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matchmaker, matchmaker

MICHELE FIELDS FINDS THE
PERFECT MATCH. IT ISN'T EASY.

When it comes to dating, men want trim and taut. Women want height and hair. Matchmaker Michele Fields' clients may fantasize about meeting that perfect 10, but she tosses a dose of reality into the equation.

"I'm a matchmaker, not a magician," said Fields, owner of Bon Jour Inc. in Denver.

A former legal secretary, Fields, 43, has had a lifetime of dating, six proposals and one marriage. She created Bon Jour Inc. 10 years ago.

"I always used to date people and think, 'Who would he be better with than me?'" Fields said.

Fields considers Bon Jour Inc. "the total opposite" of the bigger dating services that have annual fees of \$1,500 to \$4,000. She charges a one-time fee of \$800 and \$35 for each introduction.

Most of her business comes through referrals. She has little overhead, working out of her Denver home. She has no employees and doesn't advertise.

Bon Jour Inc. has 250 clients, about evenly divided between men and women.

On average, her women clients earn \$70,000 and the men, \$90,000. Everyone is college-educated, some with master's degrees and Ph.D.s.

"You should be able to do this by yourself in your 20s," she said. "But at a certain age, you may be working or traveling a lot, or you don't have that oomph to go out and meet people."

Each client helps Fields fill out a detailed questionnaire. They talk for about two hours. The discussion covers the person's opinions on a variety of sticky issues from capital punishment to abortion to living together before marriage.

She asks clients what they consider important goals, such as financial security, serenity, knowledge, power and popularity. She asks about religion, smoking and drinking, and how many times a person has been married and divorced. She asks both men and women their most superficial preferences from fake nails to implants on women to hair line and facial hair on men.



"I don't ask so much you don't need to go on a date," Fields said. "But some things — height, weight, age, and surprisingly, pets — can be deal breakers."

She then makes matches, offering advice, encouragement and a no-nonsense attitude. Fields takes credit for 59 marriages and no divorces.

Fields always talks to her clients after a date to see how it went. She doesn't like it when either men or women aren't responsive or responsible. People can be jerks for free, she said.

"I try not to push too hard, but I don't let people go on a date and just disappear if they're not interested," she said. "If it doesn't click, they've got to grow up and say so."

— Kathleen Bohland