



CONNECTING *people*

Ottawa entrepreneur Chris Klotz has developed an ingenious dating app technology that allows singles to locate others nearby — without revealing their own precise location

About Chris Klotz, dating app founder

Interested in	Connecting people
Country	Canada

BRUCE DEACHMAN
OTTAWA CITIZEN

Ottawa's Chris Klotz, who founded and runs the dating app SinglesAroundMe, has long been in the business of connecting people with things they want, whether it's merchandise, careers or partners. His first Internet startup came in 1996 when he launched Planet Shopping Network, an online shopping mall. A year later, he started JobShark.com, an Internet career-search site that in 2007 he sold to JobServe, Europe's largest IT job board.

Today, his location-based SinglesAroundMe dating app, which he founded in 2010, is being downloaded onto 200,000 iPhones, BlackBerrys and Androids every month, putting it among the major players in an industry worth more than \$1 billion annually. The app has attracted close to five million lonely — or randy — hearts worldwide.

Klotz got into the dating apps game early, soon after iPhones made precise GPS location services possible. When members open SinglesAroundMe, a map of their surrounding area pops up, and push-pin icons drop onto the map, each showing the location of a SAM member who matches the criteria of what users have indicated they're looking for. SinglesAroundMe, which now boasts five million users, was the first dating app, says Klotz, to use location technology in that fashion. Members in a coffee shop, mall or li-

brary, or halfway across the world on holidays, can easily discover other singles nearby, message them, and get together for a drink or rock-climbing date, or just some quick horizontal jogging. That immediacy and accuracy is part of the reason that dating apps a year ago eclipsed online dating sites in popularity.

Watching the scores of push-pins fall onto the houses and offices of Barrhaven, Chinatown, Hunt Club, Orléans and Gatineau serves as a reminder, however, of how such location-based apps could be used for darker purposes beyond those of simply the lovelorn searching for a Scrabble opponent and a cuddle on a sunset-dappled beach. A recent visit to the SAM app showed that BigZ, for example, last checked in while on Lyon Street between Albert and Slater streets, and who's to say what some nefarious filmmaker might do with that information.

“Boy girl whatever, i'm hungry and open-minded Gang bang, greek, video taping, WHATEVER I'm game if your into it>>>> just send me an email if your for REAL!!!”

BIGZ, 34, OF GATINEAU, MEMBER OF SINGLES AROUND ME

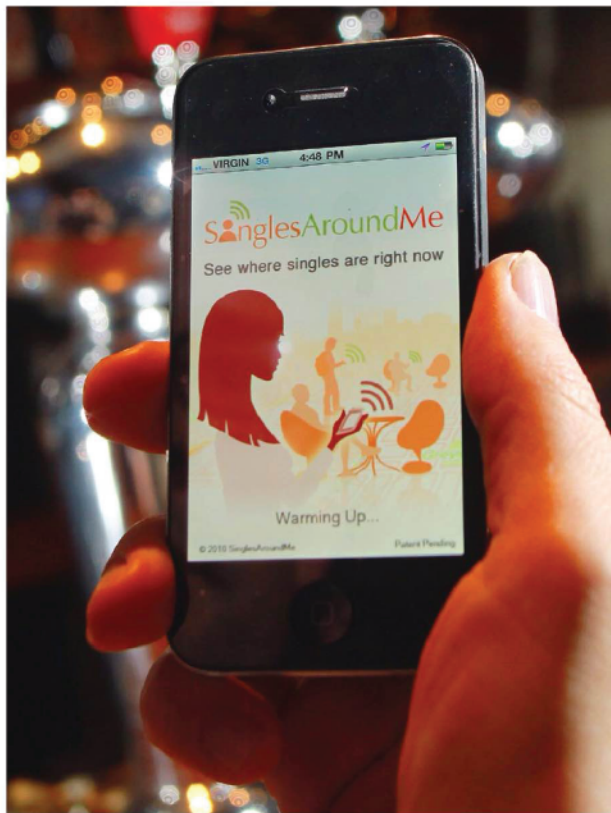
Users have the option of turning the location service off, but that added privacy comes at the cost of the feature that makes such apps so popular in the first place. What do you do, asks Klotz, if you want to play the game without revealing your precise whereabouts?

Enter Position-Shift, a proprietary piece of algorithmic software, designed by Klotz a year ago, that allows SAM users to have their identified locations arbitrarily shifted by up to five kilometres. Other singles can then know roughly where a user is without actually being able to surprise her with flowers or a zirconia wedding ring. The feature has helped improve SAM'S rating by users from the one-and-a-half stars out of five that it typically received in its earliest days, as Klotz and his team worked on improving the interface and user experience, to the four-star rating it currently enjoys. “In this business,” he says, “you don't get better than that.”

According to Klotz, 60 per cent of SAM'S users have opted for the shifting option, with the remaining 40 per cent split fairly evenly between those who want their precise location revealed and those who want that information kept private. “It tells us that people love having the vicinity they're in shown, but they don't like it shown accurately.” Beyond SAM, the shifting feature, which Klotz is currently in the process of patenting, has enormous potential for any application that uses a location service, such as Facebook or Twitter.



Entrepreneur Chris Klotz with his wife, Hattie.
CAROLINE PHILLIPS/OTTAWA CITIZEN



Chris Klotz's app is downloaded onto 200,000 mobile phones every month.
JEAN LEVAC/OTTAWA CITIZEN