

NEW YORK CONFERENCE 2026
18 March 2026 / 1700 Broadway Club / #GDIEVENTS

10.00 - 10.20	<p>Dating App: How to Build, Survive and Thrive in the World's Most Human Tech Industry.</p> <p>Michael O'Sullivan Owner, HubPeople</p>	<p>In this session, Michael O'Sullivan explores the realities of building and sustaining successful products in the rapidly evolving 'human tech' sector — where technology meets connection, community, and relationships.</p>
10.20 - 10.40	<p>The Video Shift: What the Next Era of Dating Apps Looks Like</p> <p>Brittnee Barnes CEO, Vybes</p>	<p>Brittnee explores how video-first experiences are reshaping the future of online dating. As users grow tired of endless swiping and text-based interactions, a new generation of platforms is emerging that prioritises face-to-face interaction, authenticity, and real chemistry.</p>
10.40 - 11.00	<p>The Retention Playbook Behind 50%+ D30 in a Category Known for Churn</p> <p>Ankit Nayal Founder, Flamme App</p>	<p>Ankit Nayal shares the behavioral design principles and product systems that helped Flamme achieve 50 per cent + Day-30 retention by focusing on strengthening existing relationships rather than facilitating matches.</p>
11.00 - 11.15	<p>How Dating Apps Win Experience-Driven Gen-Z Back</p> <p>Nathaniel Marcus Co-founder and CEO, Occasion Genius</p>	<p>Nathaniel explores how dating platforms can reconnect with Gen-Z users by shifting their focus from digital interactions to real-world experiences. He will highlight several strategies for achieving this shift and design features that move matches quickly from chat to in-person experiences.</p>
BREAK		
11.30 - 11.45	<p>How to Monetize Background Checks on Dating Platforms</p> <p>Obai Abdullah COO and Co-Founder, Charisma Check</p>	<p>In this session, Obai Abdullah, Founder of CharismaCheck, explores how dating platforms can successfully integrate and monetise background checks while strengthening user trust and safety.</p>
11.45 - 12.00	<p>Beyond the Swipe - Dating Through Shared Lifestyles</p> <p>David Vermeulen Founder, Inner Circle</p>	<p>David Vermeulen, Founder and CEO of Inner Circle, explores how dating platforms are evolving beyond traditional swipe-based mechanics toward experiences built around shared lifestyles, interests, and communities.</p>
12.00 - 12:15	<p>The Psychology of Dating</p> <p>Colin Hodge Founder, DownApp</p>	<p>Get a rare inside look at how behavioral science actually shows up inside the dating industry and elsewhere in products and marketing, including how Colin leveraged it to launch & grow his dating app and other products to millions-strong.</p>

12.15 - 12.30	<p>Panel Debate</p> <p>Brittnee Barnes, CEO, Vybe Michael O'Sullivan, Owner, HubPeople David Vermuelen, Founder, Inner Circle</p>	<p>'The Evolution of Online Dating: Beyond Swipes and Matches'</p> <p>The panelists will discuss how dating platforms are innovating beyond traditional swipe mechanics to foster meaningful, lifestyle-driven, and community-focused connections.</p>
LUNCH		
13.40 - 14.00	<p>Why Dating Apps Work Differently in Japan</p> <p>Ikuho Nakahata Product Manager, Tapple</p>	<p>In this session, Ikuho explores the unique dynamics of Japan's dating app market and the cultural factors shaping how people meet and form relationships. With more than 20 million users, Tapple sits at the centre of a rapidly evolving ecosystem where trust, verification, and serious relationship intent are increasingly important.</p>
14.00 - 14.20	<p>Breaking Up with the Dating App</p> <p>Jack Hollins, Head of Engineering, Jigsaw Dating</p>	<p>Jack explores why users are increasingly seeking alternatives to traditional dating apps and how new approaches can foster more meaningful, intentional connections.</p>
14.20 - 14.40	<p>Data into Reality: Understanding How Data can Create Human Centric Features and Experiences'</p> <p>Lavina Lim, Product Manager, Feeld L Nichols, Data Analyst, Feeld</p>	<p>Lavina and L explore how data can be leveraged to design dating experiences that truly reflect user needs and behaviours. This session will highlight how insights from user data can drive thoughtful, human-centric features, improve engagement, and foster safer, more meaningful connections on modern dating platforms.</p>
14.40 - 15.00	<p>Hearts 2.0</p> <p>Hari Gopal Founder, Hearts Dating</p>	<p>Hari Gopal of Hearts Dating presents the updated version of Hearts, highlighting new features designed to enhance user experience and safety. He will cover monetisation strategies, user security, geo-location masking, and other innovations that help dating platforms build trust, engagement, and sustainable growth in today's competitive market.</p>
BREAK		
15.00 - 15.20	<p>U.S. Patent Law v. The Online Dating Industry</p> <p>Aaron Jacobs Partner, Prince Lobel</p>	<p>Aaron Jacob of Prince Lobel examines the complex intersection of U.S. patent law and online dating platforms. This session will explore how intellectual property, patents, and legal protections impact innovation, product development, and competition in the dating industry, offering practical insights for</p>

		founders, operators, and tech teams navigating legal challenges.
15.20 - 15.40	<p>The State of the Dating Industry in 2026 - Turning the Tide</p> <p>Mark Brooks CEO, Courtland Brooks</p>	Mark provides an in-depth look at the current trends, challenges, and opportunities shaping the global dating industry. This session will cover market shifts, user behaviour, emerging technologies, and strategies for platforms to innovate, adapt, and drive growth in an increasingly competitive landscape.
15.40 - 16.00	<p>Panel Debate</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p>Lavina Lim, Product Manager, Feeld Jack Hollins, Head of Engineering, Jigsaw Dating Ikuho Nakahata, Product Manager, Tapple</p>	<p>'Looking at the Future of Online Dating and What Users Really Want'</p> <p>This panel will explore the evolving expectations of dating app users. They will discuss emerging trends, user behaviours, and strategies for creating experiences that prioritize authenticity, safety, and meaningful connections in the next era of online dating.</p>
CLOSE		