



*Taking the Waiting out of Dating...*TM

PRESS RELEASE

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London, UK – December 6th, 2007: Guardian Technology Writer Victor Keegan explains how dating is moving from the PC to the Mobile and announces the relaunch of The 3G Dating Agency.

Guardian
Unlimited

Dating moves from the PC to the mobile

By Victor Keegan

Social networks typically put you in touch with friends or friends of friends. Dating sites let you meet strangers anywhere on earth with whom you might share a passion. Never before has it been possible to trawl so many people to discover the person of your destiny. Whether this leads to more stable relationships or whether it undermines the concept of stable relationships because of the opportunities for covert contact with previous friends is a moot point.

Online dating is a huge business, awash with sites such as Datingdirect.com, Pocado.com, Meetic.com, Match.com and the amazing Plentyoffish.com, a bog-standard service that claims to be the biggest in the world. It is still run by one person, founder Markus Frind, from a room in Vancouver, Canada. According to comScore's rankings, Plentyoffish.com received 7.2m visits in October, more than the combined traffic of rivals Meetic and Match.com. It is refreshing to know that the proverbial backroom programmer can still beat them all and make a good profit by a word of mouth without spending millions on site development.

Online dating could change soon as webcams start to be employed in earnest. They have been around for ages but haven't taken off. A few years ago, three young Americans started a webcam dating site so prospective partners could size each other up. It bombed, so they allowed punters to upload their own videos instead. They called it YouTube. Two new but very different services now being launched could take dating in new directions. George Berkowski, a Polish-born entrepreneur with UK roots, has just launched Woome.com, an online speed-dating site (free at present) enabling people to join sessions or start one of their own on subjects such as "bored at work" or "Hillary Clinton, love or hate her". Participants have up to two minutes to impress one of the other people on the screen and if they want to take it further they click on the "woo me" button which, if reciprocated, can lead to the relationship continuing by email.

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Unlike the time-lagged static experience of other dating or social sites, this gives a live experience that Berkowski hopes will help him crack the lucrative speed-dating market [\$1bn in the US alone] - though nearly 25% of sessions have been not about dating but functional things such as finding an apartment or talking politics.

Romi Parmar, after two failed attempts, is hoping it will be third time lucky with 3G Dating Agency, a Clerkenwell-based company using the neglected video camera on 3G phones to launch a secure global dating service. He believes that the increasing availability of 3G phones and the belated arrival of "all-you-can-eat" data tariffs - meaning you no longer need to take out a mortgage to make a 3G call - have boosted the chances of success.

Parmar says: "We offer the ability to view a picture profile and text first, before proceeding to the video [and] before ultimately meeting in person." His selling point, to nervous handset manufacturers, is that the service is secure and moderated. Someone rings back with a video call to check out users and they consult electoral rolls as well. A centre in India monitors and records all calls so there is a paper trail if something untoward happens. He says he is the first in the world with a validated service and claims it will work on "every 3G handset on the planet".

Future plans include turning it into a mobile social networking service, with GPS enabling users to contact people nearby. He claims an advantage over social networks such as MySpace because of the difficulty they have in porting a web experience to the varying features of mobiles. Whether he succeeds remains to be seen. I have yet to see anyone using a 3G phone for a video call. If Parmar can change that he will deserve an Order of Merit from grateful handset manufacturers and network operators.

About the 3G Dating Agency

The 3G Dating Agency is the worlds most advanced global mobile social networking phenomenon that doesn't require subscription and works on any internet enabled mobile phone. Our service is a great way to find new friends or partners for fun, dating and long term relationships and our technology enables us to offer unrivalled levels of safety, convenience and ease of use - thus enabling you to **Take the Waiting out of Dating...**