

TODAY

business › sme

A maverick in matchmaking



SINGAPORE — Saddled with a full-time job in business development at a technology company, Ms Michelle Goh faced a conundrum that is common among many singles in Singapore: A dearth of opportunities to meet other singles who are interested to start a relationship.

BY FRANCIS KAN - 5 HOURS 41 MIN AGO

SINGAPORE — Saddled with a full-time job in business development at a technology company, Ms Michelle Goh faced a conundrum that is common among many singles in Singapore: A dearth of opportunities to meet other singles who are interested to start a relationship.

Instead of moaning about it to her friends — many of whom were busy getting hitched — Ms Goh took matters into her own hands and set up a Facebook group for singles to meet through arranged gatherings.

Started in 2007, the initiative was a hit right from the start, attracting a large faithful following of singles looking for love.

“Within the first week after I started the group, 50 people joined and I didn’t know any of

them,” said Ms Goh, 33. Groups of between four and 12 would come together for movie or dinner dates. A couple met at five events in 2009, and got married in 2011.

Ms Goh eventually found her Mr Right through a more traditional route — she married someone she had met at work in 2010 and gave birth to a baby boy the following year.

Mission accomplished, Ms Goh shut down the Facebook group to focus on her family, much to the dismay of her followers.

“When I closed the group, my mobile phone started ringing immediately. People were saying, ‘I don’t care that you’re married, I’m not’,” she recalled.

Ms Goh decided that starting a dating agency required her to work only a few times a week and would give her more time to spend with her newborn son. So, she quit her full-time job and in September last year and launched CompleteMe, which organises speed-dating events and self-improvement courses for singles to improve their dating experience.

Ms Goh is one of the fewer than 20 dating practitioners accredited by SDNTrust, part of the Government-linked Social Development Network.

Her flagship events are one-on-one speed-dating dinners for between 24 and 48 singles. Each meeting with a member of the opposite sex lasts about eight minutes. At the end of each session, participants indicate who among the group they would like to keep in touch with. Couples who name each other are then notified via a text message.

“I do a lot of dining (events) because it is a very good platform for communication. What I specialise in is providing a good ambience. I try to find places with nice concepts,” said Ms Goh. One of the establishments she often holds events at is German eatery Stuttgart Blackforest Boutique S-Cafe.

Meanwhile, Ms Goh’s self-improvement courses help participants with their grooming and dating techniques. She has tied up with fashion retailers to allow men and women to pick clothes for each other.

“This way, the guys can see what kind of clothes the ladies find attractive, and vice-versa,” she explained.

To help alleviate any stress of being alone during the festive season, Ms Goh is arranging a large-scale dating event this Saturday at the York Hotel, where she hopes to attract more than 100 participants.

“I fully understand how singles feel during the festive season because I have been (in that situation) before. It can be very lonely, especially when you get older — your social circle gets smaller as your friends will have their significant others and families,” said Ms Goh.

She currently runs her business on her own from home, relying on freelancers during events. But as interest picks up and she increases the frequency of her gatherings, she

foresees CompleteMe becoming a full-time job.

So having become an expert in the dating game, how does Ms Goh rate her husband's performance on their first date?

"I would say there was a lot of room for improvement," she replied with a laugh. "He's a very straight guy — when my friends asked him to take me back after a group date, that's what he literally did. He wasn't prepared for a relationship back then."