

Perform a SWOT Analysis

Engaged couples love the internet. It has changed the way that they find and choose the services they need for their “Big Day.” Word-of-mouth is still a very powerful way to reach engaged couples, and it will undoubtedly help you close new sales.

Word-of-mouth, like online reviews and testimonials, is a form of “social proof.” But make no mistake, the internet is an engaged couple’s new favorite wedding planning tool.

How well does your internet marketing strategy reach brides and grooms who are planning a wedding in your local marketplace?

Are your tactics you are using effective?

Does your website leave the right first impression?

Are you effectively competing online in your targeted category and marketplace?
Or are you a runner up?

Are engaged couples likely to find your website when searching at Google, or is it lost like a needle in a haystack?

Action Item

- Perform a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis of your current situation, with a focus on internet marketing.

Very Carefully Integrate Your Online and Offline Advertising & Marketing

Print advertising is not dead! But to get the best bang for your buck (ROI) print advertising now requires very careful integration with your internet marketing.

Your website address, special offers used as incentives to visit your website, free downloadable documents (aka “takeaways”), and even those crazy looking QR codes are now each an important part of any print advertising.

Action Items

- Review and rework all of your print advertising to include an incentive to visit your website.
- Make your website address prominent in your offline advertising and marketing.
- You should no longer need the “www.” before your domain/website address. Test this, and if necessary, talk with your webmaster or hosting company to fix this.

Recommendation

I love rack cards. They give you more working room than a postcard and plenty of room to include key benefits as well as unique value propositions (UVPs). There is also plenty of room for testimonials. They are inexpensive to produce in short runs (100-200) at places like Vistaprint (<https://vistaprint.com>).

<https://bookmorewedding.com/rackcards>

Responsive Website Design

A responsive website design is a design that “responds” and changes based on the browsing device a website visitor is using. Properly created, using a responsive design will optimize a visitor’s browsing experience at your website and help you to book more weddings.

Responsive websites deliver the best visitor experience no matter what the browsing device is, including:

- Desktop computers
- Laptops
- Tablets
- Smartphones

Mobile-friendly and responsive are two different things. Your website might pass the Google Mobile-friendly test, but still not be responsive.

<https://bookmoreweddings.com/google-mobile-test/>

A quick way to test for responsive design is to visit your website on your smartphone. If you don’t like what you see, neither will the engaged couples visiting your website from their mobile devices!

There are many benefits to creating a website using responsive design.

[1] Website content presentation changes automatically depending on the device used to browse the website.

[2] Navigation is condensed and easier to use.

[3] Images are optimized for the layout and presentation.

[4] Layout, spacing, and padding is automatically corrected for the device being used to browse the website.

[5] It creates an excellent user/visitor experience at your website.

[6] Google recommends building websites using responsive design as an industry best practice. A responsive design is likely to be viewed more favorably in their ranking algorithm. In other words, responsive websites are an important part of your overall search engine optimization strategy for getting (or keeping) top rankings at Google.

[7] Responsive websites create a better impression of your business.

[8] Responsive websites increase conversion rates and sales. This should be no big surprise. A better visitor experience at your website leads to more inquiries and more sales.

[9] Your website will load faster on a mobile device if you use responsive design. Slow loading pages are the #1 reason people will leave your website. Poor visiting

experience or device-related presentation issues is another reason people leave websites.

[10] Competitive advantage is a huge benefit. When your website is responsive and a competitor's is not, the engaged couple visiting your website has a better and more favorable experience. You win, a competitor loses.

Get More Testimonials & Reviews

After word-of-mouth, testimonials and reviews are probably the most powerful tools in your internet marketing toolbox. Websites like Yelp! and Amazon have trained everyone to look for and read (and trust) what others have experienced before making a buying decision.

With this in mind, I am going to ask you to focus on getting more testimonials and reviews from your happy customers in the next year.

If you would like to see a 20% to 30% bump in your sales in the next twelve months, getting and properly using more testimonials is a guaranteed way to achieve that. Yes, guaranteed!

Action Items

- Create a SYSTEM to follow-up with customers to get testimonials and reviews.
- Create a page at your website describing how to leave you a review.
- Create an easy-to-use link to create a Google review that you can send to couples.
- Use your testimonials and reviews to create blog posts.
- Use your testimonials and reviews as individual Facebook and Instagram posts.

The Testimonials Most People in the Wedding Industry Forget About

I think we all know the power of testimonials from brides and grooms who were very happy clients! But what about testimonials from wedding industry peers or other wedding vendors that you know and have worked with? Do you have any of those on your website?

They also make great blog posts.

How about that wedding photographer you always see and love to work with?

What about the wedding catering company you enjoy working with?

Peer-to-peer testimonials are arguably easier to get if you ask me. This is particularly true when you offer to exchange them.

For an added punch, exchange website links. This will create an inbound link to your website which is a very important part of an effective search engine optimization (SEO) strategy (i.e. inbound links).

Get More Google Reviews (Create and Use a Google Review Link)

Many businesses in the wedding industry receive reviews at *The Knot* or *WeddingWire*, but what about Google Reviews, the reviews that show up with your Google Business Profile listing?

If you have 30-50+ great reviews at *The Knot*, and/or at *WeddingWire*, I suggest you make a focused effort to get more reviews at Google.

Google reviews have a lot of clout and they will help you book more weddings.

I would argue that Google reviews are more powerful than reviews at *The Knot* or *WeddingWire*.

A lot of engaged couples use Google every day (thousands more than *The Knot* and *WeddingWire* combined!) and they trust Google reviews.

Unfortunately, Google makes it a bit tricky for you to get reviews. There currently is not an easy-to-use direct link (URL) that you copy-and-paste to send to someone quickly via email.

Action Items

- Get 10-12 Google reviews in the next 12 months.
- If you have not claimed your Google Business Profile listing, do it today (<https://www.google.com/business/>).

- Using your Google Business Profile account (dashboard) create a custom direct link and copy the link. Keep this link readily available in a digital notepad like Evernote. (<https://evernote.com>).
- Create a “How to Leave Us a Review” page (or blog post) at your website. Provide detailed instructions on how people can leave you a review at different review sites (*The Knot, WeddingWire, Yelp!, Facebook, Google*).
- Go through your client list for the past 6 months and identify couples who may be willing to leave you an online review but have not given you one yet. Ask them to leave you a review at Google with your new Google review link. You may also direct them to the “How to Leave Us a Review” page at your website.

Regularly Monitor Your Online Reviews

Online reviews can make or break a company's reputation. The best thing to do is to avoid getting a poor online review, if at all possible. But there are some nutty people out there, and a poor review can happen to even the best. With this in mind, it is a good idea to review your listings at Yelp!, Facebook, and Google monthly or at least quarterly. Some websites notify you when you have a new review – others may not. I have also found review notifications in my junk-email folder.

Action Items

- One of the best ways to deal with a bad review (one that you cannot get removed) is to have many, many good reviews.
- Ask clients to give you reviews at Yelp!, Google, and Facebook – all three places.
- Put a recurring reminder in your calendar to review your online reviews. I recommend you do this at least quarterly, ideally each month.
- Use your best reviews to make blog posts as well as social media posts. Copy and paste them into Evernote (<https://evernote.com>) which then makes it easy to copy and paste into a blog post, or social post at Facebook, or Instagram.
- If you have not already, claim your listing at Yelp! as well as your company's Google Business Profile.
- Google Alerts may help you find out when people are talking about your company online. It used to be very good, now I am not so sure (but I still use it).

Resources

Google Calendar: <https://calendar.google.com>

Google Alerts: <https://alerts.google.com>

Use Your Reviews More Effectively

Reviews and testimonials are “social proof.” They increase conversion and they will help you book more weddings. Here are 10 ways to use reviews and testimonials more effectively:

1. On the homepage of your website (and throughout your website)
2. Just before the call-to-action at the bottom of your website pages
3. To create blog posts
4. As individual social media posts
5. In your Facebook page cover image
6. In your email newsletter
7. On the back of your business cards
8. In your sales presentations
9. In your email signature
10. On your post-inquiry-landing page

Create Social Media Posts Using Your Reviews from WeddingWire or The Knot

Social Proof is one of the things engaged couples are looking for at your website.

Social Proof is also powerful content to use at your social media touchpoints. Couples want to see reviews, testimonials, awards, and membership in professional associations. All of these things lead to trust and authority. I believe social proof is the number one reason couples ultimately choose a wedding vendor, service, or product.

How can you get even more value from your reviews if you advertise at *WeddingWire* or *The Knot*?

Copy them to your website as blog posts or add them to a website page with all of your reviews. Each review can be a separate blog post (if they are long) or group three or four together (if they are short).

Next, create social media posts using the same reviews across your social media channels – be sure to include backlinks to your blog posts, reviews page, pricing page, contact page, or home page. Reuse these posts over time by rescheduling them with Hootsuite or SmarterQueue.

Properly optimized, these blog posts or pages will make great search engine friendly “evergreen” content. Win-Win!

Action Items

- Take 4 of your best reviews from The Knot and create a new single blog post at your website. Be sure there is a call-to-action at the end of the blog post.
- Next, do the same with 4 reviews from WeddingWire.
- Every time that you get a new review from WeddingWire or The Knot, copy it and post it to Facebook. For added punch, try to post it with a picture of the couple who gave you the review.
- Now, copy/paste your blog post content as a post to Facebook. Schedule these individual posts using Facebook's post scheduling option to be automatically published over the next week. Rinse. repeat.

Recommended Resource

Smarter Queue - <https://smarterqueue.com>

First Impressions & Creating the “Oh Yes!” Moment

Does your website create that much needed “Oh Yes!” moment?

The “Oh Yes!” moment is that split second when a bride on her first visit to your website says to herself: *“Oh yes! This is the company I’ve been looking for!”*

Engaged couples are planning the most important day of their lives. They want the very best, and your website *absolutely* must make a great first impression. If not, they will just click their “back” button and look for something better.

Remember, attention spans are at an all-time low!

Are you frustrated that couples will not return your calls after they make an inquiry at your website? If your answer is “yes” maybe your website did not create enough of the “Oh Yes!” moment to make them want to talk with you on the phone. Yes, that really is how it works!

Action Item

- Compare your website to that of 5-7 of your competitors.
- Make notes about what you like and what they are doing that you are not.
- Identify opportunities to capitalize on their weaknesses.

Email Signatures Can Help You Book More Weddings

Your email signature is a powerful way to promote your business and drive traffic to your website.

It is virtually on autopilot and working for you 24/7/365. In my opinion, an email signature is “prime real estate” for marketing.

Used effectively, an email signature can drive traffic to your website, promote a special, or maybe link to your social media touchpoints.

Add a link in your email signature to important pages at your website, like an FAQ or about page, photo galleries, or your blog. Do not assume that just because someone has already visited your website that they have visited these important pages.

Tools like WiseStamp (<https://wisestamp.com>) and Mail Signatures make it easy to customize an email signature for virtually any email platform (i.e., Gmail, Outlook, etc.). You probably send thousands of email messages a year, start utilizing them to book more weddings with simple modifications to your email signature!

Promote Benefits Before Features

A common marketing communication mistake I see at many websites in the wedding industry is that they first promote features instead of benefits.

In most cases, people buy benefits and then support their buying decision with the features of a product or service. People choose benefits because of the emotional connection to their particular needs. They then support their emotional decision with logic (i.e. features).

One of the most famous quotes in marketing comes from Harvard Business School professor, Theodore Levitt:

“People don’t want to buy a quarter-inch drill; they want to buy a quarter-inch hole.”

In other words, you do not buy a drill for the drill, you buy it for the hole it drills.

What is the outcome engaged couples want when looking for your particular wedding services or products?

An example in the wedding industry might be: Couples do not initially care about the top-of-the-line speaker system a DJ is pitching. They want to be sure that their guests will dance all night long and have such a great time that everyone will rave about it after the wedding.

Here are some more examples that will help you understand the difference between benefits and features.

Remember, people buy benefits to gain from them. Features are just the icing on the cake.

Examples of Benefits vs. Features

Benefit (emotion): Choosing Greek yogurt makes you healthier and more satisfied.

Feature (logic): Greek yogurt is nutritious and packed with protein.

Benefit (emotion): These tissues will sooth your nose and make your cold less painful.

Feature (logic): These tissues have multiple cushiony layers and are velvety to the touch.

Benefit (emotion): One dose of this medicine will relieve your headache and let you enjoy your day.

Feature (logic): This medicine has 500mg of acetaminophen.

Benefit (emotion): With this case, your phone won't break into a million pieces if you drop it.

Feature (logic): This phone case is made with layers of carbon fibers and reinforced plastics.

Benefit (emotion): You'll be able to work and play at lightning speed on this computer.

Feature (logic): This computer has 16GB of RAM and a 6GHz quad-core processor.

Action Items & Resources

- Create a worksheet with two columns: The first column should list your benefits. The second will list features. This worksheet is the basis for key information that should be used to optimize your marketing message. It should also be at the top of your home page.
- Look at your website marketing copy to make sure you are selling benefits *before* features. Sell the sizzle before you sell the steak.
- For a great example of a wedding business that sells benefits first (emotion), and then supports a buying decision with features (logic), visit <https://drsmusic.com>

Get an Objective Outsider to Review Your Website & Internet Marketing

It is often just small things that a website designer without marketing expertise in the wedding industry misses when building a website.

Unfortunately, even little things can *greatly* influence conversion (i.e. getting more inquiries, closing more sales!), particularly in the wedding industry.

I think we would all agree that the wedding industry is very different than selling cars or home repair services.

Get an outside and objective review of your website as well as your overall internet marketing strategy and tactics. Find someone with wedding industry experience who has a lot of experience and happy clients.

Try not to look at this as an expense, rather, look at it as an investment that will help you book more weddings and build a more profitable wedding business.

<https://bookmoreweddings.com/help-desk>

An Engaged Couple's Favorite Radio Station: WII-FM

Engaged couples are human beings and most human beings buy something largely based on a common theme: “What’s in it for me?” (WII-FM).

This is why price is not always the deciding factor in making a purchase.

With this in mind, it is critically important that the homepage of your website opens with a marketing message that clearly communicates a WII-FM message.

Action Items

- Write down 3 to 5 things that engaged couples look for when they search for your type of products or services. In the wedding industry, these are typically things that elicit strong emotions and have to do with impressing their guests or ensuring that their guests have a great time.
- As necessary, rewrite your homepage opening message to communicate a stronger and optimized WII-FM message.

Create an Infographic

You have probably seen infographics on the internet, they are very eye-catching and usually fun and informative. Not many people use them in the wedding industry, so if you create and use one it will make your business stand out. Infographics are a powerful and effective conversion tactic.

Action Item

- Create an infographic and use it at your website as a marketing page or blog post.
- Post it to your social media channels.
- You might also want to use it in your sales presentations!
- Infographics can go viral online since people love to share them – if they are good.

Sidenote

Do not skimp on the production quality of your infographic. You will be using this for a long time, and a high-quality infographic should deliver a great long-term return-on-investment (ROI).

Recommended Resource: Canva <https://canva.com>

Create a Fun & Informational Whiteboard Video

Whiteboard videos are eye-catching, fun, and informative at the same time. They are also known as “explainer videos.” Not many people use them in the wedding industry, so a whiteboard video can make your business stand out.

Action Item

- Create a whiteboard video and use it at your website as a blog post, or maybe even on your homepage.
- Post it to your social media channels and it could even go viral!

Sidenote

Do not skimp on the production quality of your whiteboard video. You will be using this for a long time and a high-quality whiteboard video should deliver a great long-term return-on-investment.

Recommended Resource

You can find many whiteboard video creators at Fiver (<http://fiverr.com>)

Marketing Tools: QR Codes

QR codes are those weird looking little square images that people can “scan” using their smartphone photo app.

Once it has scanned it will automatically launch the mobile web browser on the user’s smartphone and load a specific web page, a page programmed into the QR code when it is created.

Most people know they can scan QR codes to get more information. They are very popular in the tourism and restaurant industries.

It’s not uncommon to find them used in conjunction with a special offer. In the past phones needed a QR reader app. Not anymore. Today, QR codes can be scanned using a smartphone camera, no app required. Open a smartphone camera, point at a QR code, and automatically the user is redirected to a specific page on the internet.

While QR codes won’t probably create a tsunami of traffic to your website, they are a best practices internet marketing tool.

QR codes are easier to scan than remembering and then typing a website address into a browser on a smartphone.

Don’t be fooled by people who say no one is using QR codes, this is simply not true. I highly recommend that they are integrated into your overall internet marketing strategy – *because they work!*

Action Items

- Create a QR code for your website at <https://qrstuff.com>. Use it in all of your offline marketing.
- Put your QR code on your business cards, post cards, and rack cards.
- Create a web page with a special offer and a QR code for that specific page. Add this to your bridal show booth marketing assets and/or handouts.
- Use the call-to-action: “Scan here for a special wedding show offer...”

Show Support for LGBTQ

Showing support for the LGBTQ community and marriage equality is an important part of any business and marketing strategy if you are in the wedding industry.

Do you have a statement of support that shows your business is open to the LGBTQ customers on your website?

Here is an example to help you craft your own (or copy and use it on your website):

“We believe in equality, inclusivity, and the right to marry anyone you wish. We are same-sex couple friendly and welcome everyone regardless of their race, color, religion, gender, national origin, or sexual orientation. Love is love is love. Whether a man loves a woman, a woman loves a woman, or a man loves a man, it really makes no difference. This is our commitment to all the couples we work with.”

“Where there is love there is life.” — Mahatma Gandhi

Where might you use this? Pretty much anywhere on the internet, including:

- At your website on your Homepage (don't hide it!)
- On your About page
- On a page that is specifically focused on LGBTQ (SEO optimized)
- In the footer at your website
- As a blog post
- As a post from time to time on your social media channels

Recommended Resource

Love Quotes: <https://lovequotes.com>

Review (or Optimize) Your Unique Selling Proposition (USP)

If I visited your website today, would I immediately see your unique selling proposition (USP), also sometimes referred to as a unique value proposition (UVP)?

Often, your USP is weaved into your “What’s in it for me?” message.

This is the message that an engaged couple should immediately see and, as they read it, say to themselves: “Yes, that is what we want!”

Well-written USPs turn the engaged couples who visit your website into inquiries and sales!

You may have multiple unique selling propositions, which is great. And if you do, just make sure the ones that are most likely to resonate with couples are placed first (i.e. create an emotional response). In other words, prioritize your USPs.

Action Items

- Print out your Homepage and review it for your company’s USP/UVP. It should be found “above the scroll,” the portion of your Home page that is initially visible to a visitor without further scrolling or clicking.
- Often, your USP/UVP is the same reason people decide to hire you.

- To help identify or fine-tune your USP/UVP, review the testimonials and reviews from past clients.
- Use a summary of your USP/UVP at the bottom of your website pages and blog posts.
- You might use this same summary statement, or a modified version, in your social media posts.

Inspiration: Rack card with multiple UVPs:

<https://bookmoreweddings.com/inspiration-promotional-rack-card/>

Avoid Discounting: Instead Offer Add-on Specials or Multi-purchase Packages

I hate discounting. If you are an experienced professional and deliver outstanding products and services, as well as outstanding customer service, you should NOT BE DISCOUNTING.

“But Chris, the competition in my marketplace forces me to discount.”

Sorry, but I don't buy it.

Discounting is often a result of weak marketing, particularly in the area of communicating value. It is also associated with weak sales skills or sales presentations.

When I drill down one more level, I often see weaknesses in how businesses use social proof (i.e. what they have done for others, testimonials, reviews, etc.).

Discounting your core products or services means less revenue, and that is never a good thing.

Action Items

- Avoid discounting (lowering your price).
- Improve your marketing message and sales presentation(s). This often starts with the marketing message at your website.

- Instead of discounting your core products or services, try offering additional services at special “package” pricing.
- Avoid the use of the word “discount” in your marketing copy.