

RSVP: a concise history

RSVP first opened for business in 1992, the brainchild of Patrick McDonald. Patrick had sold his previous business and determined to fill his life with travel, fishing and playing golf. The novelty soon wore off and he was left feeling something was missing. As a widower, he felt that there was nowhere he could go to meet like-minded single people, so set about creating it for himself.



Initially, RSVP members came from Northamptonshire, with Patrick doing most of the work himself, helped by just one part time lady. He quickly realised that people value choice and linked up with a Bedfordshire-based agency so that there could be more variety for members – and more potential partners.



In 1995, following several enquiries from people just outside the boundaries, Patrick decided to engage extra staff and move into the Coventry and Rugby areas. Current RSVP General Manager Gaynor (then also recently widowed) initially commenced working for Patrick on a part-time basis in the evenings to deal with enquiries and use her expertise in matching.

Patrick eventually persuaded Gaynor to join him on a full time basis and, with both of them able to draw their own experiences of singledom, and a nation growing more accustomed to the idea of using professionals to help them find Mr/Ms Right, the stage was set for some serious growth.

In 1996, RSVP opened an office in Birmingham and set about some high profile marketing. February 1st 1996 saw our first adverts appear in the Birmingham Evening Mail and Birmingham Post. It also heard our adverts being played on Heart FM.



It was not long before word of RSVP's success spread – there's nothing like word of mouth to attract new members – and RSVP began receiving enquiries from the Leicester area. This seemed another natural progression; the events calendar was revamped to include events in all the new areas and for the first time there were multiple events each day. New offices followed in Rugby in 1998 and Leicester in 2000.



RSVP's first website hit the airwaves in October 1999. It was a simple affair, though the philosophies and values that underpinned it are still very much alive in today's rather more sophisticated offering.

Later, in 2000, probably the single biggest jump in RSVP's enviable position occurred, with the acquisition of the Bedford-based agency with which RSVP had enjoyed a close and mutually beneficial working relationship. At a stroke, RSVP added members in Beds, Herts, Cambs and Lincs.

The next few years were spent consolidating RSVP's position as the largest independently-run Introduction Agency in the Heart of England, building up membership in the areas already covered and nudging into Nottingham and Derby, offering more events and increasingly sophisticated matching techniques.



RSVP: a concise history (continued)

In 2005, after thirteen years at the helm, Patrick decided to retire – for a second time – and set about the difficult task of finding a safe pair of hands for the organisation he had created.

It took some time for the right person to come along but, after extensive discussions and inspections, Patrick finally decided that the right pair of hands were those of Anne Stringer, whose high-flying corporate career had left her feeling unfulfilled and in need of something a lot more personal to get her teeth into.

Breaking with RSVP singleton tradition, Anne brought her husband, Roland, on board as Marketing Director and in May 2006, as new owners, they took control. Fortunately for them, continuity was afforded by Gaynor and most members of the staff being pleased to stay with the RSVP they know and love.



Since then, it's been a process of gradual modernisation, with the introduction of skills and technology more familiarly used in big corporates to extend RSVP's leadership in the provision of a personalised dating and events service. A comprehensive rebranding exercise took place in 2006, characterised by a more sophisticated image, classy full-colour brochures, 24-page quarterly events calendars and a sophisticated, frequently-updated website, complete with members' area and online events booking.

New matching software was installed, allowing sophistication of matching that dating sites could only dream of. New event management software allowed the number of events to rise to 60 per month. In 2007, RSVP expanded into Essex and London, bringing its excellent reputation and experience to a much larger audience.



Today, with over 15,000 lifetime members, RSVP continues to enjoy great success as **the** place to meet like-minded sophisticated single people confidentially and conveniently, thereby offering a very personal service. RSVP brings a real sense of family to a sometimes lonely world; as one member put it: "there's always someone there to talk to". It's certainly a world away from the harsh anonymity of internet-based alternatives.