

The logo for Global Dating Insights (GDI) is displayed in a large, bold, red sans-serif font. The letters 'G', 'D', and 'I' are connected, with the 'I' being a solid vertical bar. The background of the top section of the cover features a dark, semi-transparent collage of several people's faces, including a man on the left and three women on the right, all smiling or looking towards the camera.

**GDI**

POWER BOOK

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# POWER BOOK 2016

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO THE  
MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE  
IN THE ONLINE DATING INDUSTRY

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Welcome to our second annual GDI Power Book, the defining list of the most influential and powerful people in the online dating industry.

Over the next 23 pages we recognise and celebrate the people driving, shaping and developing this exciting industry.

Our inaugural Power Book in 2015 launched at the start of the year. While this date is significant in the holiday calendar and during an important season for the dating industry, we've moved this year's Power Book to launch for Valentine's Day, the biggest day of the year for online dating.

This year's Power Book has a different feel. We have split the stars of our industry into four categories that include influencers - made up of the giants from our industry - innovators who are setting a new path for consumers, the startups making waves in the market in Europe, Asia and the US, and the ones to watch, which includes future stars and established players adapting their businesses.

With the industry changing over the past 12 months with continued market consolidation, the emergence of some big new players and a thriving interest in dating services, it is the work and dedication of these talented people that continues to shape the world of online dating for millions of singles around the world.

In association with Venntro, we are proud to present the GDI Power Book 2016.

**SIMON CORBETT**

FOUNDER, GLOBAL DATING INSIGHTS



2015 signalled a shift for the online dating industry. We saw greater consolidation from established businesses like The Match Group and Plenty of Fish, who continued to dominate, and innovate, while a number of new entrants to the market also played an important role in driving the sector forward.

Each of the four categories in this year's Power Book - innovators, influencers, startups and ones to watch - represent what makes online dating such a dynamic industry.

This year's innovators are leaders of high revenue generating, long-established online dating businesses, who have worked hard to drive innovation while remaining faithful to their membership base. Meanwhile, those who are influencers lead businesses that embody maturity, stability and steady growth, while simultaneously moving with the market.

Both of these categories demonstrate that the established businesses, or those with the support of established businesses, still dominate the online dating space. And for good reason. They understand how to build

great dating experiences, how to monetise an online dating product and the importance of providing consumers with a safe and secure environment to make meaningful connections in.

But while a number of dating startups have failed to gain enough momentum to break even, those who have entered the market in the last 12 months are more important than ever. These startups bring a fresh approach, new ideas and drive us all to offer consumers better dating products. And looking ahead, this year's ones to watch includes some exciting new entrants, as well as a few established players looking to adapt their businesses to a changing market.

In 2016, the leaders in this industry owe a great responsibility to collaborate, nurture and support the next generation of leaders in online dating, in putting up a united front to help more consumers make the connection to a life they'll love.

**ROSS WILLIAMS**  
CO-FOUNDER & CEO, VENNTRO



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**SAM YAGAN**  
Co-founder & CEO, OkCupid



**GREGG BLATT**  
CEO, The Match Group



**MARKUS FRIND**  
Founder, Plenty of Fish



**SEAN RADD**  
Co-founder & CEO, Tinder



**JOEL SIMKHAH**  
Co-founder & CEO, Grindr

POWER BOOK

# INNOVATORS 2016





match.com

## GREG BLATT

CEO, THE MATCH GROUP

Greg Blatt is, in many ways, the hidden driving force behind the most successful dating company in the world. Acting as Chairman of The Match Group from 2013, Blatt, who was also the CEO of IAC for three years, is the one who handles the company's investor relations, and has overall influence over the direction of the company's stellar dating properties. And Blatt, who stays out of the limelight and shuns media appearances, is the man Barry Diller has tasked with taking The Match Group forward, assuming the position of CEO from Sam Yagan, after its successful IPO last year. The spin-off from IAC was rumoured for years, and in 2015 it finally happened, the company raising \$400m at an initial valuation of over \$3bn. On its first day of trading, shares of The Match Group were priced at \$12, and closed the day 23% higher, at \$14.74. As 2016 starts, Blatt has a huge job on his hands - continuing to drive the growth of well-performing properties like Match.com and OkCupid, but also handling the future of The Match Group's jewel in the crown, Tinder, and delivering the revenue success investors crave, without spoiling what makes the app so special.

## SAM YAGAN

CO-FOUNDER & CEO, OKCUPID

Sam Yagan described last year's The Match Group IPO as "every founder's dream", one that felt like a graduation of sorts. And there are few who have achieved his level of success in the dating industry, having co-founded OkCupid in 2004 then selling it for \$50m, to leading The Match Group for three years and into its IPO. But as with many graduations, what follows is an air of uncertainty. As 2016 begins, Yagan's future at the company is unclear, with IAC announcing that former Match Group Chairman, IAC CEO and longtime Barry Diller favourite Greg Blatt will become CEO of The Match Group, as the company embarks on single life. In 2015, Yagan was also increasingly working on Corazon Capital, the VC fund he founded in January 2014, which he may decide to focus on more permanently. But whether or not Yagan decides to stay on with The Match Group, his position in the history of online dating as a true innovator is firmly secure.



okcupid



“THE DATING PHENOMENON NOW HAS 9.6M DAILY ACTIVE USERS”

A photograph of Sean Rad, co-founder and CEO of Tinder, sitting in a chair and speaking. He is wearing a light blue button-down shirt and a gold watch. His hands are raised in a gesturing motion. The background is dark.The Tinder logo, featuring the word "tinder" in a lowercase, orange, sans-serif font with a flame icon above the letter 'i'.

## SEAN RAD

### CO-FOUNDER & CEO, TINDER

2015 was a tumultuous year for Tinder CEO Sean Rad. The 29-year-old founder lost his position as CEO in November 2014, seeing an experienced eBay exec take his place at the head of the company he co-founded in IAC's Hatch Labs back in 2012. During this time, Tinder released its long-awaited premium service Tinder Plus, brought advertising to the platform and was a key part of The Match Group's IPO. Although he has publicly stated that his thoughts were completely focused on the product, seeing someone else lead the company he built through these milestones must have been tough for

Rad. However after just six months in charge, new CEO Chris Payne was shown the door, and Rad was given the go-ahead to return as Tinder CEO. And although Tinder was never far from the headlines last year - whether it be the Vanity Fair Twitter meltdown, or Rad's embarrassing Evening Standard interview - the product itself is going from strength to strength. The dating phenomenon now has 9.6m daily active users, and has not, as some industry experts predicted, burnt bright and fast, but is instead casting an influential and all-encompassing glow over the dating industry.



“MARKUS FRIND  
SECURED ONE OF THE  
MOST REMARKABLE EXITS  
FOR A BOOTSTRAPPED  
BUSINESS OF ALL TIME”

## MARKUS FRIND

FOUNDER,  
PLENTY OF FISH

Without a doubt, the most incredible dating industry story of 2015 was The Match Group's mammoth \$575m acquisition of Plenty of Fish. With this deal, PoF founder Markus Frind secured the biggest ever exit for a dating company, and one of the most remarkable exits for a bootstrapped business of all time. Frind built the free dating site in his Vancouver apartment by himself 12 years ago, and when he hired the company's second employee, had already made \$10m and the site had 15m users. When he sold to The Match Group last July, the Canadian site had over 100m users, \$100m in revenue, and the 36-year-old founder still owned 100% of the business. This incredible achievement, in addition to his work pioneering the free model, will always make Frind one of online dating's true originators and innovators. One interesting titbit that came out after the acquisition was Frind's guarantee that the company “would not exist today” and he could not have secured the huge exit, had he not made the decision to update his product for the mobile world. And with over 80% of its traffic now coming from mobile, Frind's leadership shows that in this fast-paced industry, even those with phenomenal success must adapt to changing tides.

**PlentyOfFish**



# JOEL SIMKHAI

## CO-FOUNDER & CEO, GRINDR

Grindr's position as the most ubiquitous and popular gay dating app seems unlikely to change any time soon. In 2015, the app was listed as the ninth top iOS app of all time in terms of revenue, and as of July 2015 has over 2m daily active users. And according to leaked documents from the Ashley Madison hack, the company estimated it would hit \$38m in revenue for 2015, and \$77m by 2018. The app's founder, Joel Simkhai, has also overseen a clever strategy shift over the past year, pushing the app's advertising and promotional features, whether it be selling gig tickets, albums or promoting sexual health campaigns to its vast number of daily active users (who spend an average of 54 minutes a day on the app). This advertising thrust means that 25% of Grindr's revenue now comes from advertising. Simkhai has also spoken about the app turning into more of a "lifestyle brand", last year making the surprising move of hiring renowned fashion public relations firm PR Consulting. And after reports emerged in 2015 that the app's 39-year-old founder was looking to sell Grindr, in January, news broke that Simkhai had sold 60% of the company to Chinese gaming firm Beijing Kunlun Tech for \$93m, in a deal that valued the app at \$155m. It's not only a very impressive deal for Simkhai and the mobile phenomenon he has built, but with Grindr's executive team staying the same, we eagerly anticipate its next moves as the brand enters a new chapter.







**ALEX HARRINGTON**  
CEO, SNAP Interactive



**NEIL CLARK WARREN**  
Founder & CEO, eHarmony



**GEORGE KIDD**  
Chief Executive,  
Online Dating Association



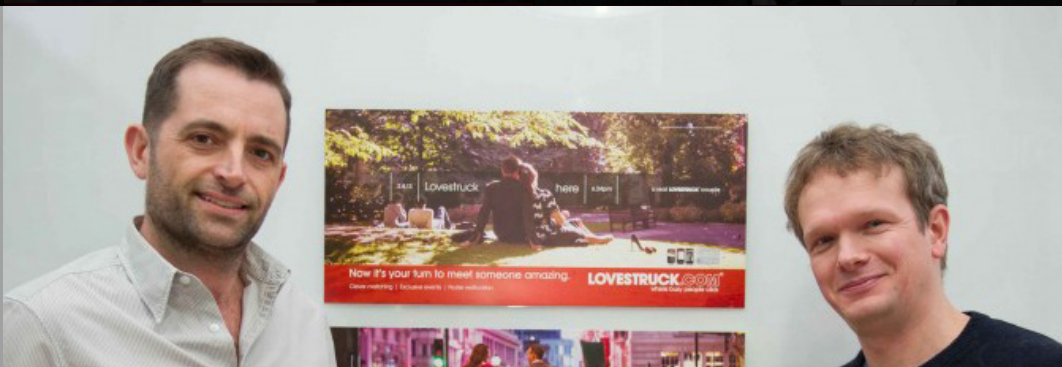
**KELLY STECKELBERG**  
CEO, Zoosk



**JACKIE ELTON**  
Founder & CEO,  
Christian Connection



**ROSS WILLIAMS**  
Co-founder & CEO, Venntro



**BRETT HARDING & LAURENCE HOLLOWAY**  
Co-founders, Lovestruck

**POWER BOOK**

**INFLUENCERS  
2016**

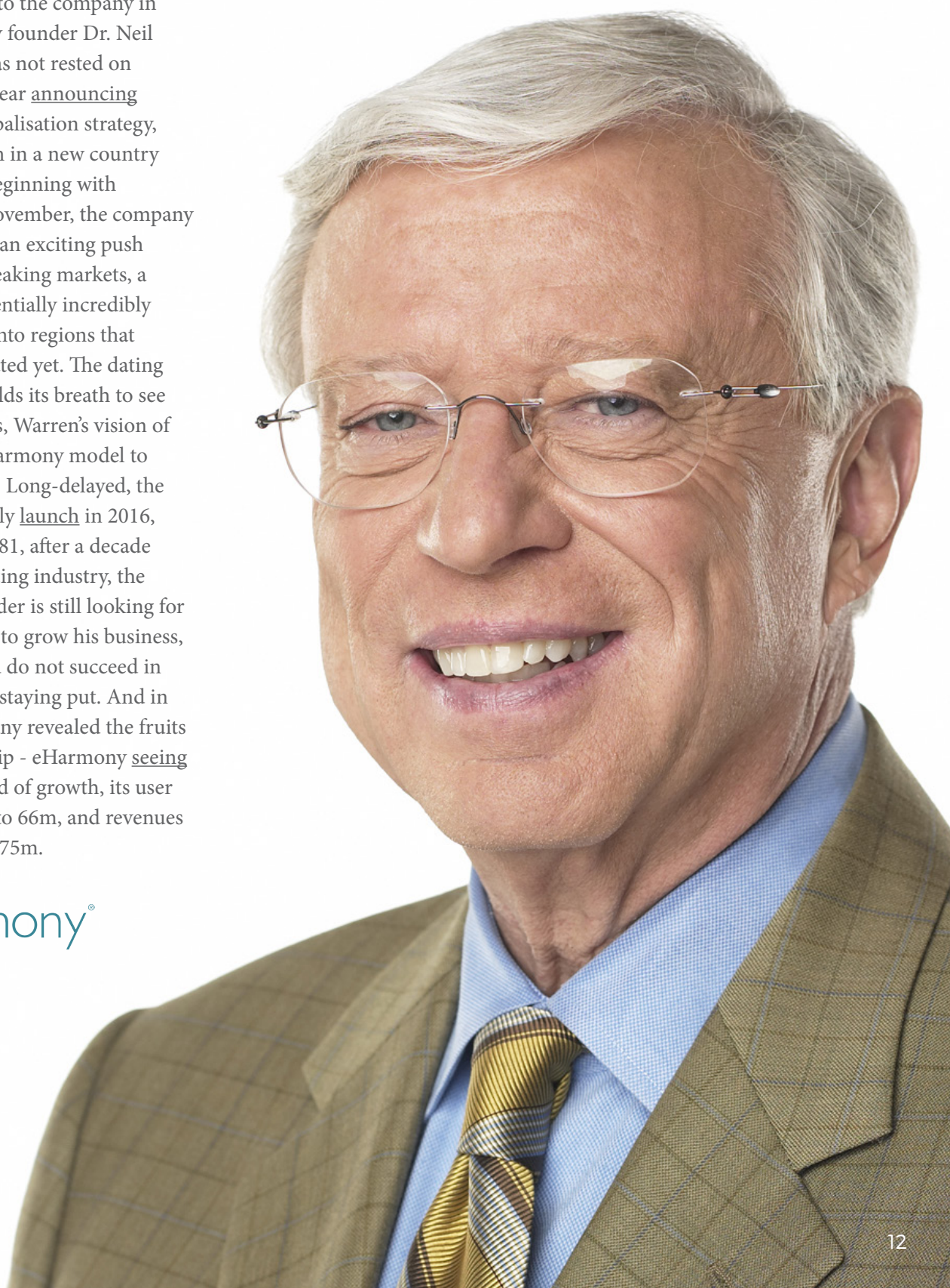


# NEIL CLARK WARREN

FOUNDER & CEO, EHARMONY

Since returning to the company in 2012, eHarmony founder Dr. Neil Clark Warren has not rested on his laurels, last year announcing eHarmony's globalisation strategy, aiming to launch in a new country every quarter, beginning with Singapore. In November, the company also announced an exciting push into Spanish-speaking markets, a shrewd and potentially incredibly lucrative move into regions that aren't oversaturated yet. The dating industry also holds its breath to see Elevated Careers, Warren's vision of applying the eHarmony model to jobs in America. Long-delayed, the project will finally launch in 2016, Warren said. At 81, after a decade in the online dating industry, the eHarmony founder is still looking for innovative ways to grow his business, proving that you do not succeed in this industry by staying put. And in 2015, the company revealed the fruits of his stewardship - eHarmony seeing its highest period of growth, its user base increasing to 66m, and revenues totalling over \$275m.

eHarmony®







## ALEX HARRINGTON

CEO, SNAP INTERACTIVE

Alex Harrington's rise to the top of SNAP Interactive has been swift and steady since he joined the company back in April 2014. The former CEO of MeetMoi - a company he helmed to an acquisition by IAC - was appointed COO of the publicly listed dating company, before joining the board and taking the position of CFO, then unseating SNAP founder Cliff Lerner as CEO in October 2015. Lerner will now be tasked with replicating his success building AYI.com with SNAP's new mobile product, The Grade, while Harrington leads the company towards its "ultimate goal" of listing on the national securities exchange. It's also possible that Harrington's experience selling companies to both Google and IAC was attractive to SNAP's board, after the industry consolidation in 2015, with The Match Group's purchase of Plenty of Fish. During his leadership, SNAP also reported its highest ever net income last year, as the business enters a strategic review to accelerate its organic growth and unlock shareholder value over the coming year.



## JACKIE ELTON

FOUNDER & CEO,  
CHRISTIAN CONNECTION

By walking away with the best haul at the UK Dating Awards last year, Christian Connection again proved that it is one of the best niche sites on the market. By winning both the publicly voted Daters' Favourite Dating Site and Best Niche Dating Site, the company, which was founded by Jackie Elton in 2004, has shown that daters respond to services that treat them with respect and keep them safe, and do not take umbrage with paying monthly subscriptions for a specialised site that is honest. And this philosophy has been rewarded with strong growth, Christian Connection seeing a 78% increase in membership in the UK and Australia last year, and the interactions between members almost tripling. With a mobile app in the works, the company also finally secured the .com domain, making international growth in new markets a real possibility. Not just competing in this changing landscape but also seeing excellent growth, Elton's Christian Connection is an example that quality niche providers are far from a thing of the past.



“KELLY  
STECKELBERG  
WAS NAMED  
ONE OF SAN  
FRANCISCO  
BUSINESS  
TIME’S MOST  
INFLUENTIAL  
WOMEN”



## KELLY STECKELBERG

### CEO, ZOOSK

When she became the CEO of Zoosk in December 2014, Kelly Steckelberg became the most high profile female executive in an industry dominated by men. After assuming the position of CEO - with Zoosk’s founders Shayan Zadeh and Alex Mehr relinquishing their executive positions - the company reached profitability for the first time in Q1 of 2015 under Steckelberg’s direction, after she made the big call to switch to a premium model. The former CFO of Zoosk also formally withdrew the company’s IPO plans, instead opting to focus on product enhancements and consumer experience. Steckelberg, who was named one of San Francisco Business Time’s

Most Influential Women, also had to cut staff by 15%, and has spoken about the tough task of rejuvenating the team, many of whom had stayed at the company for the IPO. Zoosk is now available in over 80 countries, 25 languages and caters to 35m people, and last year was included on Inc.’s list of 5,000 of the fastest-growing private companies in America. It’s been an excellent year for Steckelberg, making some important decisions immediately after becoming CEO, and as we enter 2016, Zoosk is a much more financially robust business. We look forward to seeing what this year holds for them.

# ROSS WILLIAMS

## CO-FOUNDER & CEO, VENNTRO

2015 was probably one of the biggest years of change for Ross Williams and Venntro, as the company that built White Label Dating and Global Personals became housed in the umbrella company of Venntro, alongside other dating products like Smooch, WooWise and Jiko. With this move, Venntro also launched its startup incubator, Venntro Ventures, as the company embarks on a new chapter as an IAC-style collection of dating services, with a focus on acquiring and building mobile dating products. Guiding the UK business, which is approaching £50m in revenue, is Williams, whose ambition is to make a true competitor to The Match Group in the UK and US. And despite a tough year finding their feet in the US with WLD last year, the white label platform is now seeing strong growth in this complex market, and Venntro and Williams' own personal PR has seen a massive boost - with appearances on CNBC and coverage in TechCrunch, as well as being the recipient of a number of entrepreneurial and dating awards. Having stepped into the spotlight last year, 2016 is a massive year for Venntro and Williams, as they look to take the next step in the company's history.



“2015 WAS PROBABLY ONE OF THE BIGGEST YEARS OF CHANGE FOR ROSS WILLIAMS AND VENNTRO”



“IN 2016, KIDD WILL HELM THE LAUNCH OF NEW INFORMATION SHARING ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN ITS ODA MEMBERS”



Online Dating  
Association 

## GEORGE KIDD

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, ONLINE DATING ASSOCIATION

As the industry's regulatory body in the UK, the ODA's highlights are, paradoxically, often low or relatively hidden, as they revolve around work with the police and other organisations on harm prevention. Led by George Kidd, the organisation has built strong relationships with Action Fraud, the National Fraud Investigation Bureau, the Home Office, the Information Commissioner and the National Crime Agency, representing the industry as a go-between on big issues like scammers, ISP filters and government legislation. As Chief Executive George Kidd said of their

work last year: "It matters profoundly that these bodies understand the sector, and it is real progress for public bodies to see the dating sector as partners." Over the past few years, the industry has come of age, and having representative organisations like the ODA is vital so that the industry can have a unified voice. In 2016, Kidd will helm the launch of new information sharing arrangements between its ODA members to keep problem users off sites, as well as possible information sharing with the police, and has plans to expand the organisation internationally.





**LOVESTRUCK®**

## BRETT HARDING & LAURENCE HOLLOWAY

CO-FOUNDERS, LOVESTRUCK

Lovestruck's continued success in the UK and Asia is a testament to the fact that the subscription model is alive and well, and that despite the influx of free mobile apps, there are daters who will shell out for a quality mobile-friendly premium service. As CTO Laurence Holloway said at the GDI Innovation Conference, the mobile revolution has brought new customer expectations, and meant that free no longer means low on quality, and mobile no longer means a compromised experience. But despite these

changes, there are still reasons for consumers to pay for serious dating services like Lovestruck, who can provide better customer & tech support, added safety features, scammer detection software and a more curated and premium service. This is what Lovestruck offers its customers, and the excellent execution of this philosophy was shown once again in 2015, with the company picking up Online Dating Brand of the Year for the second year running at the UK Dating Awards, beating competitors such as Match.com.



**DIDIER RAPPAPORT**  
CEO, Happn



**ROBYN EXTON**  
Founder & CEO, Her



**JUSTIN MCLEOD**  
Founder & CEO, Hinge



**ARUM KANG, DAWOON KANG, SOO KANG**  
Co-founders, Coffee Meets Bagel



**WHITNEY WOLFE**  
Founder & CEO, Bumble



**AMANDA BRADFORD**  
Founder & CEO, The League

POWER BOOK

# STARTUPS 2016



# DIDIER RAPPAPORT

CEO, HAPPN

Happn successfully established itself as a major force in the industry last year, and it is clear that the app's strong growth is in part due to its excellent and experienced team, led by CEO and Dailymotion co-founder, Didier Rappaport. As many VCs often say, a huge part of what they are investing in is the team, and this is clearly a big factor in Happn's funding success, with its latest round (led by Idinvest) taking the company's total funding to \$22m. There is no doubt that Rappaport's tech industry nouse helped Happn join the big league of dating players last year, with the app reaching 8m users in November and the company claiming it was adding 1.2m users every month. Its 60-year-old CEO even made the bold claim that Happn will have 30m users by the end of this year, and just as many as Tinder in 2017. The product is now live in 25 cities in Europe, South America and the US, and the company has plans to launch the hyperlocal dating app in Asia. In addition to this, under Rappaport's leadership, Happn added some very interesting product features, such as a coveted Spotify song sharing partnership and a forthcoming voice messaging feature, and has used the platform for some innovative marketing and advertising campaigns. With the same amount of funding as another rival to Tinder's throne, Hinge, we expect Happn to continue to expand its presence in the industry over the next year under Rappaport's strong leadership.

A close-up portrait of Didier Rappaport, CEO of Happn. He is a middle-aged man with grey hair, wearing glasses and a blue button-down shirt. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage and a bright light source, possibly the sun, creating a bokeh effect.

happn





## ROBYN EXTON

### FOUNDER & CEO, HER

In 2015, Robyn Exton made the always difficult decision of undergoing a full rebrand, changing the LGBTQ app's name from Dattch to Her, and evolving the brand into more of a social platform for the lesbian community. The decision came after Exton travelled to the US in 2014 to raise funding and save Dattch - something documented in Channel 4's How To Be A Young Billionaire show. Having secured funding, Exton and Dattch turned their focus to the US market, and after seeing an excellent response from women in cities such as San Francisco, decided a new name and rebrand was vital before the brand grew too big. This was in part because of troubles they'd encountered with the name Dattch, but also from listening to its users about what they wanted from the platform. They achieved this refresh with aplomb, and Exton has done a brilliant job building Her's female-built, female-focused brand, that stands apart from previous lesbian platforms, which were often male-built apps for gay men, rereleased and slightly tweaked for women. With its new community-orientated feel that touches on everything from events and blogs to dating, it's obvious that this new strategy is resonating with users, and with plans to launch in Canada and Australia this year, we expect Exton to continue to cement Her's place as one of mobile dating's niche leaders.



## JUSTIN MCLEOD

### FOUNDER & CEO, HINGE

Off the back of a brilliant 2014, having raised a considerable amount of funding, Hinge has continued its impressive growth that saw its user base increase by 500% last January. In the last twelve months, CEO McLeod steered the app through rapid international expansion into the UK and India, and continued to push its reputation as an "anti-Tinder" relationship app. In 2015, McLeod often referred to Hinge as "Facebook to Tinder's Myspace" and his team cleverly used negative stories about Tinder and other hookup apps to inform new relationship-centric product releases. For example, in reaction to a story that said 42% of Tinder users are in a relationship, Hinge introduced a feature that revealed whether a user was in a relationship on their profile. In addition to this, McLeod decided to implement a big change to the product, adding a Bumble-style 24 hour time limit to conversations, along with launching a new loyalty reward scheme and continuing to keep Hinge in the spotlight with its strong marketing campaigns. As 2016 begins, things are looking bright for Hinge, but with many other mobile dating competitors like Happn having a strong 2015, the company must watch its back if it wants to remain the biggest mobile-only threat to Tinder's throne.



“ONE OF THE FEW FEMALE  
CEOS IN ONLINE DATING,  
BUMBLE’S STRONG  
FEMALE-FOCUSED  
PRODUCT LEVELS THE  
PLAYING FIELD AROUND  
GENDER EXPECTATIONS”

## WHITNEY WOLFE

FOUNDER & CEO,  
BUMBLE

2015 was an impressive year for Whitney Wolfe and Bumble. The app proved the doubters wrong by gaining real traction amongst daters, as Wolfe stepped out of the shadows of the ugly Tinder lawsuit and became one of the most high profile new CEOs in the dating industry. As one of the few female CEOs in online dating, and with Bumble’s strong female-focused product that levels the playing field around gender expectations, Wolfe became a media favourite in 2015, even securing a spot as the main guest on the high profile first week of The Daily Show’s new season, when Trevor Noah took over as host from Jon Stewart. After leaving Tinder, Wolfe originally planned to exit the dating industry, but was contacted by Badoo founder Andrey Andreev, who convinced her to launch her own app, partnering with Wolfe and funding the project. Having celebrated their one year anniversary last month, Wolfe has guided the Austin-based app to over 1m users, seeing more than 800,000 messages sent every day, with the app recording a 15% user growth every week. With 15m conversations and 80m matches already made, Bumble and Wolfe have achieved a huge amount in a year, having created the perfect synergy of personal brand and product, and we expect Wolfe to continue to be an influential player in 2016.







coffee  
meets bagel  
QUALITY DATING MADE EASY

## ARUM KANG, DAWOON KANG, SOO KANG

CO-FOUNDERS, COFFEE MEETS BAGEL

The appearance of Coffee Meets Bagel on US TV show Shark Tank by its three founding sisters catalysed a renewed interest in the US dating app last year. The trio of sisters made the massive decision to turn down a \$30m buyout offer from Mark Cuban, after refusing to detail exactly how many MAUs the app had. Whether or not it was the correct decision, their collective belief in their product is certainly inspiring, and the sisters were rewarded with a huge surge in traffic and downloads after the show aired. And the

appearance also piqued the interest of investors, with the company closing \$7.8m in Series A funding from existing investor DCM Ventures, alongside Quest Ventures Partners and Azure Capital. With this injection of cash, Coffee Meets Bagel continued its international expansion, launching in markets like Hong Kong and Australia - brilliantly capitalising on the Shark Tank appearance by using it to help grow the business, just at a time when new startups are entering the industry and increasing competition.



# AMANDA BRADFORD

## FOUNDER & CEO, THE LEAGUE

After debuting in San Francisco and impressing a number of investors at the beginning of the year, Bradford led her app to a very successful launch in New York in 2015. The Stanford graduate has opted to follow a gradual release strategy, launching the platform in one city at a time, and only when the app's waiting list is large enough for the user experience to be excellent for its new members. Bradford's app seeks to solve the overwhelming nature of Tinder by offering its users a curated experience and user base, for "smart and ambitious men and women that don't have the time or desire to swipe through thousands of profiles". It does this by being admissions-based, requiring both a Facebook and LinkedIn account, not admitting everyone who requests access, and ensuring that its male to female ratio is always 50/50. Last year, the app was recognised in Silicon Valley's Top 100 Startups for 2015, was featured in the Style Section of the New York Times as the "dating app to match power couples", Bradford was nominated for Forbes' 2016 30 under 30 in Consumer Tech, and listed as one of the 18 coolest women in Silicon Valley. Bradford also worked hard to correct The League's label as an "elitist" app for trust fund kids, recently writing that the app's true goal is to "cultivate the desire for an egalitarian relationship in both sexes" by promoting "higher education and career ambition" without being elitist or snobby. In 2016, Bradford is eyeing international expansion into cities like London, and it'll be very interesting to watch this roll out, and see whether The League's curated and career-orientated brand will resonate with daters outside the US.

"BRADFORD WAS NOMINATED FOR FORBES' 2016 30 UNDER 30 IN CONSUMER TECH, AND LISTED AS ONE OF THE 18 COOLEST WOMEN IN SILICON VALLEY."

**THE**  
*league*





**CLIFF LERNER**  
President, The Grade



**MICHAEL S. EGAN**  
CEO, Spark Networks



**JOSEPH PHUA**  
Founder & CEO, Paktor



**GEORGE CHRISTOFORAKIS**  
Co-founder & CEO, Rendeevoo



**LOREN GOULD, BEN GREENOCK & GARY MACDONOUGH**  
Co-founders, Double

**POWER BOOK**

# ONES TO WATCH 2016



## CLIFF LERNER PRESIDENT, THE GRADE

Although an industry influencer thanks to his work building SNAP Interactive and AYI.com, last year Lerner lost his position as CEO of the company he founded with his brother Darrell in 2005, and took public the year after. With this management shake-up, former CTO and COO Alex Harrington usurped Lerner as CEO, and Lerner is now tasked with pushing the growth of SNAP's new dating app, The Grade. His SNAP Interactive successor, Alex Harrington, has spoken of Lerner's "proven track record of building successful early-stage digital properties such as AYI", and with The Grade just over a year old and showing positive engagement metrics and user growth, it'll be fascinating to see how the app evolves in 2016. With big questions to answer such as what monetisation strategy to choose, can Lerner replicate his previous success with AYI.com, now that his entire attention is directed on SNAP's great mobile hope?



## MICHAEL S. EGAN CEO, SPARK NETWORKS

2015 was a tough year for the newly-appointed Spark Networks CEO, a company that has struggled to compete in an increasingly mobile industry, as their main brands JDate and Christian Mingle lose traction after years of poor management and massive marketing expenditure. At the end of 2015, Egan oversaw a revamp of these two core brands, and launched its first new mobile product in years. After committing to achieving positive subscriber growth by the end of 2015, Spark said this finally happened in Q3, the company recording the first positive subscriber growth in years. However, there are some questions about how the company calculated this growth, and any proof of having actually achieved a positive subscriber turnaround will become apparent in the coming quarters. And having also signed off on a surprising acquisition of competitor JSwipe for \$7m - after hitting the startup with an expensive lawsuit over its use of the letter "J" - there will be even more pressure on Egan in 2016 to bring about Spark's much needed turnaround.







“UNDER THIS FAST LEARNING AND FRESH LEADERSHIP, DOUBLE HAS SEEN STRONG GROWTH IN BOTH LONDON AND SYDNEY”

double

## LOREN GOULD, BEN GREENOCK & GARY MACDONOUGH

CO-FOUNDERS, DOUBLE

Launched in 2015, London dating startup Double has made an excellent entry into the dating industry. The expertise of its trio of founders, Loren Gould, Ben Greenock and Gary MacDonough was clear to all at the GDI Innovation Conference, the founders giving an extremely impressive talk detailing 20 mobile growth hacks for your dating app. Under this fast-learning and fresh leadership, Double has seen strong growth in both London and Sydney, and also welcomed Bebo founder Michael Birch as an

angel investor. Birch's investment came after the trio's very successful appearance on Dragons' Den last December, where the double dating app impressed Moonpig founder Nick Jenkins, who invested £75,000 in the app for 15% equity. Since it aired, Double has seen fantastic growth, its MAUs increasing from 5,000 to 25,000, at a rate of 18% a week. With this injection of funding and these impressive growth metrics, Double looks set to assert itself as a big niche mobile player in the next 12 months.





## JOSEPH PHUA

FOUNDER & CEO, PAKTOR

Phua's dating app Paktor is currently operating in the region of Southeast Asia that has relatively little competition and huge potential. This region will likely become an important market in years to come, and there are a number of online dating companies like Paktor seeing brilliant growth in the area, with their products and the possibilities of the market attracting the interest of excited investors. In this key market for the future of online dating, Phua is the CEO of one of the region's leading apps. Paktor has over 6m users, and has raised over \$12.3m, including its most recent round of \$7.5m from Majuven, Convergence Ventures and a re-investment from Vertex Venture Holdings. As we enter 2016, the app now facilitates an average of 14m matches every month, and has seen over 5bn swipes. Since launching in 2013, Phua has expertly navigated the complex Southeast Asia market, which is comprised of countries that have very different cultures, dating habits and languages. With over 6m users in six countries - Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam and Taiwan - Phua expects the app to more than double its user base in 2016, to 15m. Part of this growth will be driven by two former Meetic expansion experts, Jose Ruano and Miguel Mangas, who Paktor impressively secured to spearhead its international growth, a move that highlights Phua's ambitious intentions for Paktor.

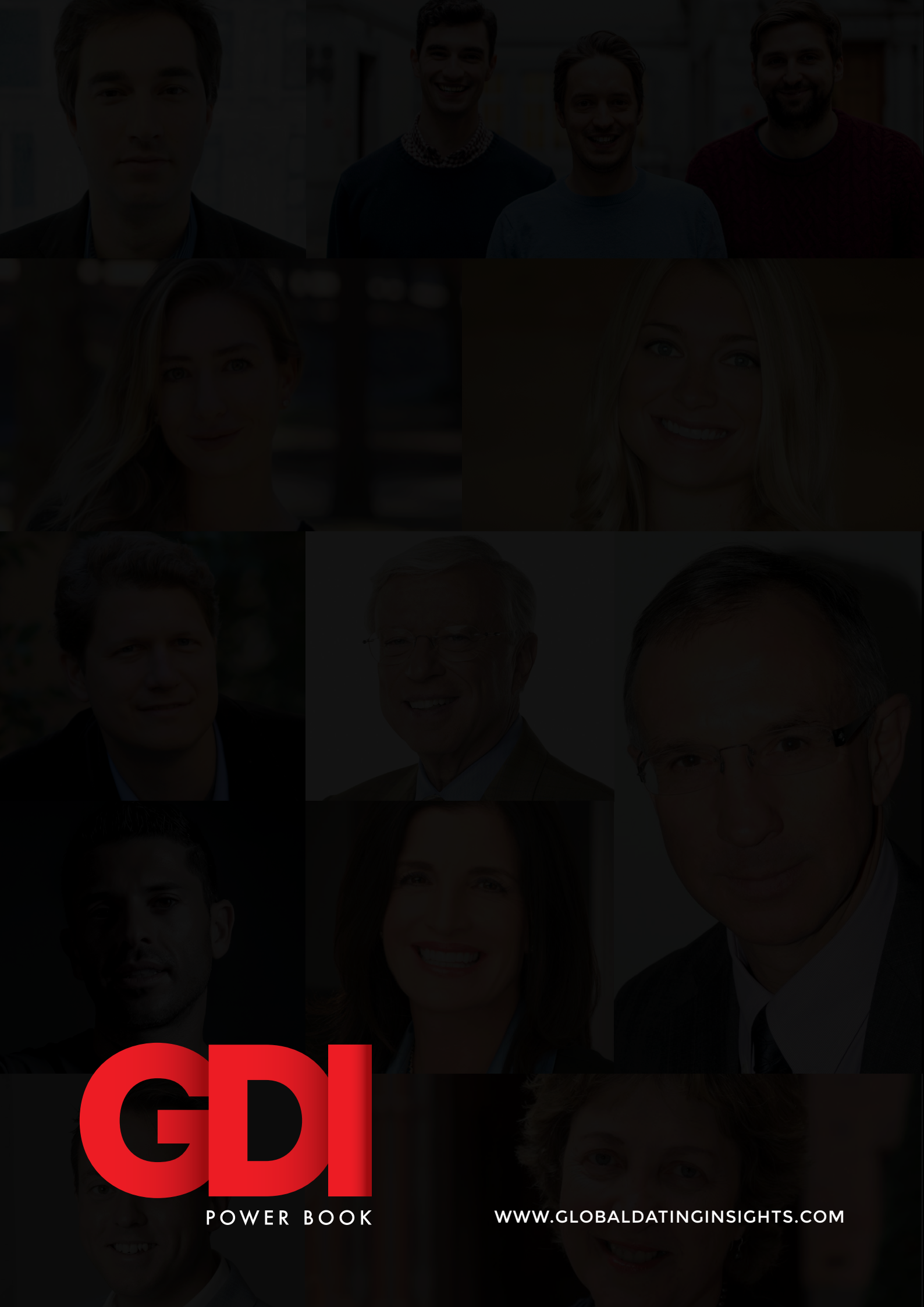


## GEORGE CHRISTOFORAKIS

CO-FOUNDER & CEO, RENDEEVOO

London-based dating app rendeevoo is one of the most innovative new startups we've seen, and is part of a new group of brands looking to disrupt online dating and unseat the "old guard" of the industry, and the models they use. As co-founder George Christoforakis said in his video interview with GDI, the app "stands on a completely other side of the river when it comes to how we bring people together, because we focus exactly on the how, rather than on the who." It does this by working on an on-demand basis, with singles ordering a date for that night, just like requesting an Uber. Built into this model is an innovative monetisation strategy that doesn't rely on advertising, subscriptions or in-app payments. When its users organise a date on the app, they both pay for the first round of drinks in one of rendeevoo's partner bars, which rendeevoo then takes a cut from. With this unique and forward-thinking model, the app, which last year was featured in TechCrunch, is set for a big 2016, as it readies a number of exciting product updates, expands across London and raises more funding.





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