



Feature

Lawyers in Love: The Legal Industry's Online Dating Destination

By Mahsa Khalilifar

As a former member of an online dating site, Elena Albamonte found that establishing her own came naturally.



"I started the site after I was on Match.com," she says of her decent experience with the popular Internet matchmaking portal. "I got matched up with a bunch of people — one was even a lawyer. I [eventually] ended up getting off Match.com, though, and never getting back on it. I ended up going back with a previous boyfriend."

After a month or so on the site, Albamonte left the online dating world as a customer and came back as a founder. In 2005, on Valentine's Day, appropriately enough, she launched LawyersinLove.com, a dating site created specifically for law students, lawyers, and legal professionals.

"I didn't really know what I was doing [at first]; I had no idea," Albamonte admits. "The first thing I did was buy the domain name. Luckily, they sold it for a reasonable price."

After purchasing the domain, Albamonte met with someone who had the appropriate software and went from there.

"It was very time consuming," she says. "I made up all the profile questions, some of which are law related."

The site's entertaining profile questions make humorous reference to various legal topics. For example, one question asks the user to choose which Supreme Court justice best fits his or her personality. Basically, Albamonte created questions that would amuse a law student or lawyer.

Albamonte, a federal attorney herself, has worked for the U.S. Department of Justice's Board of Immigration Appeals in Fall Church, VA, for the past 19 years.

"I thought the legal community needed something like [this

site]," she says. "I wanted to do something that would make [lawyers] laugh and find true love within the legal profession. Lawyers have a lot in common. They understand each other's work schedules. People [in the industry] work long hours. It's the idea that you understand each other and have a common schedule."

Albamonte also wanted her site to lighten the atmosphere and counter the seriousness that law school and the legal profession can bring.

"Lawyers are also serious people, and I wanted to create something to make them laugh," she says. "It's a fun thing."

Having graduated from Mercer University School of Law in Macon, Georgia, Albamonte knows that law students are also in search of love.

"I think it's nice not to date someone at your law school. You're there for three years; it could be risky," Albamonte jokes.

She has a point, though, considering law students work closely with their peers, especially if they're at a small law school like Albamonte was. As the site states, LawyersinLove.com is also "a great way to break out of law school cliques and meet others with whom you have something in common."

"It's more discreet to date outside of your school," Albamonte elaborates. "You can meet people from other schools."

On LawyersinLove.com, searching is free, and the subscription price is reduced by 50% for students. That is, you can browse the profiles without paying, and to contact someone personally, you only need to pay \$10. Legal professionals pay \$20 for subscriptions. Albamonte says she has a generous bug in her, though, and sometimes offers specials and free items.

Only law students, lawyers, and other legal professionals



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can join the site. Albamonte personally checks out almost everyone on the site, making sure he or she is legitimate. She can usually confirm that members are law students through their email addresses. However, she will go as far as having attorneys fax over proof of profession if they buy subscriptions to the site.

"I check them out. If [the information] is really bizarre, it's a lawyer," Albamonte laughs. She says that lawyers also include their favorite quotes and answer questions about certain trends, making them recognizable as legal professionals.

Albamonte deletes any fake candidates on her 2,600-member site. Although that number is not very high, she is positive about the future of the site.

"Our hope is to continue on, and we will continue to get more and more members," she says. "It's been really fun, but I'm not a good marketer. I'm working on that."

The mother of two teenagers, a 19-year-old son and a 15-year-old daughter, Albamonte works full-time and runs the site as well. During her downtime, she likes to spend time with her dog, travel, go to the movies, and go to the theater. And, yes, she is still searching for Mr. Right, although she has decided not to join her own dating site as it would create a conflict of interest.

Albamonte has bought 190 domain names for future use and is also planning to launch a "Facebook-like" site for lawyers. She has not yet settled on a name for the new site.

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