrospect this advice to stay the course and dig deeper was correct. While I personally was ready for the next big thing, the dating culture and "matchmaking" was just starting to gain traction in the public eye. Had I changed what we do, too many would have missed it!

Dating shows, for example, turned into "matchmaking shows" and this unique boutique industry was just starting to take a hold on primetime TV. Suddenly the term "Matchmaker" became a household name yet it was still too soon to change what we do because so many singles had little to no idea what it was all about still.

I followed my mentor's advice and I spent the next decade perfecting what we do—marketing to those who DID know what matchmaking is, while waiting for those who didn't to catch up. It worked! Dating apps got people to be proactive with their love lives while simultaneously proving how difficult it is to find the needle in the haystack. It brought about the importance and time saving advantages of someone else screening out all the "riff raff" for you.

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The time flew by as the world caught up to my mother's idea 33 years ago and our company's revenue tripled in the same time so it all was great advice. Now, I am ready to do what I wanted to do over a decade ago. Now is the time right to lead the way once again and disrupt matchmaking and this is what we plan to do.

How are you going to shake things up next?

First and foremost, it's all about relationships. We opened doors to new relationships and while we were staying the course at Kelleher International, we added some partnerships to shake things up along the way.

One of these partnerships is with Virgin Unite. Sir Richard Branson's wonderful Foundation that I fell in love with. I was fortunate to become a board member and on the advisory committee, and with this I began curating special think tanks of industry leaders for Richard. We would personally meet once a year at his private estate with a handful of change makers who I drew from within my Kelleher community. We have Former Presidents, Hollywood Academy award-winning actors, former Prime Ministers, celebrities, and Forbes entrepreneurs of the year. They are all our clients! We gathered together to talk about the triple P bottom line (people, planet, profit). We discussed how to leverage our influence as a driving force for good. Collectively we began to change business for the better. The Book "Screw Business As Usual" is the bible for business owners (written by Branson himself). It gives wonderful examples of people who make what they do their passion and their legacy and how industry and business can change the world much faster than the individual. Richard and I started to create ripple effects and these guests left his island with the intent to pay it forward. That is when the light bulb went off for me and I knew that the incredible community that we had built over three decades could meet on more than a match. We could essentially Match on Purpose, match one another for passion projects and networking with love at the center.

I knew then that if Kelleher can capture eligible singles in transition—for example at their peak of performance in business and life's goals and *then* place the love of their life in front of them—it's incredible to witness the joy and satisfaction of one plus one equals 20. This was the incubator of our KI Social Club which will launch January 2022.

In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges faced by 'women disruptors' that aren't typically faced by their male counterparts?

Men tend to be more solo focused while women by design are multi-taskers. Because of this wonderful female trait, I feel that women in general can be extremely successful disruptors. However, most industries are still male dominated and so these female disruptors who face male counterparts will likely have to deal with the challenge of getting their vision accepted and then implemented.

Men will want to wait, test the market, stay the course etc. Women on the other hand use their intuition and if they feel strongly about an idea then may wish to jump in, work faster and take more risks. All are important to consider but it's true that men may be less likely to take on a female disruptor's idea without proven data and research to pave the way first.

Is there a book/podcast/talk that has had a deep impact on your thinking? Can you share a story with us?

I love to immerse myself in meditation books, YouTube channels that talk about health and nutrition, and I always read books that teach us how to be happy and keep that positive energy and enthusiasm for life alive! I am a firm believer that thoughts become things.

If things start to go south after I wake up, I pause, even take a nap if possible or go meditate or lay in the sunshine to press reset and start all over again. What we think attracts our experience. Leave me in a bookstore and I am on cloud nine, we can never learn too much or expand the mind too far. I read about all forms of manifestation. It's what I do for others as well. Kelleher's client must manifest love and positivity in order to attract it.

If you could inspire a movement that would bring the most amount of good to the most amount of people, what would that be?

I believe that love heals everything. It gives us hope and it's what makes the world turn 'round. Real love starts with loving yourself first and then once you can honestly achieve this, you can love others. This includes friends, animals, children, family, and of course romance.

Unfortunately, life tends to get in the way for so many and love is lost or overshadowed by loss, pain, and life in general. If I could inspire a movement that would bring about the most change it would be to develop a tool that met everyone emotionally where they are and create the ability to process all the pain, dreams, aspirations, emotions and desires we all carry around inside ourselves to get past the defunctions and insecurities. I would develop a roadmap to make sense of it all so that each and every person on this planet could find their center and feel what it is like to be loved and to be able love in return.

There really is nothing more important in a lifetime. That's a movement worth practicing.

Can you please give us your favorite "Life Lesson Quote"? Can you share how that was relevant to you in your life?

A life quote from C.S. Lewis has always been true for my personal journey working with our clientele is **"You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending".** This is such an important life lesson for those in transition from marriage to divorce.

When people find themselves suddenly "single" they tend to focus on the past and try to find fault or reason—but what we do at Kelleher is show them the opportunity that lies in front of them. It is in other words, time to rewrite the book! With a healthy new perspective and the right guidance our clientele can rewrite the next chapters of their lives and ensure that when it comes to love, they indeed have the best years ahead of them!

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Hey lovers! If you haven't tapped into this series yet I am here to clue you in. The New York Times turns real life love stories into on screen dramas. Every episode is beautifully adapted and suspenseful. xoxo Amber bit.ly/37NPjtM

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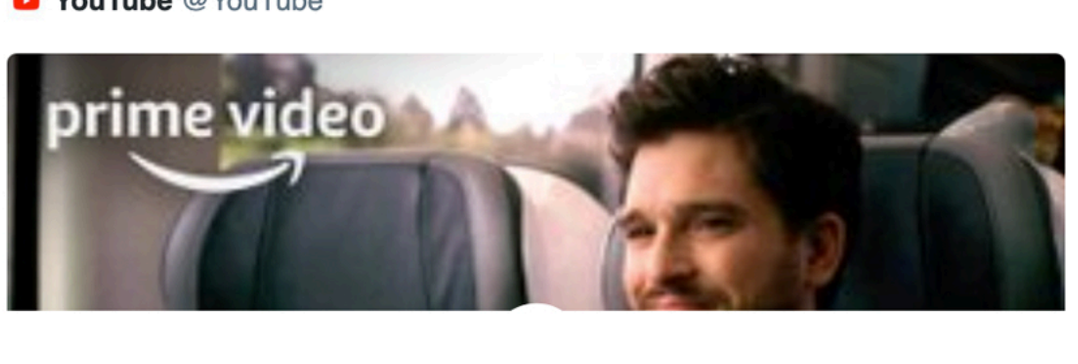

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