

## Collective Genius



## Andrea Zaza & Vinko Anthony

### What's the connection?

Life partners and co-founders of Beau Brummell Introductions, an exclusive matchmaking agency for professional gay men.

### What makes it work?

Being in sync, drawing strength from each other – and the odd fiery argument.

### VINKO SAYS

"I was at a dinner party one night and met a woman who ran a heterosexual dating agency. She said she got a lot of queries from professional, time-deprived gay men wanting a long-term relationship. As I walked home, I thought, 'What a brilliant idea!' At the time, I was Lucy Turnbull's executive assistant and the manager of the Turnbull & Partners office.

Andrea (above left) and I never even thought about whether or not we could work together. You're dealing with a Croatian and an Italian; we're both fiery, temperamental people but business and private lives are very similar. You don't always have to agree but if you acknowledge that 'I've heard you', things tend to have a different outcome.

In four years, we've been together every day, 24/7. I don't think we've been apart more than two weeks. But if we weren't on the same journey, we'd never see each other and we'd be grumpy at home. Here, we have fabulous, passionate arguments and get to have lunches and dinners, and it functions!

From the word go, we've had the vision that this is going to work. Andrea is great at concepts and I'm really great with people so it's been complementary. The fear factor is zero with us. From the minute we met, something's guided us in the right direction.

I think the business is successful because we've gone against that 'swipe, swipe' social media mentality. We have more than 700 clients and by the time they go on a date, we have met them four or five times. Our success rate is between 75 and 85 per cent.

You don't always need to be chasing money in business to be successful. For me, the most important thing is listening, empathy and kindness. Amazing things happen only when people sit down and communicate.

Before Andrea came along I had so many ideas but you need somebody in life to give you the strength to make those ideas happen."

### ANDREA SAYS

"I'm an Italian and I was living in Vienna when I met Vinko on holidays in Croatia. It was July 2010, on Lokrum, an island off the coast of Dubrovnik. We weren't picking up; we just talked and talked. The relationship developed from there.

A year later, having made plans to move to Australia, Vinko called and told me about his idea for the agency. I thought it was a good idea but I wasn't sure. Sometimes you have to go with gut feeling. I'm an architect; I took it as a project.

Things happened so quickly. I didn't have time to think about the consequences of living and working together. I worked on the concept on the plane to Sydney and the business started rolling almost as soon as I landed. I'd never thought of myself as a matchmaker but I had introduced a few people – not with romance in mind – and they've been together forever.

Vinko says I'm the boss but I think he's lying. I look after the concept, the look of the company, the analytics and research. Even in the matching, I research all the background. Vinko is more connected to the clients because no-one needs to deal with my spelling mistakes and my accent.

Working together is an evolutionary process. In terms of managing conflict, it's been a learning process. We can get annoyed with each other but if he's not here, I'm like, 'Where are you? Come back!'

When we met, we had this idea we could do anything we wanted. We said we'd never say no. Our relationship gives us the power to do anything. Our strength is being together."

AS TOLD TO DI WEBSTER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JULIE ADAMS