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Report card for dates

by Kezia Toh

Dating agencies offer post-mortems to help clients learn why a date did not work out and increase their chances of dating success in future.

She thought she had covered all the bases: donned a pretty dress, brushed her hair, asked polite questions and kept eye contact with her date.

But when this did not blossom into a follow-up meeting, financial analyst Y.L. Tan, 28, asked [dating agency](#) Lunch Actually - which set up the date - why.

The post-mortem of the date, conducted by the agency, gave her the answer. She had treated the restaurant staff as "invisible". She did not thank the waiter for bringing her food and wine, or for opening the doors for them.

"I learnt that this was a universal test. How you treat waiters shows how you treat the people around you," says Miss Tan, who credits these "exit interviews" [offered](#) by dating agencies, where they ask a client's former dates what happened when things did not work out, for helping her realise that little things matter.

These reviews let clients know their "blind spots" to improve their chances of dating success, says Ms Violet Lim, 33, owner of Lunch Actually.

She has conducted personalised post-mortems for the past five years, at \$100 a session.

The client gets his "report card" via e-mail: detailing the positive and negative aspects of a date, an average rating given by his date and whether his date would be willing to see him again.

Nearly 20 per cent of Ms Lim's clients will sign up for the post-mortem and of these, about 60 per cent are men because they will not take the feedback "too personally".

For stock analyst Tay Hock Meng, who will undergo a date review with the agency in the next two months, it is a chance to improve his communication skills.

The 36-year-old says: "It is a way to strategise my approach for future dates, such as not talking about my line of work too much because not many women are interested in stocks and finance."

Two other agencies - Love Express Services and Champagne JSG - have been conducting dating reviews for the past four years.

These are included in the price of signing up for a one-on-one date or dating event. Clients are given feedback via e-mail on their dating performance.

"We approach it from the 'action' angle, such as what can be done better, rather than focusing on what is wrong with someone, to avoid hurting anyone's feelings," says Ms Deon Chan, 40, managing director of Love Express Services.

The post-mortem is gaining popularity. Two more agencies will start one-on-one dating reviews in the coming months. This is because many clients would ask anecdotally for feedback on why a date did not work out, says Ms Choo Yanqing, 29, director of A Dance Date. She plans to roll out the additional service within the next six months to a year, pegging the fee to about \$100 to \$120.

Another agency - CompleteMe - will be doing the same by asking participants to fill up a questionnaire after an event. Those interested to find out what others really thought of them can pay \$45 for a 30-minute one-on-one review, says its owner Michelle Goh, 33.

But Ms Betty Goh, 57, president of the Association of Dating Agencies and Matchmakers, is unsure if the service will take off. "The additional cost of knowing 'the truth' - which can be sensitive - may prevent people from paying extra," she says. It is also likely to be more popular with women as they are "more proactive", she notes.

"Whereas for men," Ms Goh adds, "they may just think, it is okay if this one does not work out, I can just look for someone else."

It is impossible to know someone fully after just a few dates, says psychologist Daniel Koh, 41, of private practice Insights Mind Centre.

He adds: "Dating could also be quite emotional if either party is upset for any reason, so the exit interview - just like the human resource practice - might not be entirely truthful."

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