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THE NEXT US—ALEXANDRA CHONG: CEO & FOUNDER, LULU



IN TODAY'S SOCIAL scene, the process of dating is all thumbs. Apps like Tinder and Zoosk have made it possible to pick your next prospective date with a swipe on your smartphone. But app-based dating is getting a makeover thanks to Lulu: the mobile app that gives women the power to choose (and rate) their next date. Lulu is currently taking the industry by storm, and founder Alexandra Chong is busy redefining dating rules in the digital age—one hashtag at a time.

After graduating from the London School of Economics, Alexandra Chong was on the hunt for the next big idea. Getting her start in the legal department of a music licensing company had introduced her to a fast-paced working environment and hooked her on the entrepreneurial, no-holds-barred nature of the start-up business. Appropriately, inspiration for Chong's business venture came during brunch with girlfriends the day after Valentine's Day. As the group sat around the table discussing their latest experiences in the world of dating, careers, beauty and otherwise, Chong realized the power of candid, girls-only conversation. The premise was simple: women love to share and look to each other for references on everything from health and careers to apartments and restaurants—so why should finding a date be any different?

Here's how it works: a woman signs on to Lulu via Facebook to add their male friends and rate, review, and recommend them (or not) to other women using a hashtag system. It's a concept that continues to captivate its female audience by empowering women to make informed decisions about the men they date. Since its launch, Lulu has seen considerable success and is currently on the phones of one in four college-aged women in the United States. The app hit #1 on the App Store in Brazil only a week after launch and its popularity has only continued to grow from there. However, like any good relationship, launching Lulu has taken hard work, dedication, and a commitment to making it work at any cost. As a female entrepreneur, Chong cites her biggest professional challenge as pitching a female-focused app idea to tech investors in a very much male-dominated industry.



Chong recently relocated the Lulu offices from London to a 5,500 square-foot raw space in the trend-setting epicenter of New York,

where she seeks continual inspiration in the thriving spirit of the city. When she's not busy conceiving ways to refine the Lulu consumer experience and evolve the platform, you can find her honing her own competitive edge on the tennis court. Born in Jamaica to her Canadian mother and Chinese-Jamaican father, Chong attended boarding school in England where she trained to become a professional tennis player before attending college at Florida International University on a tennis scholarship. It's an experience that taught her to assess her own strengths and weaknesses as well as those of her opponents—training which serves her well in continuing to keep Lulu a step ahead of the competition. The future looks bright for Lulu and dating may be just the beginning.

Chong has high ambitions of ensuring the app gets on the phone of every woman around the world and plans to expand the platform to other reference-based verticals that matter to women like health and beauty. In the meantime, Lulu continues to change today's rules for dating, putting power in the hands of women and proving that kissing and telling isn't always a bad thing.



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