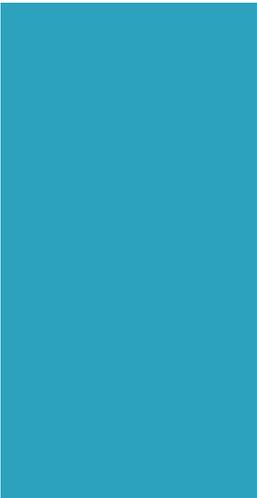


How To Book More Weddings & Make More Money With Wedding Fairs

By Heidi Thompson



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About Heidi Thompson

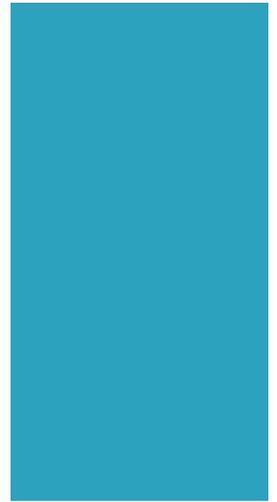


I'm a marketing maven for wedding pros who want to kick ass in business and get out of the dreaded feast or famine cycle of doom. I teach these awesome entrepreneurial ladies and gents how to do amazing marketing on a tiny budget and create a consistent flow of leads because in business, it doesn't matter how good you are at what you do if no one knows about it.

My Story (the short version)

- I moved from the US to the UK in 2009 which ignited my passion for traveling. Nowadays, you can run a business and travel the world thanks to the internet. I don't know about you, but that is crazy exciting to me.
- I have a bachelor's degree in political science and a graduate degree in non-profit management.
- I got into marketing when I volunteered to run and promote a World AIDS Day event for a charity.
- Everything I know about marketing comes from years of experience and learning from those who have mastered it in their own businesses. School just can't teach you what self-made millionaires can.
- The idea for [Evolve Your Wedding Business](#) came to me when I was running The Alternative Wedding Fair. I kept seeing these incredible wedding professionals struggling because they weren't getting enough business. Since my background is in marketing, I decided to do something about it.

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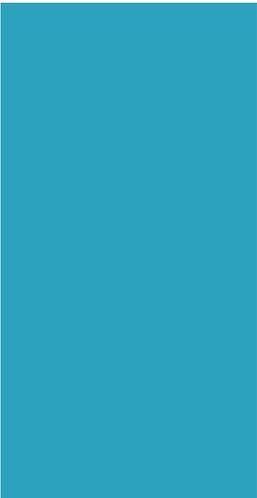
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Before Choosing A Fair



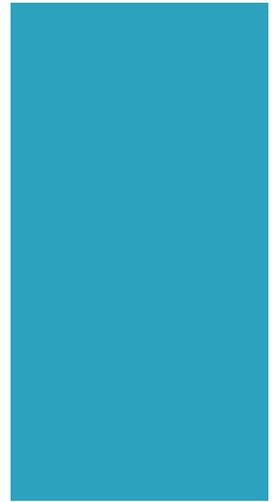
In order to make the most of your next wedding fair, there are some things that you need to take care of before you even sign up and go to the fair. These steps will help you choose the fair that is best for your business. No amount of marketing and strategy can make up for choosing the wrong type of fair.

Consider who the show is targeting

In the past I have found that when wedding fairs target a niche, they attract brides who want what YOU do....that is, if you fit into the niche. Be sure to ask the show organizer who their target market is. If they say “brides” that's fine if you don't have a target market, but if you know that you better serve couples who are into an eco-friendly lifestyle, that may not be the right place for you to exhibit.

If you don't know who your ideal client is, I've got a worksheet for you [on the ebook resources page.](#)

Before Choosing A Fair



Find out how & where the fair is being advertised

Couples are using social media more now than ever. Does the fair have a strong social media presence? Are they advertising on relevant blogs/publications? You want to make sure the fair you choose is being promoted so that you will get a healthy amount on traffic on the day of the fair.

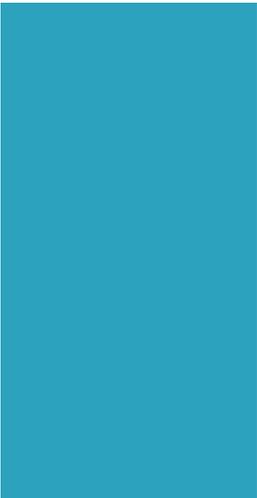
Ask the show organiser how the show is being advertised and marketed online and offline. Does this line up with where your target market is?

Find out exactly what is included in the cost of your exhibit space

Your exhibit space can be anything from empty space, to a shell scheme so be sure to ask so that you can plan your costs accordingly. Ask if electricity, wi-fi, tablecloths and basic furniture (trestle table & chairs) are included or how much extra they will cost you. Some fairs include all of this in the cost and some do not so this may change what any given fair will cost you.

Be sure to figure your marketing materials and any giveaways into your budget as well.

Before Choosing A Fair



Make sure you will receive a list of attendees and ask if they have agreed to be contacted by the exhibitors

A list of couples that attended is nice, but you can't market to them via email because of CAN-SPAM laws. You can only legally email couples that have agreed to be contacted. If you market to couples who have not opted-in to receive your emails, they could report you as a spammer and your email address could be blacklisted which is a huge headache.

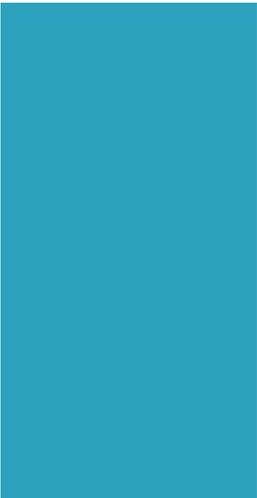
Ask the show organiser if they specifically ask couples if they give permission for exhibitors to contact them after the show. If the organiser does not do this, you may want to suggest it as it will benefit all of the exhibitors and attendees.

If you end up with a list of attendees who have not agreed to be contacted, you can't add them to a mailing list but you can email them individually and ask them to join your list (if you have one) in exchange for a free ebook or another free resource. Alternatively, you can create your own list in this same way from interested couples who visit your stand. Remember it is better to have a smaller list of people who want your specific service than a large list of people who don't want anything to do with you.

Review the contract

Contracts for wedding fairs can contain a list of items that are prohibited and list anything required by you such as a copy of your insurance policy. As with all contracts, be sure to review it before you sign it.

Preparing For The Fair



You've signed up for the fair, now it's time to start preparing!

Invite your prospective and current prospects

You will appear to be on top of what is going on in the local wedding industry if you personally invite these people along. Even if you have already booked a client, they will appreciate knowing there is somewhere to go to find their other suppliers.

Promote the fair on social media

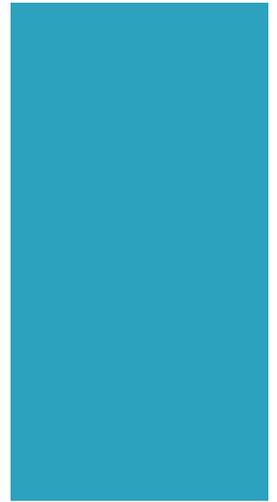
You are on Twitter and Facebook, right? Use this space to discuss what you are doing in the run up to the fair and connect with other exhibitors. The networking opportunities a fair offers are often just as valuable as the fair itself.

Ask the organiser if they have social media accounts for the fair. This will be a good place to see who else is exhibiting and how they are promoting the fair.

Network

Does the fair offer a networking event for suppliers prior to the fair? If it does be sure to participate, as it never hurts to have friends at the show and you never know who might refer you! If there is no pre-fair networking event, make a point to set up early and set aside time to have a chat with other suppliers at the fair. Even making friends with your competitors can be a good thing because then you have someone to refer couples to when you are booked solid!

Preparing For The Fair



Take advantage of promotional opportunities

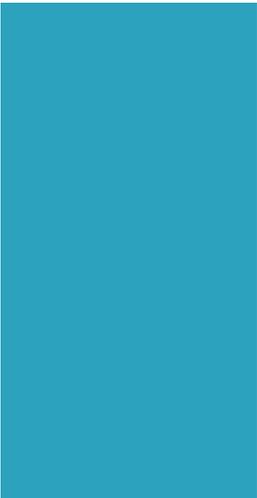
Many fairs will allow exhibitors to sponsor certain aspects of the show to gain brand exposure. Think of everything you could possibly sponsor and then ask if you can do it.

Does the fair offer a sponsorship spot for the bags? What about for the fashion show? If you are a lighting technician, perhaps you could offer to provide the lighting for the fashion show and in return have your business name mentioned and have a banner up at the fashion show. This is a great way to show off what you can do!

Set your goals

Know what you want to get out of this fair. If you provide a service that needs a more in-depth discussion, aim to schedule 5 or 10 consultations after the fair. Do you want a certain number of leads to follow up on? Setting these goals will help keep you on track during the fair. For more on setting better goals, [check out my blog post on SMART goals](#).

How To Use Your Space



There is a standard way that most exhibitors set their stands up, but this doesn't mean you can't do something a bit different!

Putting your best foot forward

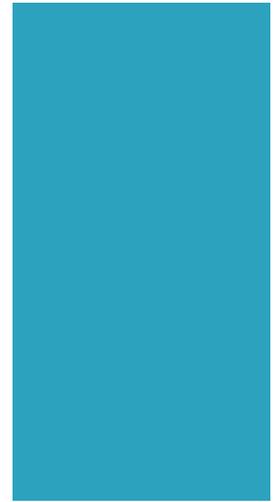
Never put your table out in front and sit behind it and watch people go by. You need to be on your feet and giving people a reason to stop at your stand.

Get in front of the table and please, please don't sit down, play with your phone, or eat at your stand! People make judgments on your business instantly and if they see someone playing with their phone and eating a sandwich and they will think "Wow, will they do that at my wedding too?". If you plan to take a lunch break you may want to consider bringing an assistant so that you can get away from your stand for a bit.

Get up there

You are given a specific floor space for a wedding fair, but have you thought about using the space above you? Try to hang a sign, above your stand or create a large, tall piece that will draw attention to your stand.

How To Use Your Space



Create eye-catching displays

Half of the battle on the wedding fair floor is capturing the attention of the attendees. If you come up with an ornate and eye-catching display, people will be compelled to stop to speak to you. If you are a florist, invest time in creating a large elaborate piece for your stand. If you are a dress designer, put your most attention-grabbing design out there for people to see. Be sure to use an image of this piece in your marketing materials so that people remember you for your work!

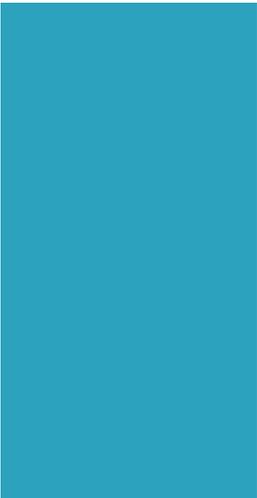
Need some inspiration? [Check out Preston Bailey's incredible floral sculptures.](#)

Put the freebies in the back

Make those brides and grooms work to get your freebies and put them at the back of your stand. You should be giving these to potential clients, not just window shoppers. Ask them to give you their details in exchange for a great freebie like a free report you will email to them or a more expensive promotional gift that they will actually use.

Your list of brides and grooms that you collect with always be better than the one that the show provides you because your list is full of warm leads (people you have broken the ice with) as opposed to cold leads (people you have not had contact with).

At The Fair



Be strategic about giving away your marketing material

There is a variety of marketing material available to you for a reason; so that you can give a business card to a window shopper and a more detailed DVD of your portfolio to more serious potential clients. You can “qualify” each couple or in other words, make sure they are a good match for your business. Take into consideration their level of interest, time left until their wedding date, and location when deciding which piece of marketing material to give out. Don't make the common mistake of simply shoving everything you have into each attendee's hand.

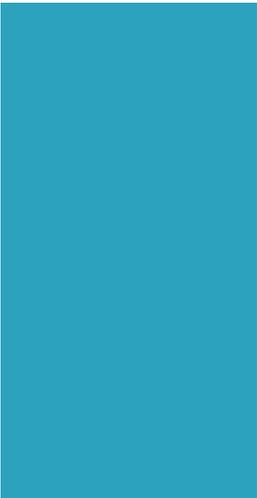
Make your business memorable

If you can engage a couple in a short activity at your stand they will remember you. I know a wedding photographer who recently made quirky cut outs for people to put their heads into and have their photos taken and emailed to them. That is pure brilliance!

Create your own warm leads list

You can easily create your own list of warm leads by offering a freebie like a free report or ebook that covers something that would appeal to the fair attendees. For example, if you are a wedding photographer you could put together a short ebook called “7 Common Mistakes Couples Make When Choosing Their Wedding Photographer”.

At The Fair

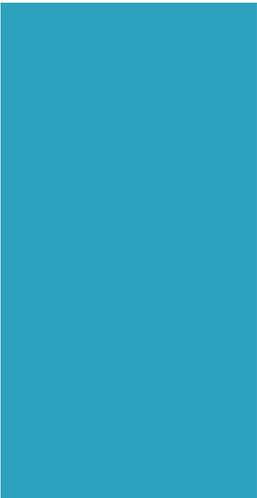


Tell the attendees that you speak to about your freebie and offer to email it to them. Ask them to write down their first and last name along with their email address on your list.

Important: Make sure you can read their handwriting. Ask them to clarify anything that you can't make out before they move on. You can avoid this by using an iPad app like [iCapture](#) or [OnSpot Social](#). Make sure you plan and test this ahead of time to make sure your technology is working properly.

After the fair, you'll have a list of people who are interested in your business and this is far better than any general wedding fair email list.

After The Fair



Now it's time to follow up on those leads you got.

Be informative, not salesy

Using an email marketing service ([MailChimp](#) and [Aweber](#) are two of the best), and import your contacts that you have been given permission to contact. Then, you can set up a series of auto responders with informative, fun and useful content for them. The idea here is to establish yourself as the expert in your field by showing the potential client how much you know and how you can help them.

Do you have a blog? You can set up your email marketing service to send out your latest blog posts to your list. For more about blogging and promoting your blog posts, check out my [free Kickstart Your Blog course](#).

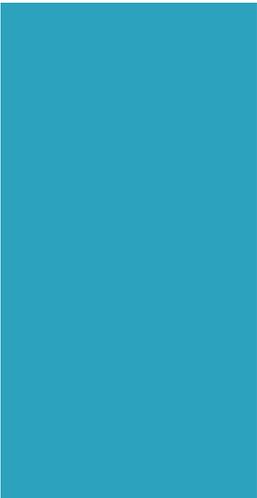
Be creative

Assume that every exhibitor is going to follow up with the couples that attended the fair. They are definitely going to get a ton of emails. How can you stand out?

Remind them who you are

A couple is not going to remember everyone they talk to at a wedding fair so when you write your follow up, always say where you met and mention something about your stand or a conversation you had with them.

After The Fair



Don't go in for the kill right away

Generating business is like dating. Would you go up to some random person and ask them to marry you? That is what you are doing when you ask for the sale right away. Build a follow up system that demonstrates your expertise and educates your potential customers. You need a system because statistically, if you aren't following up at least 5 times, you're missing out on 80% of potential sales. For an example of an email follow up system, see [the ebook resources page](#).

Remember that direct mail isn't dead

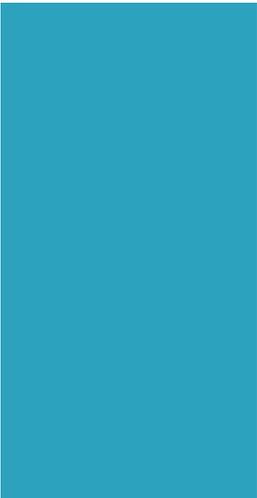
If you have collected addresses, make use of them. Put something relevant that is lumpy or bulky into a big brown envelope and send it to your prospects. Wouldn't you open a piece of mail like that?

I received a Boost energy bar from a marketing company once with a letter describing how they could give my business a boost. I didn't make a purchase because I was not in the market for their service, but I did open the package and spent the time reading the letter.

Get flagrant with your follow up

For this, you need to narrow down your very best prospects and then throw your entire marketing budget for the month at them in a clever way. For instance, if you're a baker, send a box of cupcakes or cookies to a few select prospects; I guarantee they will remember you! If it fits your business, why not have an invitation-only event for your prospects?

After The Fair



Track your return on investment

Be sure to always ask how people heard of you so that you can track your return on investment (ROI). This way you will find which fairs and which marketing techniques work best for you. If something doesn't work for you, get rid of it and try something new at the next fair. I often hear from suppliers that wedding fairs "don't work". A wedding fair is just an opportunity, much like a job interview and is what you make of it, so make the most of it!

ROI tips:

Create a specific landing page on your website for the attendees of this fair or use a custom bit.ly link on your marketing materials so you can track how many of your website visitors are from the fair. Example: <http://bit.ly/londonfair>

If you don't already use [Google Analytics](#), set it up on your site before the fair!

Keep track of all of the sales you make that came from the fair in Excel.

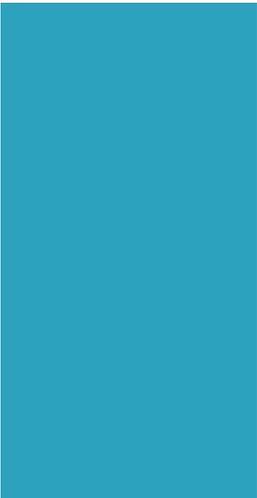
Make note of how many people you signed up on your own list that you can follow up with. Did this meet the goal you set?

Debrief

Set aside some time about a month after the fair to assess how things went. Did you meet your goals? What could you do better next time? Was this fair a success for you?

Keep track of how many bookings you get from each fair that you exhibit at. This way, you will know which ones you should exhibit at again. You may get bookings from this fair months from now so be sure to ask how people found out about your business every single time a new prospect approaches you.

Conclusion



Now you have everything you need to maximise the potential of your next wedding fair! These strategies will take a little bit of work to implement, but they will serve you much better than the “show up and hope for the best” technique that most wedding pros use. By using these techniques, you will be able to figure out which specific wedding fairs work best for your business which will save you from spending money exhibiting at fairs that don't result in bookings. The best part is that you can repeat these techniques for every wedding fair you do, which takes the worry and panic out of planning for each fair.

Remember, wedding fairs are only an opportunity for you to get in front of your audience. Whether any given fair is a success or not for you is going to depend on your strategy.

I'd love to hear about your experience in applying these techniques. You can email me directly at heidi@evolveyourweddingbusiness.com.

If you liked this ebook, please tell your friends that they can get their copy here: <http://evolveyourweddingbusiness.com/wedfairebook/>

Resources

I have put together some resources that will help you make more money and book more wedding at your next wedding fair. These resources include a worksheet that will help you really define your ideal client and a sample email follow up series for after the fair.

To get these helpful free resources, visit <http://evolveyourweddingbusiness.com/your-resources>