

The millionaire matchmaker

Why **Trudy Gilbert** may be able to find your perfect match...

► **FOCUS** // PROFILE

While some may scoff at the idea of the rich and famous being unable to find a date, Trudy Gilbert has been able to parlay this unusual social phenomenon into a successful elite dating agency.

Gilbert started Elite Introductions in 2005 after reading a magazine article about a woman in New York who was providing a similar service.

“I thought that business model could be adapted for our market,” Gilbert explained.

“Her business was way too exclusive – it cost \$50,000 and she promised to find you a husband and it was a bit full on. But it got me thinking that in Australia we didn’t have anything that catered to the professional market. Sure there were dating agencies, but none that catered exclusively for the higher end.”

So who uses Gilbert’s service?

“Our members are generally business owners or executives, most are tertiary educated, they don’t smoke, they’re athletic, they would be doing exercise three to five times a week – ranging from running, skiing, sailing and golf – they enjoy reading, and they have often lived overseas for several years,” she said.

“They enjoy cultural experiences,

and love dining out and enjoying a nice wine. They are confident, social, open, interesting.”

If you’re wondering why people like this aren’t able to find partners, Gilbert believes there are several contributing factors.

“They come to me because they want to meet an equal and they find that hard to do in their normal social circles,” she explained.

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“My members range from 28 to 65. Even in your late 20s you’re over going to the nightclubs and bars. If you have a public profile you don’t want to use an online service – that’s not an option for a lot of people or they have used it and been terribly disappointed with the results. They don’t have any more single friends in their network and they don’t want to date anyone from work – so what are they going to do? What do you do if you are 30 and none of those options appeal or work for you? Do you just hope and wait and hope it is going to happen?



AT A GLANCE:

Name: Trudy Gilbert

Position: Founder and director Elite Introductions

Founded: 2005

Turnover: \$1.1 million

Expected growth: \$2 million next financial year

“I’ve represented television presenters, models, millionaires – they are all highly eligible. People wonder why they might be coming to me, and the answer is because they find it tough. Imagine a celebrity in Hollywood, I’m sure there is a discreet matchmaker helping some of the starlets who might not want to date a celebrity but they do want to date a decent guy. It can be lonely if you have a lot to offer and you can’t meet an equal.”

After starting the company in late 2005 with a flurry of PR and an offer to register for free to build up the initial database, Gilbert now charges \$4995 for clients to register with the service.

“People fill out the application form online, then we have a phone interview with them to ask them who they are looking to meet,” she said.

“We then run a search through the database to see if we have those sort of people available. A computer helps us bring up the basic requirements such as age, religion, location, marital background, but after that it is a manual process of knowing each person and thinking about whether or not they are going to connect – do they have similar energy levels, personalities, are they going to be able to sit and talk for hours because they have a lot in common?

“It’s kind of like at school when you know that people are in particular crowds, you are able to get a feeling about people.

“After that we have a face-to-face interview if we think we have potential matches for them, and then we have them join if we think it is right.

“It is a very measured and considered approach. We tell people that membership is based on availability and compatibility. We’ve had eight marriages, lots of couples that are in long-term

DO IT YOURSELF

Research: Gilbert spent time researching the local market and international examples.

Get excited: Creating passion for your endeavour will not only motivate you to work harder, but it will encourage others to become engaged with your vision.

Aim small: By targeting a niche market, Gilbert is able to deliver a much better service than attempting to be all things to all people.

MEET YOUR MATCH!
Elite Introductions is offering five lucky *Wealth* Creator readers the opportunity to meet their match. See page 70 for details.

committed relationships and babies – we’re obviously doing something right.”

The strength of the company is evidenced by its growth pattern. Gilbert said many people were so impressed by the service that she received referrals from three or four people from some clients.

“We are so ethical in how we operate and so determined to provide a high-quality service that I won’t take anybody on just for the money – I’m not interested in that,” she said.

“The main challenge is making sure that we take on the right people so that we don’t have too many of one gender or age group. Sometimes that means saying no to profits, but it is in the best interest of the agency to do it that way.”

For Gilbert, the main challenge of building her company has been working out an effective marketing strategy, as she admits that it is not a traditional business to market.

“I’ve built a brand that is almost a contradiction of dating agencies,” she explained.

“Dating agencies have always had an aura of being for the desperate and dateless, but mine is for the exclusive and successful. It’s turning it on its head.

“People are actually proud to be a member of Elite because it means they have made it in society – they are a success and they are considered a catch.”

So what is next for Elite Introductions? After building the business in Sydney and Melbourne, Gilbert said the next target market would be Brisbane.

It’s clear the challenge of expanding the company is something Gilbert relishes.

“You have to be passionate about what you do, because then it won’t seem like work,” she said.

“Work hard, because you don’t get anywhere unless you do. If you are truly passionate about it you will just love it every day and it doesn’t feel like work. People that you encounter through your business will also respond because you are happy and giving off great energy.”

Hard work and passion? Sounds like a perfect match. **W**

