

## Rich Swiss singles employ head-hunter to find love

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By Laura MacInnis

GENEVA (Reuters Life!) - Some of Switzerland's single professionals, too busy to find themselves a spouse, have employed a former corporate head-hunter to find love for them.

Trea Tijmens launched her company, SuccessMatch, in 2005 after realizing that many of the high-achievers she was trying to recruit for new jobs were working so much that they had little time to date.

"I knew that a lot of international professional types were single," she told Reuters over a hot chocolate in Geneva's banking district.

"It is a vicious circle in the sense that if you don't have a personal life on the side, you tend to work even more. That makes it more difficult to find a partner," she said.

The married, 43-year-old mother of three now uses her business acumen to connect hundreds of English-speaking bankers, lawyers, doctors and diplomats whom she described as dissatisfied with the haphazard approach to romance.

"They want to make it a little bit more efficient," she said. "If you are looking for a job, you can send spontaneous applications to all kinds of companies and you can be lucky. But you can also go to an agency or a head-hunter who knows what companies are looking for."

Tijmens' clients pay 4,000 Swiss francs (\$3,846) up-front for an 18-month personalized membership, which includes an in-depth interview, a personality test and a professional photograph for their portfolios, which are shared on a confidential basis with potential matches.

Each encounter the company arranges costs another 250 Swiss francs per person. Dinner is not included.

"You have to ask, what is it worth to you to find your life partner?" Tijmens said, stressing that while she does not ask her clients outright how much money they make, most are well-educated and highly successful.

"This really is a service for people who have everything in their life except a person to share it with."

Online dating services in Switzerland charge much less. According to their Web sites, Swissfriends.ch costs 111 francs (\$104) per year, Meetic.ch costs 239 francs (\$224) per year and Parship.ch costs 420 francs (\$392) per year.

While SuccessMatch also offers a less-costly "meet and eat" dating service that costs 500 francs (\$460) for the first year, plus 250 francs (\$230) per date, Tijmens said many clients find this option less appealing than the fully tailored service.

"Often the younger people say, 'if I'm going to do this, I'm going to do it right,'" she said. "People want to make sure that when they meet someone it is a nice person who corresponds more or less to what they are looking for."

Switzerland is one of the most expensive countries in the world, frequently topping the Big Mac index of consumer prices published by The Economist magazine.

The prosperous Alpine country has fewer than 8 million residents, who live in cities a fraction of the size of New York, London and other urban hubs of high-end matchmaking.

Tijmens said that United Nations staff make up part of her client base in Geneva, Switzerland's most international city, along with bankers, lawyers, entrepreneurs and other busy bees. Her Zurich clients mainly work in finance, and in Basel, where leading drugmakers Roche and Novartis are based, most work in pharmaceuticals.

Though Brits make up the biggest chunk of her clientele, Tijmens said she works with people from about 30 nationalities, as well as many Swiss who have lived or studied abroad.

She emphasized that SuccessMatch carefully screens clients to make sure they are indeed single, and reject those who do not appear ready to commit or are "very angry or very sad."

"They need to be seriously interested in finding a life partner," she said.

Tijmens, who was born in the Netherlands and met her French husband in the United States, declined to say how many of her matches have resulted in lasting partnerships or marriage.

She said it was important to remember that SuccessMatch plays a limited role in getting a relationship rolling.

"My part is to make an introduction, but they have to make it work," she said, acknowledging that some of the matches she makes result in friendship and not red-hot romance.

"If I had the magic formula for this chemistry thing down, I would have it made," she said. "There is such a thing as fate. I still believe in that."