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POWER BOOK 2017

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



2017 Sponsor



Welcome to the GDI Power Book 2017, the third time Global Dating Insights has named the most influential and powerful people in the online dating industry.

The past 12 months have been a real rollercoaster for the online dating industry.

A tough industry that is getting more competitive, incumbents continue to feel the pressure of a new landscape as startups struggle to monetise and stay afloat, while the gap at the top grows.

There has been some big market consolidation with MeetMe buying Skout for \$55m, and DateTix, Paktor and if(we) all making acquisitions in the past 12 months.

We've also seen the market move into new areas - Tinder stepping into group dating and onto Apple TV, Bumble and Hinge following Snapchat's lead with story-based profiles, as Momo and Paktor search for growth beyond the dating space.

This year's Power Book recognises the biggest players in the market who are truly driving, shaping and defining our industry.

For this report, we will be placing a special focus on the events of the past 12 months, looking at the leaders and companies who have influenced the industry during this period.

It is the work and dedication of these talented people that continues to shape the world of online dating for millions of singles across the globe.

In association with Dating Factory, we are proud to present the GDI Power Book 2017.

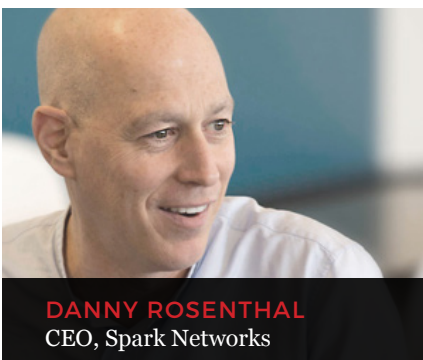
SIMON CORBETT
FOUNDER,
GLOBAL DATING INSIGHTS



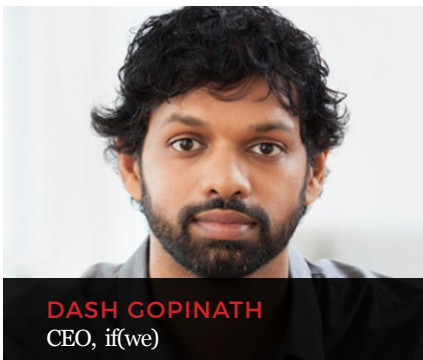
ALEX HARRINGTON
CEO, SNAP Interactive



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



DANNY ROSENTHAL
CEO, Spark Networks



DASH GOPINATH
CEO, if(we)



DIDIER RAPPAPORT
Founder & CEO, Happn



GEOFF COOK
Co-founder & CEO, MeetMe



GRANT LANGSTON
CEO, eHarmony



GREG BLATT
Chairman & CEO, Match Group



JEAN MEYER
Founder & CEO, Once



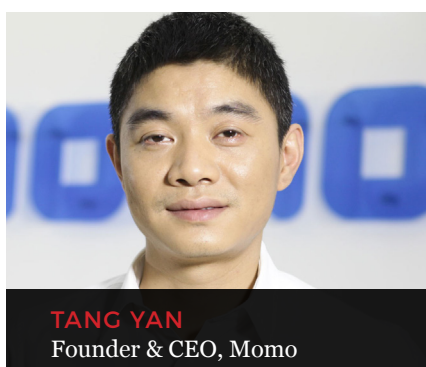
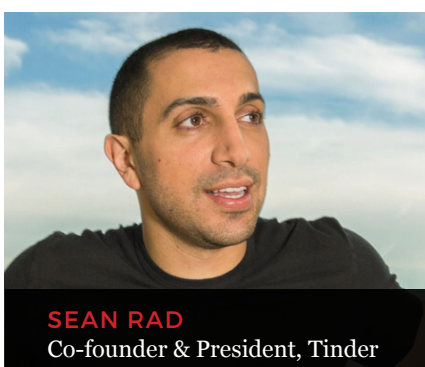
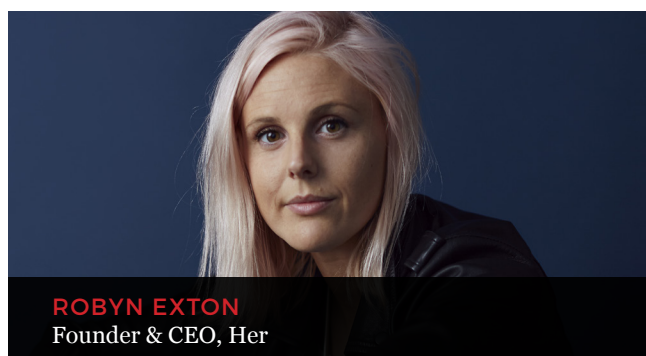
JENNY GONZALEZ
Chief Revenue Officer,
Agile Wings



JERONIMO FIGUEIRA
CEO, EliteSingles



JOEL SIMKHAH
Founder & CEO, Grindr



JENNY GONZALEZ

CRO, DATING FACTORY

2016 was a very interesting year for the dating industry.

It was the first full year for the Match Group as a publicly traded company, with Tinder finally becoming a crucial component of its revenue growth.

We witnessed even the most skeptical turned into believers of the “app-only” business model, after seeing Tinder’s rise from a free app giant to the highest-grossing dating app in the world, according to App Annie.

Tinder’s fellow mobile dating leaders also saw significant global growth last year, with French dating app Happn more than doubling its user base to 25m, and Bumble hitting 11.5m users after just two years.

Sadly, it was also the year when the industry got by far the most negative media attention, with the fallout from the 2015 Ashley Madison hack continuing to play out, the world looking down on the industry and judging us harshly at every turn.

Hopefully this scrutiny will bring about positive change, uniting the industry further and setting standards for how we conduct business.

After all, we do hold people’s hearts and love lives in our hands, so it is our responsibility to make sure we do our best to provide our users with technology they can trust.









2016 was also a year of innovation and further niche specialisation, bringing a wonderful array of clever new products, as a welcome wave of gender acceptance swept the market, making it a more fun and colourful place - a market not only for singles but for social discovery, with companies using technology to advance human interaction.





Focus on the one thing you do best - turning your traffic into revenue!

If we say **EASY**, it would be an understatement! We've done all the hard work so you can get started in no time:

-  70 dating niches
-  22 languages
-  Content management
-  Customisable templates
-  80 Banner management
-  Fully editable HTML & CSS
-  Localised payments
-  Detailed reporting

“IN 2016 SEAN RAD OVERSAW THE SMOOTHEST AND ARGUABLY MOST SUCCESSFUL PERIOD IN THE COMPANY’S HISTORY.”

SEAN RAD

CO-FOUNDER & PRESIDENT, TINDER

After a tenure plagued by controversies, having lost and regained the position of Tinder CEO, in 2016 Sean Rad oversaw the smoothest and arguably most successful period in the company’s history. Named the highest-grossing dating app in the world, Tinder hit 1.2m paying subscribers in July, helping to drive a 21% revenue increase for parent company the Match Group. Aside from this business success, Tinder also had its busiest year for product, launching a host of updates - adding its third monetisation stream with Tinder Boost, moving into group dating with Tinder Social, implementing a photo-testing

algorithm and partnering with both Spotify and Apple for two new features. Because of this strong year, it was a surprise to learn in December that Sean Rad would be stepping aside as CEO to lead Swipe Ventures, a new project focused on acquisitions and investments to help expand Tinder’s footprint. However, considering Rad’s role in the acquisitions of Humin, Tappy and last year’s investment in Hey! VINA, the new role is a perfect fit for the Tinder co-founder, ensuring he will continue to exert his influence over Tinder, and the dating industry, for the foreseeable future.





JEAN MEYER

FOUNDER & CEO, ONCE

At a time when other dating startups have struggled, Jean Meyer's Once has seen excellent success over the past year, securing an impressive \$5.5m in Series A funding in June 2016 - bringing its total investment to \$9m. The product seeks to add a human element to the online dating equation by hiring real matchmakers to help choose users' daily matches. Last year, the dating company released new product updates such as an integration with Fitbit & Android Wear that monitored your heartbeat as you browsed the app, as well as launching noisy marketing campaigns like its London Brexit bus campaign #DoItLikeNigel. Meyer's company, which launched in mid-2015 and hit the 2m user milestone in July last year, is also approaching profitability thanks to its virtual currency strategy, as it plots a US launch for 2017.



GEOFF COOK

CO-FOUNDER & CEO, MEETME

After a 2015 where MeetMe's revenue rose by 27%, pushed by a massive 84% mobile revenue increase, in 2016 Geoff Cook continued to lead the San Francisco social dating company through consecutive quarters of record results. Mobile revenue grew 82% YoY to \$15.1m in Q2, as MAUs grew 32% to 4.8m. In June, the company announced the shock acquisition of social location-based pioneer Skout for \$55m - a company that launched in 2007, hit \$23.8m revenue in 2015 and has over 3.5m MAUs. Cook said the \$55m move put MeetMe on a pathway to reach \$100m in revenue by 2018, and closer to his vision of building the largest global service for meeting and chatting with new people.





ROBYN EXTON

FOUNDER & CEO, HER

Originally launched in the UK as Dattch, leading LGBTQ dating app Her turned its attention towards the American market in 2015 to cater to high demand, and since then has seen strong global growth by focusing on its core niche community. Last July, Her hit the milestone of 1m users - a figure that has increased by 700,000 in the seven months since - and the app is now live in 55 countries, running events attended by over 15,000 people in 21 cities around the world. This growth was driven by the launch of its long-awaited Android version in the summer. In October, Exton also oversaw the release of Her's premium membership, which gives paying customers a useful set of added features. The dating app is continuing to prove that a strong, modern, niche brand can excel in this industry.

HER



ALEX HARRINGTON

CEO, SNAP INTERACTIVE

SNAP has struggled in the tough new Tinder landscape, and in 2016, the public dating company led by Alex Harrington saw revenues decrease by 18% in Q2, its number of active subscribers falling from 98,000 at the start of the year to 78,700. In an effort to re-energise the business, having rebranded flagship product AYI to FirstMet in March, Harrington and SNAP announced a merger with video chat room Paltalk in August. This bold change of tack sees SNAP aim to diversify its offerings, leveraging live video and chat to re-engage its user base - a combined total of 250m after the merger - Harrington looking to integrate dating and real time video to build a disruptive "next wave" product.



JAMES MILLERSHIP & ROB SEGAL

PRESIDENT & CEO, ASHLEY MADISON

Despite a calamitous 2015, the return of Ashley Madison always seemed inevitable, and it arrived in July with new leadership and an apology. Joining from fellow Toronto-based company World Gaming almost a year after former CEO and “king of infidelity” Noel Biderman resigned from the company he founded, Rob Segal & James Millership were tasked with rebuilding the brand after 2015’s devastating hack. The first order of business was to rename parent company Avid Life Media, which became Ruby Corp, followed by

shelving its “Life is Short. Have an Affair” tagline and infamous “Sssssh” branding. After debuting a set of slicker TV ads, part of its new “open-minded” strategy, Ashley Madison’s management said it had added 7m users in four months in November, hitting 49m in total, with (real) female signups increasing by 20%. And while lawsuits continued to rage on, Ashley Madison ended its year of rebuilding by accepting a severely reduced fine of \$1.7m after an investigation by the FTC - a lucky end to an ugly period.

ASHLEY MADISON®



“ROB SEGAL & JAMES MILLERSHIP WERE TASKED WITH REBUILDING THE BRAND AFTER 2015’S DEVASTATING HACK.”



“THE SAN FRANCISCO COMPANY
PUT AN INCREASED FOCUS ON ITS
MONETISATION STRATEGY”

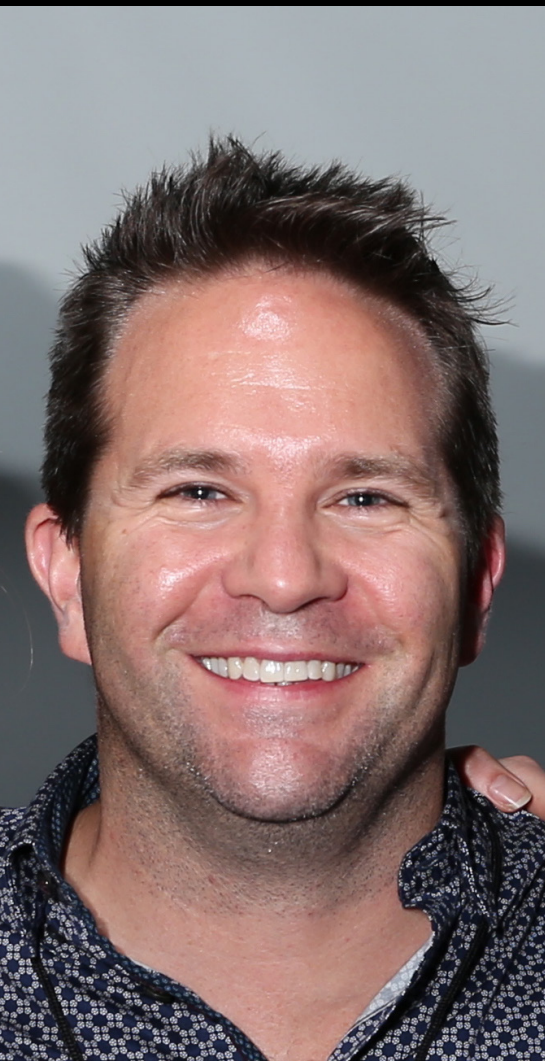
DAWOON KANG, ARUM KANG & SOO KANG

CO-FOUNDERS, COFFEE MEETS BAGEL

Appearing on Shark Tank in 2015 and turning down an acquisition offer of \$30m, sisters Arum, Dawoon and Soo Kang have had a busy year improving the Coffee Meets Bagel product. The app saw a series of changes in 2016, such as the introduction of Super Like-style match feature Woo and picture feedback tool Photo Lab. The biggest product update came in July with the introduction of #LadiesChoice, a feature that puts female users first by showing them

a selection of suitable male matches, based on who expressed an interest in them. In January 2017, the app also partnered with Spotify and Yelp for two new complementary desktop dating tools called Mixtape and DateSpots. Although not yet profitable, the San Francisco-based company has put an increased focus on its monetisation strategy over the last 12 months, with co-founder Dawoon Kang reporting double digit monthly revenue growth in September.





MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN

CEO, HUBPEOPLE

Over the past year, HubPeople's focus has been on growth and expansion, the company doubling its workforce as revenues grew by 50% over the course of 2016. The Isle of Man-based company run by Michael O'Sullivan now powers over 10,000 niche dating sites, with a total user base of 6m, and in 2016 saw both its affiliate business and number of logged-in members increase by 75%. In an interview with GDI, O'Sullivan - who has led the white label company for eight years - said this growth has been thanks to the team's strategy of cultivating and building niche communities, as well as focusing on diversity and segmentation in the market, and it's a strategy that continued to serve the white label leader well throughout 2016.



JUSTIN MCLEOD

FOUNDER & CEO, HINGE

Quickly touted as one of mobile dating's leading lights after launching in 2013 and attracting investment to the tune of \$22.5m, Hinge suddenly went quiet in 2016. It returned in September, the dating app's social media accounts proclaiming "something better is coming", as founder Justin McLeod revealed the team had completely rebuilt the product over the previous nine months. Launching on 11th October, after a clever "dating apocalypse" marketing campaign, Hinge returned with a \$7 subscription fee, ditching the swipe in favour of new story profiles, with McLeod pitching the product as the "Match.com for the next generation". Despite relaxing its paid subscription policy, offering freemium options to early adopters a month after launch, the New York brand said connections on the new version are 9x more likely to turn into dates, with app sessions being used to chat 12x more than to discover new people. Live across the US and in London, Toronto, Sydney and Mumbai, Hinge started 2017 by testing a new personal assistant service called Audrey - an intriguing new direction for the mobile dating reformer.



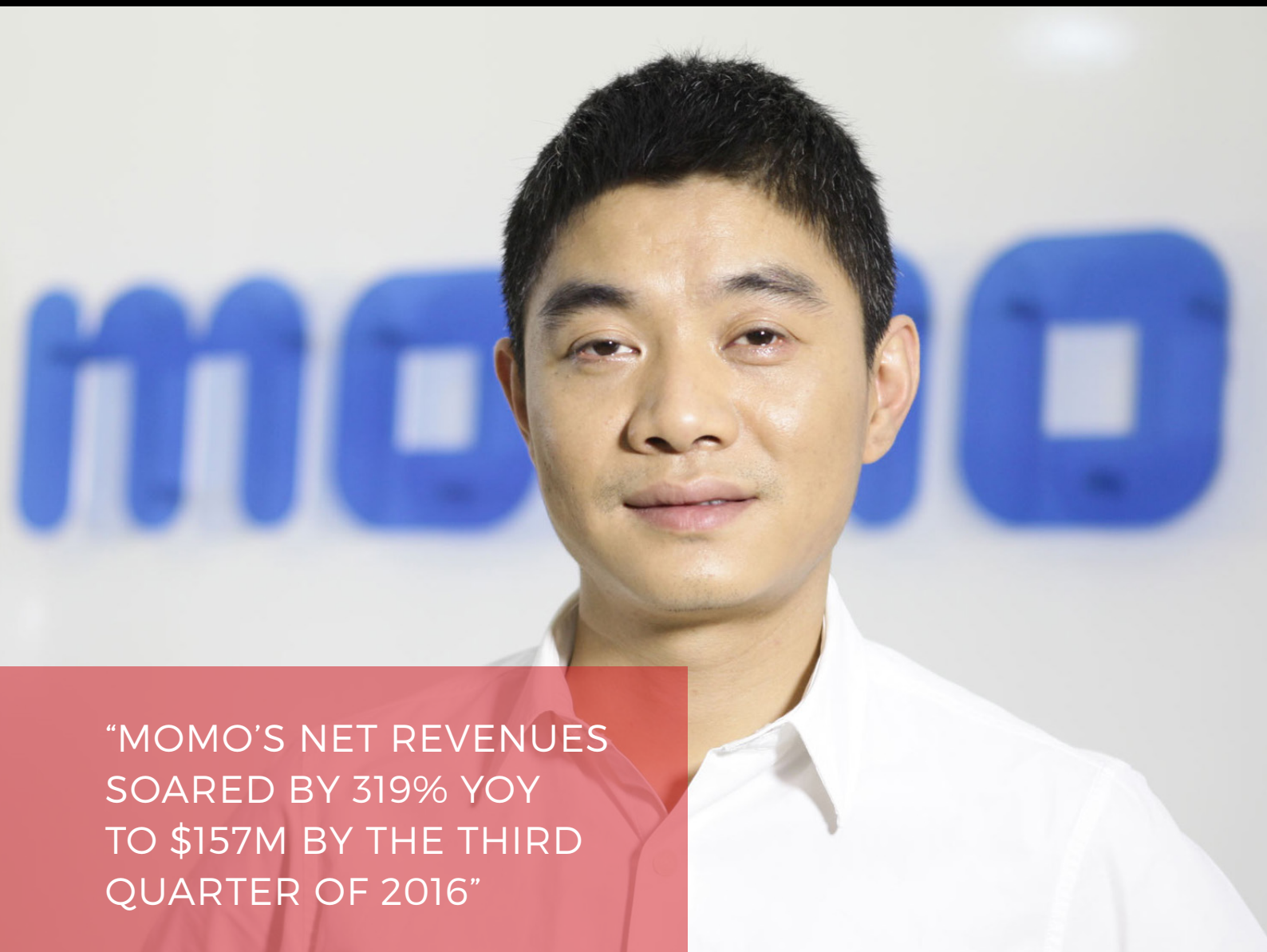
DIDIER RAPPAPORT

FOUNDER & CEO, HAPPN

In 2016, the gap between the leaders of mobile dating and the rest of the pack grew substantially - a handful of apps dominating the post-Tinder landscape. One of these was Happn, the French missed connections app led by DailyMotion co-founder Didier Rappaport, which saw remarkable growth - more than doubling its user base from 10m to 25m over the course of the year. In May, Happn released See You There, an offline-orientated feature to help users connect for dates in real-time, a forward-thinking move perhaps indicative of where industry leaders like Rappaport see the future of online dating. Now with over 80 employees in its Paris headquarters, and live in over 40 countries, experienced CEO Didier Rappaport revealed the dating brand was plotting a “game-changing” product launch for Q2 of 2017, likely hoping to capitalise on 2016’s growth by setting itself apart at the top of the pile.

happn

“HAPPN MORE THAN DOUBLED ITS USER BASE FROM 10M TO 25M IN 2016”



“MOMO’S NET REVENUES SOARED BY 319% YOY TO \$157M BY THE THIRD QUARTER OF 2016”

TANG YAN

FOUNDER & CEO, MOMO

In the third quarter of 2015, Chinese Tinder-style app Momo, which has over 77m MAUs, launched a fledgling new streaming service to let users broadcast live videos. A year later, the live video business had generated a remarkable \$108m, helping Momo’s net revenues soar by 319% YoY to \$157m by the third quarter of 2016. The streaming service - which lets users broadcast live videos,

comment and send virtual gifts - took off in Q2, revenues tripling as paying users of the broadcast service hit 1.3m. Announcing these Q2 results, founder & CEO Tang Yan revealed the \$1.9bn buyout proposal he had put forward the year before was being withdrawn, as Momo once again proved itself ahead of the curve - the waves of its influence already being felt across the industry.





GREG BLATT

CHAIRMAN & CEO, MATCH GROUP
CEO, TINDER

Assuming the role of CEO following its IPO in late-2015, Match Group stalwart Greg Blatt guided the public company through another strong, steady year. In May, the Match Group posted a 24% increase in its dating revenue, hitting \$285.3m total revenue and beating the highest analyst expectations. Much of this growth came from strong membership gains at Tinder, which had an excellent 2016 - doubling its paying subscribers to 1.7m and contributing to a 22% revenue rise for Match Group in Q3. And as the year closed out, Greg Blatt, who has been with IAC since 2013, took the leadership of another piece of the Match Group empire, succeeding Sean Rad as Tinder CEO after the co-founder stepped down to lead new project Swipe Ventures.



DASH GOPINATH

CEO, IF(WE)

After rebranding in 2014, if(we) became entirely focused on building and incubating social products designed to help people form meaningful connections. The Silicon Valley social company operates Tagged and Hi5, which have a combined user base of 300m, and in 2016 CEO Dash Gopinath oversaw a 40% growth in mobile revenue and 50% EBITDA increase, as its total user base grew by 20%. In January this year, if(we) closed an acqui-hire of Bae - a celebrated dating & social app for black millennials that has since been merged with Tagged - its founders Brian and Justin Gerrard appointed to lead if(we)'s marketing and growth. This was quickly followed by the launch of live streaming app WeChill, which generated 50,000 users in its first month, and lets viewers send custom virtual gifts that can be cashed out by broadcasters - a taste of if(we)'s video-focused product strategy for 2017.

if(**we**)



“THE COMPANY SAW A 10% CONVERSION RATE INCREASE ON ITS MAINSTREAM NETWORK TOWARDS THE END OF 2016”

ROSS WILLIAMS & STEVE PAMMENTER

CO-FOUNDER & CHAIRMAN, CO-FOUNDER & CEO,
VENNTRO

In June last year, Venntro co-founders Ross Williams and Steve Pammenter changed roles for the first time in the company’s 14 year history. Taking over as CEO of the business, Steve Pammenter immediately carried out a review of all business operations, overhauling its planning process, opting to refocus all resources on Venntro’s core product, White Label Dating, and implementing an increased partner focus. With his new Chairman role, Ross Williams moved his attentions towards the Windsor-based company’s long term strategic vision, concentrating on acquisitions, partnerships

and securing future investment for the company. In press appearances on Radio 4’s Friday Boss and in the London Evening Standard, Williams continued to raise awareness about the dating industry and consumer safety - Venntro joining as a member of the Online Dating Association in October. For White Label Dating, in addition to further investing in its customer care and moderation division, the company saw a 10% conversion rate increase on its mainstream network towards the end of 2016, the business hitting the milestone of \$200m paid out to partners in November.





“IN 2016, BUMBLE
SECURED ITS PLACE
AMONG THE LEADERS
OF MOBILE DATING”

WHITNEY WOLFE

FOUNDER & CEO,
BUMBLE

At the end of 2016, Whitney Wolfe’s Bumble hit 11.5m global users, securing its place among the leaders of mobile dating after two years on the market - an impressive feat in a crowded space. As with Tinder, this growth was aided by the assistance of a big name backer - Badoo revealed to own 79% of the app in March - something that enabled Wolfe and her team to scale Bumble, focusing on product, growth and user acquisition, without needing to seek outside capital. Armed with one of the strongest brands in the mobile space, in the last 12 months Austin-based Bumble introduced a raft of innovative features, including social discovery tool BFF, a selfie verification system and Snapchat-style video story profiles - Wolfe’s leadership helping to cement Bumble’s position as one of the industry’s most exciting and forward-thinking brands.





MICHAEL YE

FOUNDER & CEO, DATETIX

DateTix has quietly emerged as one of the industry's most active players. In March, the Hong Kong-based company sold its consulting business so it could grow its eponymous on-demand app, which launched in February. Acquired by Enverro in October 2015, the company, founded by entrepreneur Michael Ye, followed this with a swift Android launch, quickly registering a 67% monthly MAU growth in key markets. In July, Ye then secured the shrewd acquisition of former UK dating star Lovestruck for 2m shares, a move that boosted its user base by 259%. This was followed by another acquisition in November, buying Thai startup Noonsnoon, setting out DateTix's ambitions in the region, before Ye and DateTix closed out an impressive year by raising \$1.3m in a private placement.

DATE TIX 

JERONIMO FOLGUEIRA

CEO, ELITESINGLES

Joining the company at the end of 2015 from Betfair, Jeronimo Folgueira guided EliteSingles through an extremely successful 2016. With a targeted approach of catering to singles looking for a more serious service than that offered by apps like Tinder, EliteSingles rebranded in March and expanded into new territories, doubling the size of its tech team and seeing mobile traffic grow from 30% to 70% over the course of the year. In October, the Affinitas-owned brand acquired French site Attractive World for over €10m, consolidating its presence in the market and showing its clout as a global market force, as it hit the 40m user milestone, announcing the product was seeing 500,000 new registrations every month.

 Elite
SINGLES





JENNY GONZALEZ

CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER,
AGILE WINGS

For Agile Wings and Jenny Gonzalez, the first half of 2016 was taken up with completing the handover of Dating Factory, the white label dating leader it acquired the year before for an undisclosed sum. Having finished the handovers from the previous management and restructuring the company, Gonzalez was made Agile Wings' Chief Revenue Officer in August and tasked with managing the Dating Factory team. Now part of a larger firm, one that specialises in performance optimisation and email marketing, Dating Factory spent the rest of 2016 improving its business for partners - decreasing chargebacks by 30% and increasing partner profitability by reducing low quality traffic and closing down certain geos. With a new office in Malta, the white label brand now has the means to complete strategic deals and bring the benefits of economy of scale to its partners, as it readies the wholesale overhaul and relaunch of its platform, due later this year.



DANNY ROSENTHAL

CEO, SPARK NETWORKS

In August, Chicago investment firm Peak6 bought 16% of JDate and Christian Mingle owner Spark Networks for \$7.6m. With this investment, the public dating company's executive team was overhauled, with Peak6 partner Danny Rosenthal becoming Spark's fourth CEO in five years. It's been a tough few years for the LA-based company, with former CEO Michael Egan unable to resuscitate the dating business after promising a "crawl, walk, run" strategy, the company continuing to haemorrhage users as revenue fell further in 2016. In Q3, revenue decreased 28% to \$8.4m due to a fall in the number of average paying subscribers, which dropped to 173,564 from 197,109 the year before. Rosenthal wants to halt this decline by pausing short term initiatives and focusing entirely on modernising its two core products, JDate and Christian Mingle. With new versions of the core brands due in 2017, the new management has a job on its hands if it wants to reverse Spark's downward trajectory over the past few years.



GRANT LANGSTON

CEO, EHARMONY

In 2016, Grant Langston became the CEO of a company he joined 16 years previously, when it launched into a nascent online dating market in the summer of 2000. Founded on the ideas and beliefs of clinical psychologist Dr. Neil Clark Warren, the company is now one of the clear market leaders, and in 2016 Langston succeeded Warren as CEO after the 82-year-old recommenced his retirement. Early into his tenure, Langston was vocal about his belief that the eHarmony product needed to be

modernised, calling it his “first order of business”. By December, the first set of updates were in place - Langston taking the bold step of making its famous questionnaire optional, adding real-time chatting and introducing a new compatibility rating for users. With more changes coming in January 2017, Langston said the company was “just getting started”, promising to re-energise the brand by modernising to new times while staying true to its core relationship brand.

eHarmony®

A portrait of Grant Langston, CEO of eHarmony, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. He has short brown hair and a goatee. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a white railing and a brick wall.

“LANGSTON WAS VOCAL ABOUT HIS BELIEF THAT THE EHARMONY PRODUCT NEEDED TO BE MODERNISED”

JOEL SIMKHAI

FOUNDER & CEO, GRINDR

At the start of 2016, Grindr announced a major investment by Chinese gaming firm Beijing Kunlun Tech, which acquired 60% of the Los Angeles-based app for \$93m, valuing the gay dating product at \$155m. Off the back of this impressive deal, in its seventh year Grindr set about pursuing its strategy of evolving into a “lifestyle brand”, something founder Joel Simkhai hinted at the year before. Grindr quickly put its new PR agency’s fashion connections to use, exclusively live-streaming acclaimed designer J.W. Anderson’s London fashion show on the app and launching its first men’s fashion line in August - all proceeds going to fighting homophobia and transphobia in the sporting community. Simkhai’s Grindr - which is live in 196 countries and visited by 2m people every day - also made the big step of letting users state their HIV status on the app last November, in an effort to open dialogue among users about sexual health.



KELLY STECKELBERG

CEO, ZOOSK

Zoosk CEO Kelly Steckelberg was forced to begin 2016 in the same way as the year before - by laying off a portion of the company’s staff. The “difficult but necessary” decision to cut Zoosk’s workforce by a third was part of its strategy to cultivate a profitable and sustainable business, and by the end of 2016 the company had celebrated a record eight quarters of profitability. The San Francisco brand also released Snapchat-style app Lively, announced at the GDI Amsterdam Conference, the first release from its new incubator Zoosk Labs. In 2016, the brand also hit the 40m user milestone, with CEO Steckelberg named one of the San Francisco Business Times’ Most Influential Women for the third year in a row.



JOSEPH PHUA

FOUNDER & CEO, PAKTOR

2016 was another big year for Asia's leading dating group, Paktor. Fresh from securing a massive \$32.5m funding round co-led by venture capital firm K2Global and media company PT Media Nusantara Citra Tbk, it acquired a controlling stake in 17 Media, a Taiwan-based live streaming platform with over 15m users. Its first acquisition, the move signals founder Joseph Phua's ambitious long term plan for Paktor Group to diversify beyond dating, venturing into the social entertainment space. Phua followed this with an acquisition of US casual app Down - previously called Bang With Friends - for "several million". The Paktor app, which is localised for 17 markets, also introduced a range of features that helped its user base cross the 20m mark, as its new premium service pushed the company towards a 22x YoY revenue growth. With a strong presence in six countries - Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam - Paktor has plans to expand to a seventh country, South Korea. Phua expects the app to continue growing in 2017 as its offline dating unit, GaiGai/Paktor Premium, establishes a foothold in both Singapore and Taiwan.



"2016 WAS ANOTHER BIG YEAR FOR ASIA'S LEADING DATING GROUP, PAKTOR."



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