

A dating agency run by a North East entrepreneur has enjoyed the busiest period in its history as singletons vow to make 2010 the year they find their match.

Gateshead-based Coco Moon, run by Sharon Kell, has seen a surge in business since the festive period and is now looking to expand its reach.

The company, which currently targets single professionals in the North East, now plans to spread its reach as far North as Edinburgh, South to Harrogate and across the country to Carlisle.

Ms Kell's days as a high-flying business executive made her realise that people put far more effort into getting their careers right, than making their relationships work.

She saw a gap in the market for a dating agency for busy professionals in senior roles with relationship training and more focus on finding the right match for people.

After four months in business the company had surpassed year two's financial targets and has since reached the final of several national awards including Grazia's Female Entrepreneur awards.

Ms Kell said the recent boom following the festive period, was down to singletons who have started the New Year with a fresh desire to find love.

She said: "January is often a crunch time for people that have just experienced a lonely Christmas and, alongside New Year's resolutions, there is also Valentine's Day [on the horizon]. "This January has been our best month on record and we are now much more established in the market."

Meanwhile, a North East solicitor yesterday warned that divorce rates look set to rise in the coming months in tandem with the economic recovery.

Victoria Moreton, partner and family law specialist with TBI Solicitors said divorce rates continued to decline in 2009 as couples stalled the process because of financial worries.

The concern was caused primarily by low property prices, but also by funding professional fees. However, if house prices continue their recovery and economic growth is sustained, it is expected that this will provide couples with more confidence in relation to their financial affairs and therefore enable them to agree it is now an appropriate time to go their separate ways.

Ms Moreton said: "In the last year, the simple fact that properties have been much harder to sell, raising less cash in the process, has meant that couples literally could not afford to divorce. However, if a relationship has broken down it is always worth seeking professional advice as soon as possible. We are aware that the economic crisis has affected families and can suggest alternatives to ensure as stress-free a divorce as possible, assist in organising the financial settlement and help you through the entire procedure."