



# GDI

POWER BOOK

# WOMEN IN DATING POWER BOOK 2021

RECOGNISING THE  
MOST INFLUENTIAL AND  
INSPIRATIONAL FEMALE  
LEADERS IN ONLINE DATING

**WOMEN**  
♀ IN DATING

[WWW.GLOBALDATINGINSIGHTS.COM](http://WWW.GLOBALDATINGINSIGHTS.COM)



On behalf of the Global Dating Insights team, I am honoured to partner with the Women In Dating initiative as we recognise 20 of the most influential and inspirational female leaders in online dating.

Positive steps have been taken in the past few years to achieve equal representation, but the Women In Dating initiative is here to lend a helping hand. Together we are striving to empower women to enter technology roles, leading to more inclusive cultures and innovation.

I am always proud to say that online dating is ahead of this curve, with a good number of major brands, including the two biggest publicly-traded companies,

being led by female CEOs. I am excited about what the future holds and can't wait to see the changes that are coming. The first Women In Dating Power Book honours 20 incredible women who have broken down barriers to make the online dating industry a better place. We're looking forward to publishing this list every year and recognising new women who continue to build upon this platform.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to the Women In Dating Council for taking on the necessary role of providing thought leadership and guidance to women in the industry. This movement will undoubtedly shape a better future for online dating, as well as the wider technology sector.

GDI will continue to offer support in any way that it can. Whether that's in the form of this Power Book, podcast episodes, webinars or panel discussions at our global conference over the coming years.

**LUKE SMITH**

**EDITOR,  
GLOBAL DATING INSIGHTS**

'TOGETHER WE ARE STRIVING TO EMPOWER WOMEN TO ENTER TECHNOLOGY ROLES, LEADING TO MORE INCLUSIVE CULTURES AND INNOVATION.'

# INTRODUCTION



I had the opportunity to talk to two of Women In Dating's founders, **Jane Ramadan** and **Courtney Kovacevich**, to get a better understanding of how the Council operates.

## *Can you explain why you wanted to create Women In Dating and why it is such an important movement for the industry?*

- Women In Dating is a shared passion for elevating the online dating industry through the perspective of diverse women executives and contributors to build core values, company cultures, and future products that align with modern dating app users.
- Women In Dating was created out of the belief there is a unique opportunity to transform dating apps and the industry, beginning with amplifying female voices worldwide. We hope to bring together our influence to drive meaningful change while shaping the industry and product development through the Women In Dating Council.
- We are grateful to RealMe for supporting this initiative and recognizing its important industry impact.

## *How did you go about assembling such a brilliant lineup of female dating representatives?*

- We were fortunate when reaching out to our contemporaries about joining the Council. We found a collective shared spirit in the desire to lift up women, trans women, and connect with allies.
- The Women In Dating Council comprises the greatest industry minds, who also happen to be women. With their guidance, support, creativity, and generosity, we empower and drive a positive impact for others worldwide.

## *How is the Council working with its members and other online dating organisations in order to shape a better future?*

- We regularly meet with the Women In Dating Council members to develop projects and programming to support, educate, and empower women, trans women, and allies worldwide.

- GDI and IDEA/OPW have been crucial partners in amplifying our content and giving our organization greater reach.
- We had such an overwhelming initial response to Women In Dating that we added Contributors to the organization. We can tell more stories, inspire more people, and develop additional ideas for programming, events, and branding through this powerful group of women. Women In Dating is better for the diverse voices and experiences which give rise to our movement.

## *What are some positive steps that have already been taken by the industry as a whole that you're looking forward to building upon?*

- This year marks a huge step forward in hiring female leadership to key, senior roles throughout the industry. We feature many of these women in this inaugural Women In Dating Power Book.
- This has also been an essential year for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion leadership. It is crucial to see dating companies ensuring more inclusive and diverse environments and company cultures, with pivotal hires reflective of the employees and members of their dating apps.

## *What are your biggest goals for the Women In Dating Council over the next 12 months?*

- Women In Dating has one central mission to help empower as many women, trans women, and allies as possible worldwide.
- We are starting meaningful industry conversations, forging a path for female representation in the workforce, and helping to make product considerations for women dating worldwide. These initiatives begin with the simple step of gathering like-minded peers and giving their voices a platform to be accessed and heard.

## *I'm sure this message is going to resonate with a lot of people in the community, so how can they get involved?*

- Everyone is welcome to join us. Visit our website ([womenindating.com](http://womenindating.com)), follow us on LinkedIn, social media, engage with our content, attend our events, and tell us what you want to see!
- Raise your hand, and we will gladly include you in Women In Dating.

# WOMEN ♀ IN DATING

Women In Dating has been working hard to champion an important cause, hiring women in key roles throughout the industry. But it is essential we remind ourselves that the need for this isn't simply about shattering glass ceilings. Women in leadership roles in this industry bring a valuable perspective gained through life experience. It begins with a fundamental truth -- men and women have different experiences in dating.

The Internet has given us many conveniences in regard to dating; at the same time, it's created challenges for women that men, for the most part, don't face. The challenge is safety. My time with RealMe, another founding member of Women In Dating, convinced me one of the best ways to make online dating a

safer and richer experience for women is to have more women in positions shaping not just dating apps but our cultural expectations of dating online. I saw RealMe's mission, to make people safer when they connect with strangers online, as the perfect platform to rally women to this vital cause. We need to keep women safe, especially in the early stages of dating when people know little about each other.

RealMe and Women In Dating believe the dating industry needs more women at the table. Our experienced voices will speak for themselves. The promise of The Internet must include a promise to women, to be a safer place, especially when it comes to dating. This promise is what brought us here together.

**COURTNEY  
KOVACEVICH**

**CO-FOUNDER,  
WOMEN IN DATING**

**realme**





Having spent over a decade in the dating industry, it's been fascinating to watch the metamorphosis as it has transformed from a male-dominated space into the gender-diverse leadership that we see today, with new apps winning the hearts of young daters across the world.

When one of the largest female-led dating apps went public earlier this year, it was a signal that people are looking for a new guard of female leaders to step in and change the experience of online dating. Today, we've seen more than approximately 10 new dating startups founded by women.

So many of our systems were built for women, but not by women. I believe we should be at the helm in shaping these experiences for ourselves, which is why I'm

thrilled to be a Women In Dating Council Member. Together, we can support and lift each other up as we redefine, with the goal of revolutionizing our industry.

Through this work, I hope the next generation of women will be able to see themselves as leaders. The shift we're seeing in the dating space today resonates beyond just our category, it represents a step in the right direction for not only for technology companies, but corporations as a whole.

**KIM KAPLAN**  
**FOUNDER & CEO,**  
**SNACK**



'SO MANY OF OUR SYSTEMS WERE BUILT FOR WOMEN, BUT NOT BY WOMEN. I BELIEVE WE SHOULD BE AT THE HELM IN SHAPING THESE EXPERIENCES FOR OURSELVES'



'APPS DESIGNED WITH FEMALE-CENTRIC FEATURES ARE TAKING CENTER STAGE, ALONG WITH TRUST, SAFETY, AND PRIVACY.'

In my experience, dating and match-making has been evolving continuously, especially in my home country of India. With over 90% mobile traffic, we're seeing first-time internet users having access to affordable smartphones and mobile internet packs, from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds and demographics. Combined with digitization, we're seeing usage increasing outward, making this a very interesting market to grow.

Being a female executive provides a huge opportunity to address the needs of women, by offering solutions to provide the best in online matrimony. We can work toward empowering women to make their own choice in choosing the right life partner to support their aspirations, passions, and dreams.

It's interesting to see how online dating has moved from mainstream to niche segments, where it's all about quality and relevance, with users having the ability to pick and choose based on individual preferences.

Apps designed with female-centric features are taking center stage, along with trust, safety, and privacy. One of the biggest moves is seeing female executives developing products that are connecting users with empathy and providing solutions to potential issues.

As a Women In Dating Council Member, I will have the opportunity to learn and share from other female executives, which will help the overall industry address the needs and continue to grow. Women In Dating will be instrumental in increasing awareness of female-centric topics in the industry.

**SAICHITHRA  
SWAMINATHAN**

**CHIEF PRODUCT OFFICER,  
MATRIMONY**

**matrimony.com**

# WOMEN IN DATING POWER BOOK 2021



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**CHARREAH JACKSON**  
Journalist, Consultant & Coach



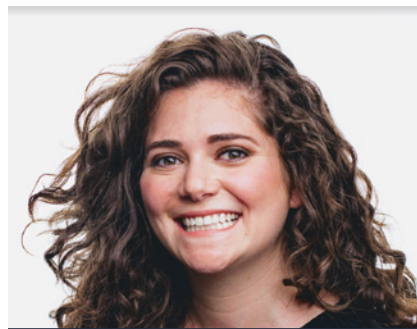
**NICOLE CHASIN**  
VP Growth & Marketing, LOLO



**SAICHITHRA SWAMINATHAN**  
Chief Product Officer, Matrimony



**CLÉMENTINE LALANDE**  
CEO, Once Dating Group



**LOGAN URY**  
Director of Relationship Science,  
Hinge



**ROBYN EXTON**  
Founder & CEO, HER



**MARIKO TOKIOKA**  
Founder & CEO, EME Hive



**KIM KAPLAN**  
Founder & CEO, Snack



**DAYO AKINRINADE**  
Founder, Africlick and Wisdom



**MELISSA HOBLEY**  
CMO, OkCupid





'INNER CIRCLE HAS COME OUT FROM THIS INCREDIBLY CHALLENGING PERIOD STRONGER THAN EVER BEFORE, WITH AN INCREASED EMPHASIS ON CHALLENGING SINGLES TO DATE BETTER'

## MASHA KODDEN

### MANAGING DIRECTOR, INNER CIRCLE

Inner Circle was one of the biggest hosts of online dating events in the industry before the pandemic, with a hybrid approach that also included a curated community of singles that were serious about ending long-term relationships. However, once global lockdown restrictions were implemented and Inner Circle events were completely cancelled, its daily active user count started to drop. The brand acted fast and evolved to make sure it continued to stand out from the crowd. Inner Circle upped its focus on high quality dating and ensured users were as safe as possible while navigating the app.

Masha Kodden joined the team in November 2020 to take over some of the day-to-day running responsibilities from co-founder and CEO David Vermeulen. Her impressive history and expertise in scaling technology companies is ideal for the next stage of Inner Circle's growth, while her passion for online safety is paramount to running a modern dating platform.

Following Masha's guidance, Inner Circle has come out from this incredibly challenging period stronger than ever before, with an increased emphasis on challenging singles to date better by being open, honest and safe. It finally managed to get back to its popular singles events this summer, much to the delight of its members. Masha is an established member of the 'Women In Dating Council', taking part in its first ever panel discussion at the GDI London Conference in September 2021.



# KARIMA BEN ABDELMALEK

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER & PRESIDENT, HAPPN

The pandemic had many effects on every level of our lives. For Singles, this has been amplified by the loneliness they felt and the inability to meet new people. Dating apps such as happn have been a modern answer, a way for them to continue socialising. In addition to this mission, happn has faced a new challenge and proved its capacity to adapt to the context and to Singles' expectations. As the app is based on geolocation, the team immediately adapted the radius for crossings and introduced some virtual dating features such as the video call.

In July 2021, Karima Ben Abdelmalek became the new CEO and President of happn. With her impulse, she initiated a new strategy based on trust. Her goal is to reinforce trust with singles, especially women. Last year's restrictions made many people rethink their romantic situation and decide not to be by themselves for potential lockdowns in the future. happn should be a reliable

partner for them, a way for them to re-enchant their dating life.

This new strategy also includes making virtual dating more real. That's why, in September, the app launched a range of new features dedicated to voice. happn strongly believes in the emotions Singles can feel, even if they meet on a dating app: listening to a voice, discovering a tone is a way to recreate the Crush they can have in real life. With this mindset, happn will continue developing features to support Singles in their quest for love, bringing to them the trust and the authenticity they need.



'KARIMA IS STRIVING TO MAKE EVERY ASPECT OF THE DIGITAL WORLD AS POSITIVE AS POSSIBLE'

# WHITNEY WOLFE HERD

## FOUNDER & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, BUMBLE

Whitney Wolfe Herd's achievements as an entrepreneur are beyond impressive and she is a constant inspiration for women looking to break into male-dominated industries. When Bumble was first launched it was an app looking to hand women the tools to take control of their dating journey. It is now a multi-billion dollar public company and a global movement, empowering women to not let anything stop them from achieving their goals. Whitney made history in February as the youngest female CEO to take her company public, becoming the fifth youngest female billionaire in the process.

Bumble's IPO on Valentine's Day 2021 was met with a large amount of interest, from both professional and retail investors who were optimistic about its future in the dating space. There is also a large amount of

talk about the company's potential expansion as a lifestyle brand and what that might look like. The first permanent 'Bumble Brew' has opened in New York, a trendy restaurant, cafe and wine bar for people to meet their friends and dates.

Whitney is looking to make real world changes as well and her spirited campaigning led to cyberflashing being outlawed in Texas. Work is still being done to introduce similar legislation on the federal level and in the UK. Bumble has also used its platform to speak on behalf of the pro-choice movement and offer financial support to Black-owned businesses that struggled during the pandemic.



'SHE IS A CONSTANT INSPIRATION FOR WOMEN LOOKING TO BREAK INTO MALE-DOMINATED INDUSTRIES'

'SHE HAS PUBLICLY MOTIVATED WOMEN TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST INJUSTICES AND TO NOT BE AFRAID TO FACE SETBACKS.'



## HELEN VIRT

### HEAD OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT, HILY & TAIMI

Helen Virt is the Head of Business Development at Hily and Taimi, two dating and social networking apps that exploded into the industry a few years ago. Hily is a general platform that is looking to take on the major players, while Taimi is a safe space dedicated to the LGBTQ community. Both products recently added livestreaming features to increase interactivity. Users can play games with each other, receive virtual gifts and take part in virtual events, such as Taimi's annual Pride Month celebrations.

Taimi used to operate simply as a dating app for gay men but expanded its reach to serve as a social platform for everyone who identifies as LGBTQ. This change in mission has been a successful one, as the community continues to grow and now has over 10 million members. The team is always looking for ways to give back, by raising both money and awareness for people in need.

Helen is very passionate about what she does and making a positive impact on people's lives, which is what led to her taking on senior leadership positions at such a young age. She has volunteered for a number of worthwhile causes, including human rights and counselling LGBTQ youth. Gender equality is a principle that is also close to her heart, and she has publicly motivated women to speak out against injustices and to not be afraid to face setbacks while fighting for what they believe in.





## CATHERINE CONNELLY

CO-FOUNDER & SVP MARKETING, THE MEET GROUP

myYearbook, a social networking platform that later became MeetMe, was founded by Catherine Connelly with her brothers, David and Geoff, in 2005. Catherine was just a teenager at the time. Fast forward to the modern-day and that product has evolved into a dating and livestreaming market leader.

The Meet Group is the parent company for social dating and livestreaming apps MeetMe, Skout, Tagged, and GROWLr. It is perhaps best known for spearheading the adoption of video and livestreaming in the Western dating industry, providing a unique experience when connecting users with new people. As the virtual trend began to gain traction last year, a lot of companies would've looked to The Meet Group as the blueprint for rolling out alternative entertainment options. Through vPaaS, its video platform-as-a-service solution, it powers livestreaming video for some of the largest dating and social apps in the world. The Meet Group's video community spends one billion minutes in video each month.

In September 2020, The Meet Group was acquired and merged to create ParshipMeet Group, alongside matchmaking brands eharmony, Parship, and ElitePartner. Catherine's ongoing journey from the myYearbook days makes her one of the longest-serving and most successful female entrepreneurs in the dating space today.

'CATHERINE'S ONGOING JOURNEY MAKES HER ONE OF THE LONGEST-SERVING AND MOST SUCCESSFUL FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS IN THE DATING SPACE TODAY'



THE  
**MEET**  
GROUP

# SHAR DUBEY

## CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, MATCH GROUP

Shar Dubey has committed a large portion of her professional career to the online dating industry, remaining loyal to Match Group throughout that time. She started 15 years ago on the product side of Match.com, working her way up to CPO. After a short hiatus, she returned to Tinder in 2017 as COO, but was quickly moved up to the holding company after less than a year in the role. Her final promotion to CEO came in March 2020, a month that will remain memorable for very different reasons.

What followed was the most tumultuous period of Match Group's history. Shar was tasked with steering the company through the early stages of the pandemic and overseeing the evolution of virtual dating. While singles around the world were facing an indefinite period of not being able to meet new people, she ensured the portfolio was continuing to offer high quality dating products. This led to approximately one million new

paying subscribers joining the company in last year's second quarter.

Match Group is looking to the future and is investing in the so-called 'Metaverse'. With the \$1.725 billion acquisition of Hyperconnect, it is planning to bring more video and livestreaming features to its subsidiaries and has even started work on a VR dating experience called 'Single Town'. Shar has also prioritised the internal development of diversity, equity and inclusion by creating several new senior positions across Match Group and Tinder.



'SHE ENSURED THE PORTFOLIO WAS CONTINUING TO OFFER HIGH QUALITY DATING PRODUCTS'



'SHE WAS ONE OF THE YOUNGEST CEOs OF A MAJOR COMPANY IN THE ONLINE DATING INDUSTRY'



## ANNA MARIA WANNINGER

### CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, LOVOO

LOVOO is a brand under the Parship Group umbrella and is dedicated to providing European singles with a combined dating and live video experience. Based in Dresden and Berlin, LOVOO has been one of the most successful dating apps in German-speaking markets for the last ten years.

The management team was completely revamped as three major executives, including two of the original co-founders, stepped down to pursue new challenges. Anna Maria Wanninger assumed the role of CEO and was joined by Claudio Di Vincenzo and Brad Richards. At just 29 years-old, she was the youngest member of this new-look executive board, as well as being one of the youngest CEOs of a major company in the online dating industry. However, this didn't hold Anna back as she immediately set about cementing LOVOO's position in the market and setting it up for future growth. She originally

joined the brand to oversee community and partner management, meaning she was already well-versed in the livestreaming products. Video is the biggest driver of engagement and revenue across The Meet Group's whole portfolio so it is paramount users are met with a high quality experience. Anna ran a major campaign earlier this year promoting live video dating as a safe alternative during the pandemic. Just recently, the new show „Liebe auf den ersten Kick. Die LOVOO und Jochen Schweizer Extreme-Dating-Show“ debuted on German TV.



# SNEHA RAMACHANDRAN

## HEAD OF OPERATIONS & PERFORMANCE MARKETING, S'MORE

S'More is a leading anti-superficial dating app, as it works hard to slow the whole process down and get users matching based on personalities before they even see what each other looks like. Following its launch in New York City at the beginning of 2020, S'More quickly became one of the fastest growing dating apps of the year. This was largely buoyed by the unique efforts of its product and operations division.

Sneha Ramachandran is in charge of operations and always puts an added emphasis on user feedback to aid the overall app development process. She also goes through the extra effort of breaking down feedback by demographic, so the management team can clearly see how different genders, sexualities and ethnicities would be impacted by proposed product updates. This has been a key driver in helping S'More with marginalised communities and establishing itself as a dating platform

for everyone who wants something more.

Sneha also analyses S'More's various performance and social channels to see how the overall brand is growing. The 'Happy Hour' live show is hosted every week on Instagram, where founder Adam Cohen Aslatei interviews and plays games with a variety of reality stars and influencers. Its success has inspired S'More to move towards creating more of its own original content and giving its community multiple interaction channels.



'SNEHA IS IN CHARGE OF OPERATIONS AND ALWAYS PUTS AN ADDED EMPHASIS ON USER FEEDBACK'



‘SHE MADE AN IMMEDIATE IMPACT AND HELPED TO IMPROVE TINDER’S IMPACT ACROSS OVERSEAS TERRITORIES’



## RENATE NYBORG

### CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, TINDER

The online dating industry took another significant step towards gender equality in September 2021 when Tinder named its first female CEO. Renate Nyborg received the promotion after being with the company for less than a year and obviously impressing the senior management team during her first few months. As General Manager of Europe, Middle East and Africa she made an immediate impact and helped to improve Tinder’s footprint across overseas territories through a series of marketing and strategic initiatives.

Renate has since relocated to New York City and is fronting up Match Group’s new offices in the concrete jungle. She is an expert in developing mobile products, growing subscription businesses and expanding them into new markets, which is perhaps an indication of the company’s plans to grow in Europe. After meeting her husband on Tinder, Renate knows how important dating

apps can be to people’s lives and will be committed to providing them with a safe and inclusive space to connect.

Tinder is in the middle of the biggest product development of its history, rolling out the ‘Explore’ hub. This consolidated section of the app is home to all of the dating and social experiences, making it easier for singles to find the relationships they’re after. The long-awaited second season of its original series ‘Swipe Night’ is now airing, with new ways for singles to match over their love of the show.





## CHARLY LESTER

### CO-FOUNDER, LUMEN & DATING INDUSTRY EXPERT

Charly Lester's expertise when it comes to online dating is practically unrivalled and she has been featured in countless publications giving advice to singles from every generation. Her industry background is a long and varied one. It includes launching the 'Dating Awards' across global markets and working with major media brands as a dating writer, as well as partnering with dating platforms as an in-house expert.

She is perhaps best known for being the co-founder of Lumen, a dating app for users over the age of 50. It was part of the former MagicLab holding company, before the Blackstone acquisition, Bumble rebranding and resulting IPO. Lumen gained significant traction by bringing modern online dating technology to the older generation, as well as its memorable (and sometimes controversial) advertising campaigns.

Charly has played a major role in the evolution of the 'Women In Dating' movement, most recently as the host of a panel discussion at the GDI London Conference alongside Inner Circle's Masha Kodden and happn's Karima Ben Abdelmalek. She has also worked closely with GDI on several podcasts and webinars to discuss how female founders are changing the dating industry, as well as more general issues like safety and security. The landscape of online dating has changed a lot since Charly first got involved, but her passion for helping single people find love has remained resolute to this day.

'CHARLY HAS PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN THE EVOLUTION OF THE 'WOMEN IN DATING' MOVEMENT'



# CHARREAH JACKSON

## JOURNALIST, CONSULTANT & COACH

Charreah Jackson has committed herself to aiding as many people along their personal journey as possible. While her own road has not been an easy one, diagnosed with cancer before the age of 25 and experiencing setbacks in both her romantic and professional life, she has never once given up her drive. She can lay claim to empowering women all around the world as the founder of Shine Army, a dedicated coaching service to make sure everyone achieves their full impact, which looks after clients on five different continents.

As a recognised relationship expert for more than a decade, Charreah has helped millions of women put themselves first and end relationships that push them forwards. She posted her bestselling book 'Boss Bride: e Powerful Woman's Playbook for Love & Success' in 2018, to guide professional women through their love lives and

careers without making sacrifices. It was named as one of the best motivational books and Charreah herself has been recognised as a 'Black Relationship Guru to Follow' by BET.

Charreah is the founder and president of Shine Army, a communications agency, Her clients include The Meet Group, where she serves as Connection Specialist for their app Tagged, a dating and livestreaming platform featuring a young and urban community. Her work has led to more and more women feeling better about dating and remaining safe while pursuing the romantic relationship they want. This was especially valuable during the everchanging pandemic when singles were constantly unsure about the best way to meet new people.



'CHARREAH HAS HELPED MILLIONS OF WOMEN PUT THEMSELVES FIRST AND FIND RELATIONSHIPS THAT PUSH THEM FORWARDS'



'NICOLE IS A STRONG ADVOCATE FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION, SPEAKING AT EVENTS TO EMPOWER FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS'



## NICOLE CHASIN

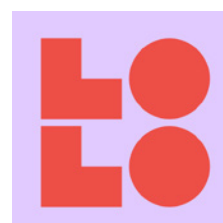
### VICE PRESIDENT, GROWTH & MARKETING, LOLO

Nicole Chasin's professional experience in both development and marketing means she can be a valuable asset for any startup in the technology space.

She is currently working with LOLO, a startup app that promises to make dating more fun and effective. It has integrated icebreakers, usually in the form of games, to help singles actually enjoy the dating journey. The process is designed to stimulate better conversation that should lead to stronger bonds and better relationships.

After undergoing a rebrand, changing its name from XO, LOLO is prepared to kickstart the next stage of its growth. Nicole's role sees her implementing proven digital marketing strategies that maximise engagement and deliver a product that members really want to use. She has also launched CUSP, the only modern astrology app focused on love, sex, relationships and compatibility, also created by LOLO's founding team. CUSP launched at the

end of October 2021, and early signals already point to its potential to be the next go-to daily astrology app. Nicole is a strong advocate for diversity and inclusion, speaking at events to empower female entrepreneurs to reach their full potential. Her expertises as a growth marketer and product strategist has helped plenty of startups get to the ground or reach the next level of growth, while also making sure that they meet the needs of their existing communities.



# LOGAN URY

## DIRECTOR OF RELATIONSHIP SCIENCE, HINGE

Hinge has been on a strong growth trajectory over the past couple of years. Driven by the consistent message of 'Designed to be Deleted', it has become a leading dating service for the millennials who are looking for a serious and long-term relationship. The company introduced a new division, 'Hinge Labs', in May 2020 that is focused on user and industry research.

As Director of Relationship Science, Logan Ury is the face of Hinge Labs. Her background in behavioural science and psychology brought her focus to dating almost five years ago. After starting as a relationship and breakup consultant, she penned her first book, 'How To Not Die Alone', a data-driven, step-by-step guide that stops singles from panicking and helps them build a relationship of their dreams. This methodical approach to modern dating made Logan the ideal person to lead the app's venture into consumer-facing research.

Hinge Labs played a major role in the early stages of in-app video calls, gathering information about the perception of virtual dating. While users were initially very skeptical, the majority said their attitudes changed after experiencing little to no awkwardness on a call. Logan is also working to tackle other industry issues, such as suggesting alternative options to ghosting and not feeling pressured on 'Dating Sunday'. Her most recent work encouraged women to be as sexual as they want with their partners this cuffing season, after missing out on physical contact over the past 18 months.

# Hinge

'AS DIRECTOR OF RELATIONSHIP SCIENCE, LOGAN URY IS THE FACE OF HINGE LABS'





## SAICHITHRA SWAMINATHAN

CHIEF PRODUCT OFFICER,  
MATRIMONY

Attitudes towards online dating and matchmaking tend to be slightly negative in countries like India, where cultures and values encourage romantic relationships to start through more traditional methods. However, established platforms like Matrimony are doing a really good job of reducing the stigma by providing safe dating services. They offer singles the opportunity to take more control when finding their future partner, but also give them the option to include their family members as much as they want. Matrimony holds the majority market share in India and manages several marquee brands in the space.

Saichithra Swaminathan has been with Matrimony for two decades and has overseen the majority of its technological and product developments. Women in India can have their reservations about online dating due to privacy concerns. Therefore, it is a major priority for Saichithra to have all the necessary safety measures in place and ensure they are completely comfortable. Matrimony released a matchmaking service for doctors at the beginning of 2021 so female medical professionals don't have to choose between putting their love or professional life first.

The company has also expanded its product reach beyond the beginning of the romantic process. It owns a handful of wedding planning platforms, giving couples a streamlined way to plan their nuptials by putting them in contact with approved vendors. Matrimony started an at-home wedding service during the pandemic so smaller ceremonies could be hosted in a COVID-secure environment.

'SAICHITHRA SWAMINATHAN HAS BEEN WITH MATRIMONY FOR TWO DECADES AND HAS OVERSEEN THE MAJORITY OF ITS TECHNOLOGICAL AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENTS'

[matrimony.com](https://matrimony.com)



## CLÉMENTINE LALANDE

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,  
ONCE DATING GROUP**

One of the biggest criticisms of the online dating industry is that it is too gamified and fast-paced, which in turn could lead to lower quality connections. These judgments are often made about swipe-based apps, so there are a number of developers who are looking to slow the process down and help users make better decisions. Once is a major player in the ‘slow dating’ sector. It very much puts quality over quantity by selecting only the very best matches for its members every day at noon.

Clémentine Lalande has grown the brand from the very beginning and often speaks about the issues that arise when dating platforms are run by men, for men. Slow dating is especially appealing to female singles who don’t want to be inundated with endless, unsolicited approaches, but enjoy spending more time getting to know their matches one at a time.

In June 2021, Once released a brand new emotional profiling test and matching algorithm, created by an all-female jury of psychologists and dating experts. It uses a short quiz of 28 contemporary questions to establish personality types and match members with complimentary outlooks on life. Clémentine is also the founder of Pickable, an app that protects women and puts them in complete control. They browse the app completely anonymously and only share images of themselves when they find a profile they want to interact with.

‘CLÉMENTINE LALANDE HAS GROWN THE BRAND FROM THE VERY BEGINNING AND OFTEN SPEAKS ABOUT THE ISSUES THAT ARISE WHEN DATING PLATFORMS ARE RUN BY MEN, FOR MEN’





## ROBYN EXTON

**FOUNDER & CHIEF  
EXECUTIVE OFFICER, HER**

After spending too long using ineffective lesbian platforms, Robyn Exton realised that there were no dedicated dating apps for queer women and nonbinary singles. So she took on extra work, taught herself how to code and created HER. The app was hand-crafted to cultivate the best possible experience for queer folk, giving them a safe platform to be themselves and interact with other members of the community. It is now home to over 8 million queer women, nonbinary, trans and gender non-conforming people.

HER is constantly evolving to make sure it is inclusive of the whole spectrum, adding new gender identities, sexualities and products to support all kinds of relationships. There is now a community section that operates more like a social network, so users can get advice and have conversations about all sorts of subjects, such as dating tips, coming out stories or just the latest TV shows and films. It hosted a number of virtual events throughout the pandemic which were attended by more than 20,000 people.

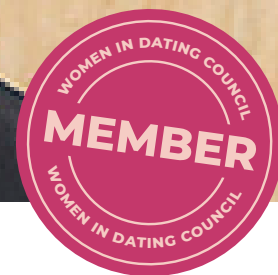
Robyn encourages her users to always be brave when dating online and to never be afraid to message someone they like. In her own experience, she has seen a lot of queer women be overly cautious when it comes to taking risks. Robyn also speaks passionately about diversity and inclusion in the technology sector and wants to see a complete structural reform in order to make real change.

‘ROBYN ALSO SPEAKS  
PASSIONATELY ABOUT  
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION  
IN THE TECHNOLOGY  
SECTOR AND WANTS  
TO SEE A COMPLETE  
STRUCTURAL REFORM’

HER



'SHE RECEIVED THE 'FORBES JAPAN WOMEN AWARD' IN 2019 IN RECOGNITION OF HER BUSINESS PROWESS AND CULTIVATION OF A DIVERSE WORKFORCE'



## MARIKO TOKIOKA

FOUNDER & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, EME HIVE

According to the World Economic Forum's annual 'Global Gender Gap' report, Japan is ranked 120th on the index that measures gender equality. Mariko Tokioka has previously called on the government, as one of the most developed countries in the world, to start implementing the necessary measures and increase female empowerment. She received the 'Forbes Japan Women Award' in 2019 in recognition of her business prowess and cultivation of a diverse workforce. Mariko is proud of her Japanese heritage, but still wants changes to be made on a much wider scale.

EME Hive is the largest Asian American dating and live-streaming app for finding community, friendship, and love. It was created for Asian American singles to meet people from similar backgrounds and escape the sexual racism they may have faced on other platforms. The dating and livestreaming service acts as a safe space for users to engage without being harassed, without being fetishized and without being rejected because of their ethnicity. It is

also working hard to improve Asian representation in the media, through partnerships with TikTok and creating other forms of video content.

Mariko and the EME Hive team have spent the past few months working on product updates to streamline the user experience. This includes improving the onboarding process to help people enjoy live streams for the first time and rolling out community features to support platonic relationships based on similar interests. Perhaps most importantly, EME Hive added more gender options to highlight its support for the LGBTQ community.



# KIM KAPLAN

## FOUNDER & CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, SNACK

Plenty Of Fish was one of the pioneers of the online dating industry when it launched early in the 21st century. Kim Kaplan was part of the first executive team, leading all product, marketing and revenue initiatives. Her work was instrumental in quadrupling the number of daily active users and growing revenue from \$10 million to over \$100 million. After leaving Plenty Of Fish in 2018, Kim started to advise a variety of Canadian startups and didn't think she would ever return to the dating space.

However, after seeing the number of young people who were trying to date on TikTok, she came up with the idea for a video-based dating app. Snack is targeted at Gen Z singles who want to have more fun and express themselves while dating. To date, Snack has raised over \$5 million, including a \$3.5 million pre-seed round in

February 2021. There has been somewhat of a video revolution going on in the industry over the past couple of years, largely caused by the pandemic and the necessity of virtual dating.

Kim has made it a priority to work alongside advisors in the 18-25 range to make sure the best possible product is being created for the target demographic. The 'Gen Z Syndicate' was set up in May to give more young people the opportunity to invest. Snack is considered by many dating insiders as an app that is worth keeping an eye on.



'HER WORK WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN QUADRUPLING THE NUMBER OF DAILY ACTIVE USERS'

‘DAYO REGULARLY SPEAKS ON PANELS ABOUT HOW DIVERSITY CAN BE IMPROVED AND IS A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION FOR MANY ASPIRING ENTREPRENEURS’



## DAYO AKINRINADE

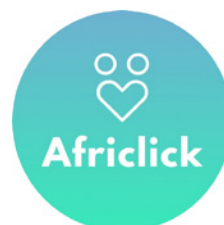
### FOUNDER, AFRICLICK AND WISDOM

The online dating industry has taken strides to be more inclusive of diversity. However, the issue of sexual racism is still prominent and the debate around ethnicity filters remains unsolved. After having one too many bad experiences on mainstream dating apps, Dayo Akinrinade spotted a gap in the market. She set about creating Africlick, a safe space for people of African heritage to meet, make connections and celebrate their culture.

Prior to working in the online dating industry, whilst working as a Big 4 IT Management Consultant, Dayo also noticed a lack of gender and ethnic diversity in London’s technology ecosystem. This drove her to co-found ‘OneTech’, an organisation that aims to increase the diversity of founders that receive funding from The Mayor of London’s investment fund. Dayo’s impressive contribution earned her recognition from the Financial Times, which named her as one of the most influential

‘Ethnic Minority Leaders in Tech’ in 2019.

While Africlick is still in its early stages, the sights have been set very high. The goal is to provide a platform for all one billion Africans around the world to form romantic, platonic and professional relationships. Dayo regularly speaks on panels about how diversity can be improved and is a source of inspiration for many aspiring entrepreneurs across technology’s endless sub-sectors.





'MELISSA HOBLEY IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S LEADING EXPERTS OF BRAND AND MARKETING IN THE WORLD'

## MELISSA HOBLEY

### CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER, OKCUPID

Melissa Hobley is one of the world's leading experts of brand and marketing in the world, creating advertising for OkCupid that always starts a conversation. The Match Group subsidiary is always unapologetic in its marketing and is never afraid to speak out on behalf of worthwhile causes. Billboards for the 'DTF' campaign were first seen at the beginning of 2018, but people are still talking about them today. A few of the various slogans were considered controversial in some circles for their political messages and support of the LGBTQ community.

This didn't deter Melissa and her marketing team and several updated versions of the DTF posters have been rolled out in the past few years. A similar campaign titled 'Every Single Person' was started this year to celebrate the incredibly diverse range of people in the OkCupid community. It recognised "romantics" and "tree huggers"

but also included individual spots for many sexualities and gender identities.

Giving a voice to minorities is a regular part of OkCupid's marketing strategy, empowering all people by giving them an opportunity to see themselves in the media. It also reiterated its support for abortion rights by introducing a 'Pro-Choice' badge in response to the restrictive new laws in Texas. This continued fight for equality is sure to continue as OkCupid expands across Europe by creating localised versions for the different markets.





# GDI

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