

10 Legal Marketing Lessons I Learned from Wedding Planning

I am currently in the throes of wedding planning. With one month to go, it is crazy and wonderful and intense and exciting all at the same time. (My fiancé may or may not have casually compared me to Maleficent last week, but otherwise, he and I are great.) As I have blazed my trail through the world of all things wedding, it dawned on me that the wedding industry is in many ways similar to the legal industry. Not a comparison you'd make every day, but hear me out.

The Wedding Industry

There are approximately 2.5 million weddings in the U.S. every year. (Funny, I thought I was the *only* bride.) America's wedding industry is estimated to be worth **\$76 billion**. It comprises around 600,000 businesses that employ more than 1 million people. It's an industry being turned upside down by technological innovation and new platforms. And while it is changing, it will never go away and probably will always continue to grow. Most importantly, it's an industry with an astounding level of competition. From venues to planners and florists and caterers to photographers, the options in each category seem endless.

The Legal Industry

The U.S. legal industry generated nearly **\$300 billion in revenue** in 2017. Industry revenue has increased year-over-year since the 2008 recession. The number of individuals employed in legal occupations in the U.S. is expected to be 1.38 million by 2022. It, too, is an industry being turned upside down by technological innovation and new platforms. And people will always need legal services. Again, as you know, it's an industry with an astounding level of competition.

I could continue, but I think you get my point. The wedding and legal industries are expansive, lucrative and saturated with service providers. Competition is fierce and the clients, whether crazed brides or CEOs, have a lot at stake. How can you differentiate yourself in a way that will earn new and repeat clientele? Here are some wedding planning takeaways that relate to developing your business.

Ask the right questions and pay attention to the responses. Many vendors in the wedding industry ask you to complete an intake form before sitting down with them for a call or meeting. The forms are full of thoughtful and helpful questions. Great! The problem is the majority of the vendors we spoke with paid absolutely no attention to the answers we had provided, essentially asking us to repeat ourselves verbatim.

Don't do this to your prospective (or current) clients. It definitely does not impress, nor



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does it invoke confidence in your capabilities. Questions are a wonderful thing, particularly if you have little base knowledge of a client's situation. Make sure that responses are read and valued, and that all information aligns with the legal service you will be providing.

Don't forget a name. This is a no-brainer and apparently something one of the DJs we were vetting should have reminded himself of before he scheduled our intro call.

"Sorry, what is your name again?" is not an acceptable question. (See my first point.) It's one thing to need a name reminder when it's someone you've just met at a networking event, but when it comes to a potential client, there is absolutely no excuse for forgetting a name or any other important detail for that matter. In fact, take it a step further: Ask (and remember) the names of their colleagues, team members, secretaries and children.

Realize the power of personal connections. I've never been a bride before, and when it came time to begin the planning process, I started with those around me. Sure, Wedding Wire and The Knot can be great resources for some things, but I mainly found myself falling into a deep dark hole of tabs and links and photos and videos that, hours or even days later, had gotten me nowhere. We selected our coordinator, photographer, florist, DJ, hair/makeup artist, and more based on personal experiences or the recommendations of close friends.

Believe me when I say that your most-desired prospective clients and those who find themselves in need of the services and knowledge that *you* offer either ask for recommendations or go straight to someone they already know and trust.

Be conscious and considerate of budget. Ask your client's budget and respect it. Some of our consultants sent us proposals that were thousands and thousands of dollars beyond the budget we communicated. Others hit the mark spot on. And others even offered bonus services as gestures of goodwill.

Money is always a sensitive topic, and neither weddings nor legal services are cheap. Be considerate about budgets, be realistic about budgets, and definitely don't try to nickel and dime.

Do what you say you're going to do. Another no-brainer, right? Wrong. We spent hours and hours on the phone with vendors who promised to follow up with this or with that. I'm pretty sure we will be celebrating our one-year anniversary before we ever hear back from some. Instead, I found myself following up with them.

Neither brides nor your clients have time for that. By doing what you say you're going to do, be it a large or small action, you're further cementing trust, showing you care and portraying yourself as someone worthy of their business.

Care as much as they do. Weddings and legal matters are serious business. The vendors we selected evidently cared and were as excited about and invested in our day as we were. Our venue coordinator has gone above and beyond to offer creative solutions for our particular obstacles. Our photographer spent an extra two hours with us, outside on a very hot September day, to make sure he got just the right engagement shots. It's comforting to know that we have advocates and partners who genuinely care that our day goes well.

It's no different for your clients. Give them the impression that you consider their business to be as important as your own. When they hang up the phone or walk away from a meeting, they should feel that you are holding their legal matters at the same level of care, concern and heart as they do.

Know and focus on what you do best. Own it, tout it and demonstrate your passion for it. Some vendors tried to offer all-in-one services when they should have focused strictly on just one or two. Focus on your strengths and build from there.

Even big industries are tightly knit. As big as the wedding and legal industries are, they consist of very small circles. Don't burn bridges, don't talk trash and don't show disrespect because you never know who and when, or where, an individual might reemerge in your career.

Use your marketing resources well. For wedding consultants, it's Instagram and Pinterest. For you, it's your marketing team.

That team, whether internal or external, exists to support you and to help you succeed. Get to know them, and don't be afraid to ask them for help. Establish a good relationship with your marketing team, and allow them to do what they do best. It will pay off in dividends.

Go the extra mile to show you want and appreciate their business. I've seen the full spectrum of willingness from vendors and consultants. I met with a florist who, after our two-hour meeting, informed me that she didn't feel it was necessary, nor was it in their contract language, to commit to attending a walk-through at the venue. The florist we hired volunteered to attend not only one walk-through, but two – *and* she sent us a "thank you" care package in the mail one week after we signed our contract. Such a kind way to make us feel all that much more confident in our decision!

How can you demonstrate that you truly want or appreciate your client's business?

Moral of the story: In a deep sea of consultants, you must find a way to stand out. And it's not always about a past track record of success or awards, but about how you make your clients feel. At the end of the day, I would shout about our vendors from the rooftop. And you want your clients to do exactly the same.

If you would like to share your own success story or tip (or to hear some other humorous/horrific stories about how wedding vendors very quickly earned my "no"), feel free to contact me, [Bethany Early](mailto:Bethany.early@jaffepr.com), at bearly@jaffepr.com.