

# 15 Strategies

TO GUARANTEE MORE  
BRIDAL APPOINTMENTS



## INCREASING APPOINTMENTS IN THE NEW NORMAL

The pandemic has been a true test of grit for many bridal shops, and the coming weeks will play a serious role in the future of your store. Throughout this eBook, we are going to examine successful digital marketing foundations for bridal shops, and help guide you through the formula of driving appointments in the post-COVID 19 era.

## GENERATION Z AND YOUR BRIDAL SHOP

There is a chain of events that leads a bride from engagement to appointment.

1. **Announcement:** Brides get engaged and make an announcement on social media.
2. **Dream Phase:** They begin 'dreaming' and 'planning' on Pinterest and Instagram.
3. **Research Phase:** They research the stores in their area.
4. **Decision Phase:** They visit your website and decide whether or not to book an appointment.

As you'll notice, 100% of this process takes place online. Generation Z, your group of brides that was born after 1995, grew up using the Internet for almost everything. It's where they find inspiration, watch how-to videos, document their life for friends/followers, and discover the businesses they want to shop.

This is not a bad thing. This just means that you have to rely less on traditional methods (print, word of mouth), and adapt your marketing so you're in the right place at the right time for these brides.

Let's start with the Announcement and Dream phase.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

The moment brides make an announcement on Instagram is a critical moment for your bridal shop. This is your opportunity to bring in brides into your marketing funnel.

Facebook/Instagram gives you the ability to target 'newly-engaged brides' with targeted ads. Instagram's algorithms can

determine when their users fall into this category -- **This does not mean they have to update their status on Facebook in order for you to target them.**

This is important because when creating your ads on Facebook/Instagram, you should ensure that you are targeting newly engaged women in your area. Otherwise, you are going to be showing ads to women that are not even in the market to buy a wedding dress anytime soon.

The announcement phase is really a trigger point that allows you to begin to market to your brides. We will discuss more specifics on what types of ads to use later in this eBook.

## **THE DREAM PHASE**

---

This period is when the newly engaged bride is scanning through Pinterest and Instagram to find inspiration for their dream wedding. These two platforms can be extremely powerful tools for your bridal shop, so let's dive into how you should use them.

### ***Pinterest***

Pinterest has made a resurgence in the last year or so

in terms of SEO (Search Engine Optimization). We are now starting to see pinterest ranking for highly-relevant terms in the bridal industry, and engagement from brides has significantly increased.

Brides use pinterest for inspiration on all aspects of their wedding, not just their dress, so it is important that you are very present on this platform.

Not sure what to do?

Start by pinning all of your dresses and linking back to your website. If you can get a bride at this stage to click over to your website, then you can bring them into your 'Remarketing Funnel'

**Remarketing Ads:** Remarketing ads are the types of ads that follow you around the Internet wherever you go. They can be very effective for branding, and they are a great way to stay top of mind when brides are actively searching for appointments in the decision phase. In order to 'remarket' someone, you need them to visit your website or social media profile first.

## Instagram

More now than ever, brides are spending a majority of their time on Instagram. COVID-19 has created a surge in the amount of usage social media platforms, specifically Instagram, are receiving, so it is very important that you step up your presence.

**Key Point: You are not just selling a dress. You are selling a lifestyle**

The last thing you want to do is fill your feed with posts showing dresses on a mannequin. These types of posts don't do much for someone who is looking for their dream dress. Instead, take your own photos of brides, or your staff, actually wearing and posing in the dresses. These will be much easier for brides to buy into.

Focus on posting this type of content (*3 times a day, minimum*)

1. Real Bride Imagery
2. Styled Shoot Imagery
3. Designer Imagery

Another major area of Instagram we'd like to cover is **Instagram Stories**

Stories are very important as they receive a lot of attention. They are featured at the top of your followers feed, and they are the first area people view when visiting your profile. It is very important that you post daily to your stories.



photo credit to @somethingnewboutique

It's about staying relevant -- We want you to stay top of mind for all of the newly engaged brides as they are browsing Instagram. You can be very casual with what you post to stories -- They do not require structured curation like your standard Instagram posts do, so have fun with it. Engage your followers with poll, countdowns, boomerangs, GIFS. Offer some BTS (behind the scenes) looks at the store. Showcase your staff's personality.

There are tools you can use to help streamline your process of posting to both your feed, and your stories.

We recommend the following:

- Later: This one allows you to schedule Stories in advance
- SkedSocial
- Planoly

You might not see direct appointments as a result of your efforts in the 'Dream' phase, but it is a critical part of the process. The groundwork that you lay in this stage, will be very useful as we progress to the Research and Decision phases.

## **THE RESEARCH PHASE**

The third phase in this series is one of the most critical as your brides will begin to narrow down their interest and start researching the shops in their area. There are two main factors you must optimize at this phase: Online Reputation, Website.

### ***Online Reputation***

By online reputation, we are referring to your total 'Star' ranking on Google, Facebook and Yelp.

### **Reviews matter.**

You can have a beautiful website, a stunning instagram, a top-notch

Pinterest, but if you are sporting a 3 star rating on Google you are losing business. You are losing a significant amount of business.

Generation Z grew up using the Internet to find businesses/places to visit. They read the reviews. We constantly hear about store owners completely wanting to disregard their reviews, because they feel like their competition is writing negative reviews to hurt them. This is a dangerous mindset! Even if you have an angry bride whose entire family is causing you grief in the review section, you cannot 'give-up' or stop worrying about your reviews.

What's the best way to deal with a negative review? 5 positive reviews. If you go forward with a mindset that for every negative review you receive you're going to try your best to receive 5 positive reviews, then your rating will skyrocket. Even better, aim to ask each one of your happy customers for a review. Reviews are one of those areas that many stores do not think about right after they closed a sale. I mean, yes -- we should celebrate each win we have in the store, but the job is not complete until the bride has given us a positive, 5-star review.

So how can we make this easier? We recommend texting each one of your brides after they've purchased their dress a link where they can review your store. Send them off with a nice thank you, and make it easy by providing the link.

Here's a video on how to grab the Google my Business 'Write a review' link:

How to Obtain your Google My Business Review Link

We strongly recommend asking every happy customer that purchases from you to write a review. The more positive reviews you have, the less effect one negative review might have. Do not rely on your quality of service to be enough of an incentive for your customers to write reviews. Unfortunately, people who have a positive experience do not usually think about spreading the word unless they are asked to do so. On the other hand, people who have a negative experience are quick to jump to yelp and write their complaints.

### ***Negative Reviews***

So what can you do when you receive a negative review?

First of all, respond to the review. It is **very** important that other people who read a negative review see that you took action to try to rectify the situation. If someone has what seems to be a legitimate complaint against you, you cannot ignore this. Again I will reiterate, you will lose business from this.

Respond to the review, thank the person for their feedback and explain the situation from your side. If you truly wronged the customer, let them know they can reach back out to you to clear the air. The last thing you want is a few bad apples ruining your reputation. Take negative reviews seriously, and respond quickly.

### ***Website***

In the post-pandemic world, you should begin to look at your website like a pre-sales employee. Your website should display an impressive showcase of your store, your store's experience, and the depth of designers that you have to offer. It should also be excellent at qualifying brides and scheduling appointments for you.

There are certain requirements that exist in the world we live in for your website to be effective. If you do not currently meet the following

requirements, I strongly suggest taking care of these before you embark on any other initiative.

## 1. Mobile

90% of Generation Z has a smartphone or mobile device. 70% of Generation Z uses their smartphone as their primary device for accessing the internet. Your website should be in its best version, on mobile.

The days of neglecting the mobile side of things are over. Do the following exercise right now:

### **Open your own website on your phone**

-Ask yourself, how easy is it to view the page?

-Are the links big enough for my thumbs to click?

-Is my phone number at the top of the page? Where's the book-an-appointment button?

-Can I find my address, and hours, in 5 seconds?

-Do my photos look cutoff? Is the text running off the page?

-Does my website load quickly on my phone? Within 3 seconds?

You do not need to be a technology-wizard to understand if your website is mobile-friendly or not. Simply go to your own website and take a look at what you are putting out there. If it is even slightly subpar, consider it broken.

Not only do your customers prefer the mobile experience, but they also have options. If you give them one reason to leave your site, or judge your business negatively, they will.

## 2. Secure

This one is nice and easy to take care of. Google provides favorable rankings to sites that are secure, over sites that are unsecure. Having a secure site means the user's data on your site is 'encrypted' and protected from hackers. Having an unsecure site means that hackers can steal your customers' information.

Google highlights the fact that your site is unsecure if you do not have an 'HTTPS' certificate set up, so your customers will see a warning when visiting your site that basically tells them their information is at risk.

Contact your domain, or hosting, provider and tell them you want to

purchase an SSL certificate. They will direct you to the link where you can purchase this, and they can help you set it up for your website. There are 0 excuses for having an unsecure website in 2020.

## **Content**

Once you have a secure, mobile website, you next have to consider the content you are providing to your brides.

One lesson we have learned over the years working with bridal shops is that brides love to engage with content. In fact, our network of sites see an average of 10+ pages per session. This means, on average, brides look at about 10 pages on any given site before leaving or making an appointment.

## **MORE PAGEVIEWS = MORE APPOINTMENTS.**

The moral of the story here is that you should make sure you have enough content on your website or the brides will go somewhere else. Instead of sending your customers to your designers', or competitors' website, you can keep them interested by adding a few items to your own site:

1. Real Bride Imagery
2. Designer Collections

These two subjects alone can help you add hundreds of pages to your website, which means a significant amount of content for your brides.

For the Real Bride imagery, make sure you have permission before you add these images to your website. Many brides are proud of their imagery, and would love to feature it on your website so it will be pretty easy for you to get permission.

Consider adding the real brides as blog posts if you have enough information about their story as this will give your new brides good content to soak up. (Here's an example)

For the Designer Collection there are right ways, and wrong ways, to go about adding this. Here's a quick overview on the do's/dont's:



**Do:**

- Add every dress that you have access to from each collection
- Add each dress as an independent page on the site
- Incorporate the ability for your brides to store the dresses they like as a wishlist
- Optimize each Style for SEO
- Optimize the file size of the imagery for mobile
- Add a strong 'Book an Appointment' call to action on every style

**Don't:**

- Worry about hiding style numbers
- Add every dress to one single page (*unless the bride can click on one specific image, and be taken to a new page dedicated for that style*)
- Add the high resolution image to the website
- Use the exact word-for-word designer description

Let's unpack this list a little. One of the most common questions we receive is, 'Should we add the entire collection to our site, or only the specific samples we have in store.'

We recommend showcasing the entire collection (assuming your designers allow this) because it will significantly help your SEO by doing so. Remember, content is key so the more content you have the better off you are. You also want to rank for style numbers that you have access for. Meaning, if someone is searching for a specific style on Google, and you could get that style as part of a loaner program from your designers, then you want your website to show up on Google.

Now let me be clear, you **should** indicate that 'not all styles are carried in the boutique so please contact if seeking a specific style.' This will make it clear that the brides should use your collection imagery for inspiration and not to shop a specific style. This also will help you generate more appointments, because brides will call you to inquire about specific styles, and like I said -- Chances are if they are dead-set on a specific style, then you can get it for them.

Many of our clients sync their point of sale with the website, so that they can automatically indicate the samples that are available in-store, so this is an easy option for you to also do so.

One of the most important considerations when adding the dresses to your website, is the file size. This process can backfire on you, and end up hurting your website, if done incorrectly. You should make sure to reduce the file size of the designers' imagery to be around 100 kilobytes each. Otherwise, you will be damaging your bride's experience and SEO.

Before we enter the decision phase, remember this. You can have the best ad campaign in the world, but it is worth nothing if your website does not do its job to convert to an appointment.

Your customers have very high standards today, so pretend you're a bride, visit your website on your phone, and see how much room for improvement you have.

## **Decision Phase**

This is it! You have polished up your Instagram and Pinterest game, your online reputation is at least a 4.0 across the board, and your

website has never been so exciting. Now we must learn how to capture the brides that are ready to make an appointment.

We have examined the data from over 350 million pageviews, hundreds of thousands of appointments, and today we are going to give you some insight on where appointments come from.

**Brides use Google when they are actively searching for appointments.**

By implementing what is called 'Conversion Tracking' we were able to determine that over 70% of online appointment requests came in from a Google search. This being the case, it is important for you to have strong Google presence through SEO, and Google Ads.

## **SEO**

SEO is a very broad topic that we could dedicate an entire eBook to, so today we will cover the basics and describe the role of SEO in generating appointments for your bridal shop.

Search engine optimization affects your 'organic' ranking on Google search -- That is to say, SEO helps

you show up higher without having to use Google ads. Although about 50% of people click on the top section of Google (the ads), you still have a large group of people that immediately scrolls past the ads and clicks on one of the three highest links. So how does this work?

First of all, **search rank is primarily geographical.** This means that Google is going to show results depending on the location of the person searching. This being the case, the primary objectives of SEO campaigns are to:

1. Rank higher in your shop's city/town for highly relevant bridal keywords
2. Rank higher in nearby city/towns for highly relevant bridal keywords

Instead of going into the theories behind proper SEO, we are going to provide a shortlist of items that you can take care of to make sure you are on the right track.

Before you start blogging, and creating landing pages, make sure you have completed the following:

### **SEO 'To-Do's':**

1. Claim your Google my Business page and ensure you have a working link to your website on your profile
2. Ensure that your website is secure with HTTPS (SSL Certificate)
3. Ensure that your website loads quickly, and that your website is mobile friendly (Use this tool)
4. Have a dedicated link on your main navigation for 'Bridal' or 'Wedding Dresses.' Make sure this link takes the site visitor to a page that has a heading for 'Wedding Dresses', a description about wedding dresses with your city name, and ideally content about wedding dresses (imagery/video).
5. Pro-Tip: Add all of your designers' collections to the site as independent pages. (1 style per page). This is an easy way to index a significant amount of 'wedding-dress' related content to Google.

The last thing to remember about SEO is that it is a process, not a one-time project. You should always have an SEO strategy in place to continuously be working on ranking in more areas for more

keywords. SEO takes time, so invest your time now and reap the benefits in the future.

## **Google Ads**

We'll start this section off with a simple statement.

Google ads work.

Google has become a multi billion dollar company for a reason. The products they sell (ads) work, and they work very well.

For bridal specifically, Google ads are effective because of **appointment intent**. The 'appointment intent' of a bride is very high when she is typing 'wedding dresses near me' on Google. She is actively searching to find an appointment if she is typing in 'wedding dresses near me.' Facebook/Instagram ads are great, because they are so targeted, but the appointment intent on Facebook/Instagram is low. Typically brides are not actively searching for an appointment on these platforms.

The great part about Google ads is that they do not require the time investment that comes with SEO. If you start a Google ad campaign, you are not going to have to wait

3-6 months to start seeing a return like you would for a SEO campaign. You pay each time someone clicks on your ad so you will need to set aside additional budget each month for your Google ads.

## **Budgeting for Google Ads**

Our stores typically spend from \$500-\$1,500 per month on Google ads depending on the time of year and their current availability. During January, February and March, we recommend spending at least \$1,000.

You will want to set up 'Conversion Tracking' on your website so that you can properly budget for Google ads. Conversion tracking allows you to tie appointments as a result of your campaigns -- Meaning, you will be able to see how many appointments you received from the \$ amount of Google ads you purchased. Establishing this 'Cost per appointment' is critical to effective budgeting, because you can get very precise with your ad spend once you know exactly how many appointments you should receive.

For example, if you have a 'Cost per conversion' of \$15.00, you know you should expect about 66 appointments from a \$1,000

This is a great point to discuss the effectiveness of Google ads. Let's use the example 'Cost per appointment' numbers above to calculate a return on investment.

Assuming an initial investment of \$1,000 into Google ads, a cost per appointment of \$15.00, a store closing ratio of 50%, and an average gown price of \$1,500, we can calculate our return.

66 Appointments \* 50% (Closing Ratio) \* \$1,500 (Average Gown Price) =

**\$49,500 in revenue** as a result of these campaigns. Subtract your initial investment of \$1,000 and you are looking at \$48,500 in revenue as a result. So is it worth it? Yes.

Google ads are going to play a pivotal role in filling your appointment books once you re-open. We strongly suggest having a healthy ad budget on Google ads year-round for bridal shops.

### ***Instagram Ads***

As mentioned previously, Instagram ads are great because of how targeted they are. You can literally show your ads to 'Newly engaged women' with specific interests in your area.

As far as budget is concerned, we would only recommend running ads on Facebook/Instagram for events (trunk shows, sample sales, designer spotlights). Many brides do not search for trunk shows or sample sales on Google. Some brides do not even know what the terms mean, so you definitely should not use Google ads to fill up those events.

Instagram will give you the ability to inform newly engaged brides about wedding dress related events in the area, and we have found great success using Instagram to book event ads.

In general, you should spend 70-80% of your total ad budget on Google, and 20-30% of your budget on Facebook/Instagram, for events, to maximize appointments from ad spend.

## **CONCLUSION**

Thank you so much for taking the time to read our eBook. There is a bright future for your store, and now is the time to adapt your strategy to Generation Z's browsing habits. Contact us today to learn more about SYVO and how we help our stores drive appointments.