

USA TODAY WEEKEND EDITION

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USA TODAY SPORTS



What now after injury?

Noel's injury reverberates across basketball **1B**

Preying on the lonely

Scammers find way to bank account is through the heart **6A**

NEWSLINE



BRANCO ORIGUA, GETTY IMAGES
Pope Benedict XVI leads Ash Wednesday service at St. Peter's Basilica.

Pope's tearful, final public Mass

Benedict tells thousands that he resigned "for the good of the church." Story at [usatoday.com](#)

Former L.A. cop was hiding right under their noses

As authorities await autopsy results, details emerge on where, how cop hid for five days. **3A**

Carnival sends 3rd tugboat, books hotels, flights

Cruise line executive acknowledges conditions on crippled ship are "challenging." **2A**

'Yippee ki-yay'



Twenty-five years after first 'Die Hard,' Bruce Willis still finding himself in trouble. "No one could predict this," actor says. **9B**

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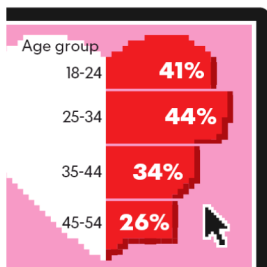


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USA SNAPSHOTS®

Virtual love

Adults who planned to send romantic images via e-mail, text or social media on Valentine's Day



Source: MSI International for McAfee survey of 1,182 adults ages 18-54 in December

ANNE R. CAREY AND PAUL TRAP, USA TODAY

Q&A: HOW THE MERGER WILL AFFECT YOU, 8A

AIRLINES AGREE TO BE VALENTINES

American, US Airways vote to be world's biggest



1 - 12 months ending October 2012; 2 - includes AirTran; 3 - includes Continental

Source: MIT analysis of Bureau of Transportation Statistics data

Charisse Jones

@charissejones
USA TODAY

American Airlines, a storied but struggling carrier that sought bankruptcy protection, has agreed to merge with US Airways to create the world's largest airline.

After weeks of discussion and speculation, the boards for the two carriers voted on Wednesday to combine, a person close to the discussions but who was not authorized to speak publicly told USA TODAY.

The deal, the particulars of which weren't disclosed, will be announced today. It would still need the approval of the bankruptcy court overseeing American's restructuring, as well as federal regulators.

American Airlines spokesman Mike Trevino said the carrier had no comment. US Airways spokesman

Todd Lehmacher also wouldn't comment.

If approved, the marriage of US Airways and American would represent the last significant merger in the U.S. airline industry.

Delta and Northwest, United and Continental, and Southwest and AirTran all paired up in the past five years. A union of US Airways and American would mean that four mega-size carriers control 87% of the U.S. airline industry's seats, says Seth Kaplan, an analyst for *Airline Weekly*, an industry trade publication.

Less competition may lead to higher fares in some markets, some industry observers say.

"For consumers, you have a smaller, less competitive industry with somewhat higher fares than you would have had the mergers not happened," Kaplan says.

But "on the other hand, you have

airlines that can now invest in their product," like roomier seats in the premium cabins or better entertainment, he says. "For years U.S. airlines were just trying to get through the day. They didn't have money for those types of things."

US Airways CEO Doug Parker has said a combined airline would keep American's iconic name and locate its headquarters in American's hometown of Fort Worth.

Passengers on a merged American would be able to fly across a vastly expanded map that would likely include US Airways' East Coast hubs of Charlotte and Philadelphia and American's strong international presence across the Atlantic and in Latin America.

The new carrier also would likely stick with American's frequent-flyer program, the industry's oldest and one of its most popular.

COVER STORY

The end of 'online dating'

Mobile devices are remaking love in America. Whether your dating needs are sacred, sexual or something else, there's an app for it.

Sharon Jayson

@SharonJayson
USA TODAY

Melissa Arseniuk, 30, isn't leaving her dating life to chance.

She's a paying member of the dating website HowAboutWe and also uses the mobile app Singles AroundMe. Arseniuk, a freelance writer in New York, plunged into both about six months ago after the end of a three-year relationship. She says the phone app is particularly handy.

"I could be at a coffee shop or meeting a girlfriend and she's running late, so I could fire up the app and see who's around," she says. "It's kind of a good supplement to the more traditional Web-based dating sites. It's about exploring all avenues and putting yourself out there."

As online dating revolutionized romance in America over the past decade, the proliferation of dating apps is now taking love to a whole new level, remaking an industry that's expected to reach \$12 billion this year. The mobile dating segment is



JENNIFER S. ALTMAN FOR USA TODAY

Melissa Arseniuk, 30, of New York City is a big fan of the mobile app SinglesAroundMe, which identifies other singles who are nearby.

TOP 5 DATING APPS

Total unique visitors ages 18 and up:

POF (Plentyoffish) sites	1,698,000
Skout.com	1,397,000
Zoosk.com	1,203,000
eHarmony	535,000
Match.com sites	330,000

SOURCE: COMSCORE, DEC. 2012

► COVER STORY CONTINUES ON 2A

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Mobile apps tap the popularity of online dating

► CONTINUED FROM 1A

to be fulfilled — from the sacred to the scandalous — there's probably a site for you, many with their own apps as well. The niches range from ethnic, religious or age-based to sites for occupations (FarmersOnly.com) or eating preferences (VeggieDate.org). For gay men, there's Grindr.com and a site launched in December called Stagg.

"I love the site DateMyPet. The idea is you like pets and I like pets. That's the level it's gone," Lesnick says. "It's everything you can imagine now. That's where it's heading."

Among the satisfied customers are Melissa Levine, 27, a physician assistant, and Corey Pew, 29, an engineer. They met on the niche site JDate, for Jewish singles, and will marry next month.

"As an engineer, you don't meet a whole lot of girls on a daily basis," says Pew, a graduate student in mechanical engineering at the University of Washington in Seattle.

In 2010, he moved to Austin. Levine was moving there as well and started looking online for Austin daters. She had tried JDate after college graduation and "ended up going on horrible dates."

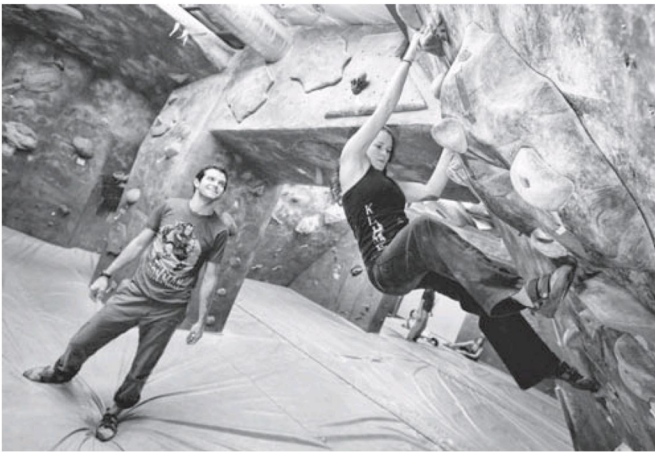
"One guy was talking about the mating of bees for three hours straight," says Levine, now also of Seattle. "Most of my friends — when they would tell me stories, they are not good stories about dating online. Weird, weird guys."

Until Pew. "I met him three days after I moved to Austin. I was talking to two guys on JDate at the time and planning on meeting both. I went on the date with Corey first and canceled the other date," Levine says.

EXPONENTIAL GROWTH

In less than two decades, online dating has soared and is "in the growth phase of its economic life cycle," says a report from IBISWorld, a market research organization. Though 18- to 29-year-olds make up the biggest chunk of users, with 30- to 49-year-olds next in line, demand is expected to rise with the north-of-50 crowd, too. More than one-third of Baby Boomers are unmarried, and as more migrate to digital, the industry is beginning to target this unattached and largely underserved market.

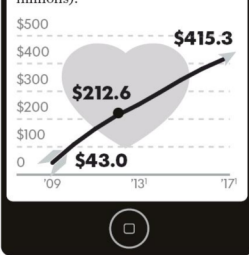
Just as the social stigma of online dating has begun to fade, the name itself might also go the way of dial-up Internet service. With the dating industry moving so rapidly, the phrase "online dating" will soon disappear from the lexicon, says Sam Yagan, CEO of Match Inc., which oversees sites such as Match.com, Chemistry.com and all online dating



KEVIN P. CASEY FOR USA TODAY

MOBILE DATING TAKES OFF

Revenue from mobile dating in the USA is expected to nearly double in the next five years. (Revenue in millions):



1 - 2013 to 2017 projected figures.

Source: IBISWorld Inc. June 2012
JANET LOEHKE, USA TODAY

operations for the global operations of its parent company, IAC.

"It's all converging so quickly that the idea of differentiating online and offline in five years will be anachronistic," he says.

Whether it's an app for a dating website or a dating app alone, mobile is "leading the industry's growth," says Caitlin Moldvay, a senior industry analyst at IBISWorld, based in Santa Monica, Calif.

It's also heading to even bigger money. Last year, the mobile dating market reported revenue of almost \$213 million, up 29% from the previous year, according to market research

company IBISWorld. In the next five years, revenue is projected to nearly double to more than \$415 million.

Nielsen reports that the number of Americans using apps or a mobile version of a dating website was 13.7 million in November 2012, more than double the previous year's 5.8 million.

"We're trying to mirror real life as best we can," says Chris Klotz, 46, founder of SinglesAroundMe, one of the first location-based mobile dating apps for smartphones, launched in 2010. "It's a natural evolution of online dating."

As the focus has shifted to apps, the online dating website category has seen a drop in visitors. About 22.9 million people visited dating websites in January 2012, down from 29.3 million in January 2011, according to ComScore, which tracks website traffic from computers separately from mobile devices.

But the shift is a sign of strength rather than weakness, experts say.

"The goal of dating sites is to eventually meet in person with an other person. That makes it inherently local and mobile," says Yagan, 35, of New York, who co-founded the free dating site OkCupid, which launched in 2004 and is now part of IAC. Last month, OkCupid launched Crazy Blind Date, a mobile app that arranges blind dates with just a few hours' notice and allows singles to provide real-time feedback.

MATCHMAKER, MATCHMAKER

What happens after people are connected via apps or dating sites is more difficult to quantify. Some sites, such as eHarmony, do more than collect profiles of singles. They have us-

ers fill out detailed questionnaires about their personalities and what they want in a potential match. The site pairs them up using proprietary compatibility algorithms.

Although research published last year found "no compelling evidence" that such matching software better predicts compatibility, one can't help but wonder how many online matches actually lead to the altar.

Sociologist Michael Rosenfeld of Stanford University set about to answer this question. His new analysis of nationally representative data found that of 926 unmarried couples followed from 2009 to 2011, those who met online were twice as likely to marry as those who met offline, with a yearly marriage rate of 13%, compared with 6%. Rosenfeld's earlier research found that about one in five new relationships began online.

The eHarmony site touts that, on average, 542 Americans get married each day after meeting on its site; that represents almost 5% of all new U.S. marriages. The findings are based on a 2009 Harris Interactive online survey of 7,994 adults ages 20-54 married between January 1, 2008, and June 30, 2009.

Founder Neil Clark Warren, 78, acknowledges a "significant lag" in business over the past few years, but he hopes to rejuvenate eHarmony by transforming it into more of a "relationship site" that will help sustain couples who met on eHarmony. The company's mobile app, launched in 2010, is key to this revival.

"We started losing subscribers at a rapid rate," Warren says. "We've turned that around now and are going to gain those people back again."

The challenge for the industry long term, experts suggest, is that its goals — making money and growing an audience — are somewhat at odds with those of its customers.

"It is kind of a weird category," says Peter Farago, marketing vice president at Flurry Analytics, a firm that analyzes smartphone and app activity. "Success for the consumer is they pair off and meet someone and no longer use the service."

Lesnick says the typical online dater stays with a service two to four months — paying an average of \$20 a month (some as high as \$60) — and then is gone.

"They'd love to keep them all year long, but the reality is they've either found someone and they don't need the service anymore, or they didn't find anybody and are frustrated with it," Lesnick says. "That's been a problem since Day 1. How do we extend that time period?"

Valeri Ziegler, 54, of Santa Paula, Calif., who was married 23 years before her divorce in 2009, has tried online dating off and on. She has tried free sites and paying sites and now says, "I just don't have the energy for it." But because she still gets e-mail from HowAboutWe and weekly updates from Plentyoffish, she pays some attention.

"You get to say if you're intrigued or interested, and that's about the extent of my looking now," she says.

As with other world-changing technologies, part of the appeal of these dating apps is speed.

"People should try to get to that face-to-face meeting as soon as they can," says psychologist Paul Eastwick, an assistant professor of human development at the University of Texas-Austin. His research found that the wish list of traits when searching online for romance doesn't matter as much as you might think.

Once you've met in person, you stop using your wish list to evaluate the person, he says, citing a 2011 study he co-wrote that was published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

"When you meet somebody, you have a gut reaction to that person, and that drives whether we pursue somebody romantically," Eastwick says. "Chemistry — you can assess that in four minutes. That is the thing driving your responses."

Mark Brooks, a consultant who has studied the industry from its infancy, says the online and mobile dating industry is more than just a business: "Going from where it is now and where it's going to be in the next 20 or 30 years time, I'd be hard-pressed to think of a business — outside of the medical industry — that will have more impact on society."