

Hub can bring romance into lives of high-flyers

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A BUSINESSWOMAN is aiming to help busy and stressed career men and women to find love.

Matchmaker Sharon Kell set up Coco Moon after spending 15 years as a business executive and observing at first hand how many high-flyers around her found it difficult to translate the success of their careers into their personal lives.

The agency is focused solely on business people in the North East and uses local social events where members can meet each face-to-face to network and perhaps find they have even more in common. The events, run under the tag Coco Moon hub, bring together people with already established shared interests.

"Coco Moon hub is a hassle-free way of improving your social life, whether you are looking for friendship, relationship or marriage," said Sharon.

The service also offers one-to-one matchmaking.

Sharon is confident of success because she says her approach is different to most dating agencies which put people together based on their age, geographical location and hobbies.

"Because of this they have limited success," she said. "Together we evaluate the elements of relationships which are really important to you, we get to know what makes you tick and



MATCHMAKER Sharon Kell set up Coco Moon, which uses local social events where members can meet.

then we use our relationship coaching expertise so we can collectively agree our approach for introducing you to potential partners which works for you."

She believes businesspeople should start to use the same tricks of the trade they utilise in their working lives

when they start searching for love.

"When we are faced with tricky business situations we don't hesitate but draw on expertise from the relevant areas, we contact head hunters to recruit the right person for key positions in our organisation, we bring in finance experts when our

operating costs are running too high, we use technology experts to make sure our systems are cutting edge," she said.

"So why wouldn't we use relationship experts to support us to find the right partner for us in our personal lives?"



We should be looking for positives

G RIM, unprecedented, doom and gloom, disaster for the economy, market failure, bleak, frightening ...

It is impossible not to hear, see or read something truly depressing about the current state of the economy. Having got that out of the way it is important to look for positives as markets operate on confidence.

Looking for positives is not just a cheap morale booster, it is vital to stimulate recovery. We should not be talking about worrying about the delays in the US Government's decision to put £400bn into the US economy, we should be saying what a good thing it is that the US Government is going to try to stimulate market recovery.

In this region we have a range of funds which can, in a small way, help stimulate growth in the SME sector. Going back to 1999, not to analyse previous market adjustments, but to look at the start of the so called Gap Funding creation which formed the foundation of the Access to Finance programmes.

Since then, the region via One NorthEast, has created at least a dozen significant funds to stimulate SME growth. While many of these are now fully invested, some still have funding available to assist start up and growing companies such as the Regional Investment Fund (Entrust), the NEL Growth Fund (NEL), Proof of Concept Fund (NSEI) and the North East Investment Centre (Business Link).

The Fund Creation, an associate mentoring support, has been part of a decade long campaign (the first in the country) to ensure that funds were available to companies that could not raise finance.

Ironically while the impetus for this programme was prudent financial management, it was stimulated from the perspective of ensuring the so-called funding gaps (between unsecured and secured lending, between secured lending and venture capital etc) did not adversely affect our SME creation.

It should also be noted that a number of banks supported this less than sexy sector out of a sense of responsibility. Northern Rock was one of the first banks to assist this sector.

Neil Warwick is Partner and head of the Kudos department at Dickinson Dees LLP

Make staff feel they are valued

T HIS is a column run in conjunction with the Entrepreneurs' Forum that looks at the gems of advice shared by our top entrepreneurs on dealing with issues in their daily lives. Each column explores three or four different takes on an issue.

Sir Peter Vardy of Wearside's The Vardy Group

"Motivating staff isn't just about paying them more than anyone else is. It's about creating an environment where they can feel valued. A lot of the factors are to do with communication. Do you communicate with people all the time, do they know where they're going, do they know how you're going to get them there, do they know their role in the journey? It's all about getting the right people on the bus, and get them sitting in the right

HOW I ... MOTIVATE MY TEAM

places before the bus leaves the station."

Tony Trapp, managing director of Riding Mill's IHC Engineering Business:

"I'm a great believer in that the team matters more than the individual. You've got to spread the message of your company to everyone in the business. We have six board meetings a year. After each board meeting I do a thing called 'State of the Nation'. We get people together and I'll spend a couple of hours explaining the business situation, what we're doing, what we've done, the successes and the

problems we've shared. We have to have people all the way through the organisation who reflect the ideas and the energy that we have at the top. We're setting up a shadow management group of young people to shadow the work of the main management group and come up with their own ideas."

Angela Brown, from Training in Childcare Ltd, based in South Tyneside:

"We've got a cash pot share and at the end of each year we take a look at the profits and then I share out a percentage. People obviously know what their salary is, but then they can see the contrast with how well we did a particular year. We're very open with that process. We're not going to hoard it all away and buy something somewhere abroad, it's about rewarding people's

commitment and effort, and people respond to that."

Fiona Cruickshank of Cramlington-based drugs company, The Specials Laboratory:

"I believe that a high spirited workforce breeds successful business. We try to instill positivism and enjoyment, a professional yet friendly place to work. It's all about having a bit of a laugh, doing the business the way you want to, and treating everybody decently. We have a party once a month, the boardroom gets done up like a kids' party with balloons and jelly and ice cream and it's all really silly but it's about getting people together. When we hit a milestone in the financials, we threw a booze cruise party on the Tyne. It was a gesture to say thanks for all the hard work, now let's have a bit of fun."



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