

8

Bridal Appointment Problems

**TO SOLVE
BEFORE 2022**



Have you gotten used to the state of the unknown yet? The resiliency of the bridal industry was put through its biggest test of the century, and we can all breathe a sigh of relief knowing that weddings are here to stay. In fact, many shops reported record-breaking sales in 2021. What might be the cause of that? Geographics? Demographics? Consumer behavior changes? While those factors certainly play a part, there are other characteristics of high performing stores that are worth diving into. Today we're going to talk about 8 bridal appointment problems you need to solve before 2022 so you can truly grow your bridal shop.

Let's get into it.



1.) YOUR WEEKENDS AREN'T BOOKED

Saturday has always been a staple of revenue for the bridal shop. It's the day of the week where brides-to-be can get together with their friends and family and embark on their journey to purchase their gown. That being the case, it's important that you have every Saturday fully booked because brides are out there booking. If they're not booking with you, then they're going to your competition.

An overwhelming majority of brides today use Google to find the shops they are going to book their appointments at. That is not to discount the effectiveness of platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TokTok, etc.. but you have to consider how appointment intention works.

Ask yourself, where does someone go when their intention is to make a bridal appointment? Do they pull up their Instagram app and start looking for businesses near them? No. Do they go directly to a wedding dress directory site and start looking? No. A majority of the time, they start by finding out what shops are near them in the first place, and where do people find businesses that are near them in today's world? Google.

So great! We know Google is ‘where it’s at’ so to speak. So how does that help us get our weekends fully booked? The short answers are SEO and Google Ads.

We’ll expand on this below, but let’s look at another challenge that high-performing bridal shops have mastered.

2.) YOU DON’T HAVE WEEKDAY APPOINTMENTS

Ahh the weekday. The day of the week you wish more brides would book in. The logistics of getting the bride and her wedding party to all be available on a certain day of the week can definitely be a challenge, but there is hope!

The first place you want to start is with the strategy. Ever heard of a ‘happy hour’ before? Bars/Restaurants have their own version of the weekday appointment dilemma, and how do they deal with it? They incentivize, incentivize, incentivize. By adding great value to their offering, they’re able to stimulate traffic, and ultimately revenue, during off-peak hours.

So how do we enact this for our bridal shop? Glad you asked!

Now, at SYVO we do not claim to be the solution to optimizing your in-store pricing schemes but we do work with hundreds of bridal shops and help them market their strategies. That being the case, we have some good ideas for you today, and we’ll talk about how to market them also!

Premium Appointments

Now, we’ve all heard about VIB appointments. This is a time where we lock the doors, break out the bubbly/charcuterie, and party with our brides. Normally, this service comes with a price tag of at least \$100 for the appointment.

One way you can stimulate traffic on the weekday is by offering this type of appointment at a discount, or free! Great part is, these types of appointments are typically associated with a higher closing ratio anyway, so chances are the brides that are booking will end up buying! Stores always come up with great ways to make these types of appointments extra special for their brides, but where they lack is in the way they communicate the value and capitalize on the excitement online. So how do we get brides excited enough to work through their friends/families schedule to make this a priority for their weekday?

Step 1, stage an appointment and take beautiful photography/video.

This might cost you some money, but if it leads to at least one bride buying then you are already going to cover your costs, and the assets you get from a styled-shoot like this will be usable for years to come. I cannot stress how important imagery is in the world we live in. You probably know this to be the case as why are apps like Instagram so popular in the first place?

It's because imagery matters and better imagery gets more action. Scroll through your store's Instagram feed. It's not a coincidence that the best looking photos get more likes/comments.

Step 2, create a beautiful landing page on your website that uses this imagery/video.

You've taken the imagery, now you need to get the miles out of it. Your website needs a specific page for your premium/VIB appointments that gives all the reason for your newly engaged brides to want this type of appointment. You can write about how great the premium appointments are all you want, but

no one is going to get their friends/families in the car on a weekday by simply reading about something. They need to see it. Make a page on your website that describes the appointment visually. Yes, you'll need some copy on the page to explain the pricing/availability, but we'll get to that. To start, make sure that when someone looks at the page their first feeling is 'Wow'. Get their attention first, then worry about the logistics/details.

Once you've gotten the wow-factor established on the website, it's time to use marketing to drive the awareness. Use copy on your Google ads that offer 'free premium appointments on weekdays. Create a Facebook/Instagram ad with your new imagery and do the same. The point is, you've spent money and time putting together all of this imagery/video, and you've spent money/time creating this beautiful page on your site that screams 'Wow!' Now you have to market it!

Don't be scared to spend money on advertising. It's a cost for your business today that literally pays itself off. You can connect the dots between ad dollars spent to dresses sold. If you've survived

this long without advertising on Facebook/Instagram and Google, that's great, but that does not mean you're special and don't need this form of advertising. It means that you have been complacent with the revenue that comes naturally (your inbound), and you've completely neglected the revenue that's out there waiting for you (your outbound). If you want to grow your business in 2022, you have to start advertising. Give it a try today, and let us know if you need any help.



3. YOU'VE NOTICED A COMPETITOR GROWING

This one hurts. You're on Instagram and you see brides that didn't even book with you holding the 'I said yes' sign at your competitor's store. Trust me, I understand your frustrations with this.

So why did that bride not even book with you? Doesn't she know you have 20 years of experience and the best selection of designers around?

Chances are, she doesn't know. Why? Your competition is taking your brides with advertising, and you're not aggressively targeting them with your own advertising.

This is where you need to know about a certain form of advertising our friends at Google, Facebook and Instagram offer called 'In Market Audiences.'

These ads target exactly what their name says, people who are 'in the market' for something. Now, how might Facebook/Instagram and Google know if someone is in the market for a wedding gown?

It all starts with a little piece of code, you might've heard of before, called a Pixel. Facebook/Instagram tells you that you need to have this pixel on your site so that you can track the performance of your campaigns better, which is true! But what they don't necessarily tell you is that they also get to see everyone who is visiting your website now. Now, don't take this as a way of me saying you should remove the Facebook pixel from your site. That is not going to do you any good and it's not going to stop what's going on. The point of me saying this is so that you know how these ads work.

Facebook/Instagram now know when people that use their platform are looking for certain things. So, by using an in-market audience ad you can effectively target people who have never even heard of your store, and never even been to your Facebook/Instagram page or your website. This is an excellent way for you to target the brides who have been checking out your competition, but haven't yet found about you.

Give it a shot today -- log in to your business manager (business.facebook.com and create an in-market audience ad).

Just make sure to only target the areas you draw from as you don't want brides halfway across the world checking out your ad instead of brides that are in your backyard.

4. YOUR CLOSING RATIO IS DOWN

Your first thought at this point is why is this tech company about to go into detail about how I'm not providing good enough service in the store. Who do they think they are!

Before you slam this eBook closed, hear me out. We are here today to talk about the one aspect of your closing ratio that your marketing/website actually plays into -- qualification.

By qualification, I'm referring to how qualified a bride is to purchase from your store. Specifically, is their budget in line with the dresses we have to offer, and is their decision timely enough for them to buy today as opposed to 6 months from now? So how in the world do we go about qualifying brides before we even have a chance to speak with them? Let's find out.

Marketing Qualifiers

There are two main ways you will tailor your marketing campaigns to target qualified brides that are ready to buy: Geographics and Demographics.

For Geographics, I'm referring to the locations in which you are targeting your ads. Facebook/Instagram and Google allow you to be very specific today with the locations you are targeting. That is to say that you don't have to target your entire city by any means. You can target specific neighborhoods and zip codes, so you will want to make sure you are only focusing on more affluent areas. Making this adjustment alone will significantly enhance your marketing spend, because you won't be wasting money on people that click on your ads only to find out their budget doesn't fit with your store.

Some stores use BridalLive, and other Point of Sale companies, to retrieve reports based on zip codes. These reports are amazing! They literally tell you which zip codes are getting you the highest order values, and the best closing ratios. If you have access to reports like these, use them! This type of data is a marketer's dream -- We always want to make sure we're using our own historical data to our advantage.

Key Takeaway: Be very specific with the locations of your ads. Only target higher affluent areas, or areas you know you've sold to in the past.

Demographics

So this one is where it gets a little interesting. You can actually tailor your campaigns to target people of certain demographics, such as income level. Now, Facebook/Instagram is not always 100% accurate with this, but it is incredible how much they know about us based on our profiles, spending habits, and search history.

Here are the main demographics you'll want to target for your ads: Gender: Women, Age: An appropriate age range for your store, and Household income level. If you simply start incorporating these three targeting mechanisms into your ad campaigns, you are going to start seeing more qualified brides.

Website Qualifiers

Your marketing campaigns are only half of the story when it comes to targeting qualified brides that are ready to buy. Your website should also be excellent at setting expectations, and it should carry an

aesthetic that fits with your target price point. Are you more of a high fashion salon or home-town boutique? The imagery, structure, fonts and colors on your website can say way more about the type of store you are than any written text.

PEOPLE JUDGE YOU BASED ON THE QUALITY OF YOUR WEBSITE

This is simply the world we live in now. You can have the best experience, a beautiful store, amazing staff, and the best selection of gowns around but your website can stop people in their tracks before they ever even find that to be the case. The game has literally changed, people. You can survive on word of mouth and referrals, sure. But are you in this business to just survive? If you want to truly grow your business in 2022, you have to start looking at what top performing stores are doing and connect the dots. It is not a coincidence that the biggest, highest revenue generating stores in the world have excellent websites and social media. By excellent, I mean extremely mobile-friendly, high quality designs, with movement, videos, and content. The times of using your website like a brochure they says

‘hey here’s my address and phone number, call me’ are over.

Now look, you don’t have to start studying coding in your spare time, and you don’t have to find a passion for web development to make this happen for your store. We live in the technology age, and as an owner you need to delegate this to someone with expertise and passion for website design. Otherwise, you’ll continue to lose brides to your competition and remain stagnant in your revenue.



5. YOU’RE NOT BRINGING BACK THE BRIDES THAT DIDN’T BUY

Most stores today have a general idea of what their closing ratio on the first appointment is and that’s great! It’s certainly the most exciting metric to track, as it literally tells you how much

revenue you'll get based on appointment numbers alone.

Many brides, especially in the uncertain world we live in today, aren't so ready to pull the trigger after one appointment. If you want to grow in 2022, it's time to start thinking about how you can bring back that % of brides that didn't buy on the first try.

There are two main strategies that you should incorporate to achieve this: Text Follow-ups and Remarketing Campaigns.

Text Follow-ups

I'll do my best to not go on a tirade about the performance of email follow-ups and focus this more on their more effective alternative. People open text messages. If you receive a text, even if it is from someone you do not know, you open it. You might not respond, and you might delete it right away, but you open it.

So why does that matter?

It matters because people do not open emails. An excellent email campaign on a highly engaged opt-in list might receive an open rate of 40% on the best day. That means more than half of the people you sent an email to didn't even bother to open it.

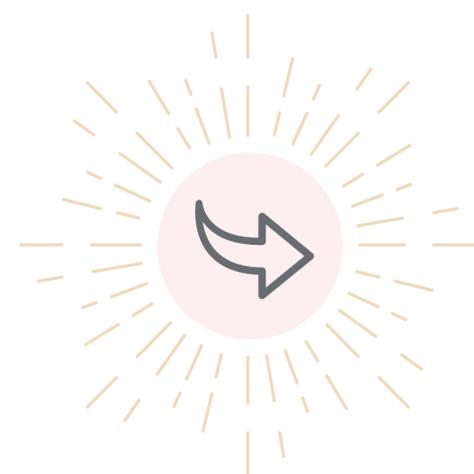
So am I saying to stop doing emails? No. Emails have a low cost associated with them, so if even one bride comes to you as a result of that 40% open rate then it's a win.

What I am saying is to start using text messaging as part of your follow-up process. Have your stylists get the cell phone number of your brides with the intention of sending some photos after the appointment of the dresses they liked the most. This is an easy ask, and once you've got it you're now in.

Remarketing Campaigns

You've likely been a 'victim' of these types of ads before. One moment you're browsing products on Amazon, next thing you're on your favorite news website and you see those same products on the side of the page.

Remarketing ads are ads that are targeted at people who have visited a specific page, or taken a specific action, on your website or social media profiles.



For Bridal shops, they are an excellent way for you to stay top of mind as your potential brides are doing their research online. Chances are, they will visit multiple bridal shops' websites throughout this process, so running a remarketing campaign will help you stand out from the crowd. These ads work very well, and they're hyper targeted. They are only going to be shown to people who have visited certain pages on your website, so you're not wasting your money on people that are not even interested in viewing gowns.

For more advanced users, you can take these ads one step further. One drawback from a standard remarketing ad is that your ads will be showing for brides that came to your website, even if they booked an appointment. That's where a more sophisticated strategy in the form of 'event tracking' comes into play.

Event tracking will allow you to only add individuals to your 'remarketing list' if they haven't taken certain actions. For example, you can set it up so that your ads will target anyone who came to your website, but did not successfully book an appointment.

This is the best way to make sure you're not spending money unnecessarily marketing to brides who've already converted to an appointment. This starts to get very technical, and will require a developer to help you set it up, but the savings you'll receive coupled with the extra effectiveness of your ad campaign make it well worth it.

6.) YOUR BRIDES AREN'T LEAVING POSITIVE REVIEWS

We are all aware of the dilemma surrounding online reviews, and chances are some of us are part of the problem. Almost no one thinks to go online and write a positive review unless someone really asks us to do so. We might be incredibly happy with the service/products we received, but once that transaction is over we're on to other things in our lives.



On the other side, the first thing we do after having a bad experience with a business is rush to Google, Facebook or Yelp and slam them with a 1 star review.

Most people will agree with that synopsis, so what does it mean? It means if we don't do anything, we're very susceptible to getting negative reviews online and we're unlikely to get many positive reviews.

So you might be of the school that says 'so what? Who cares what that little star rating on Google means.' If that's you, then you need to understand that your new generation of customers, Generation Z, care about reviews.

The first thing you should do to see how high up on the priority list this should be for you right now is to Google search 'Wedding Dresses near me.' and look at the listings of stores on the map near you.

If your store has the lowest rating compared to your competitors, you're losing a significant amount of business.

If your store has a high rating (4.5+) but less than 50 reviews, you're one or two 1-star reviews away from a 3.9.

So what should you do?

First of all, train your stylists to ask for a review after closing. This is such a simple thing to do, and if you simply ask for a review in person after someone is happy then they are significantly more likely to leave you one than if you just say nothing.

If you're in one of the categories I described above, then you need to go outbound with your requests. Pull up a list of your previous brides, and contact them to ask for a review. If you have their cell phone number, great! Text them and give them a link to your Google profile. If you only have their email, fair enough! Send them an email

7.) YOU'RE NOT ANALYZING YOUR DESIGNER'S DRAWING POWER FOR YOUR STORE.

Many stores tell me that brides come in with ideas for a certain style of dress, but end up leaving with something completely different more often than not. That's totally fine, and it's actually a testament to the service you are providing in that -- Bridal is not going full-blown eCommerce anytime soon.

We know, without the shadow of doubt, that brides want to look at different dresses before booking with a store. You might not offer them the ability to do this on your own website, but they are absolutely going online and looking at different styles prior to making any appointments. You probably just had a bride in this week who was showing you screenshots on her phone of dresses she saw online that she likes.

To really grow our stores in 2022, we need to start understanding which styles have the most draw for our store, so that we can couple that information with in-store sales figures and make better buying decisions each season.

How in the world do we go about doing that?

First, we need to put styles on our own website so that we can analyze brides' behavior. If we continue to let them go to designers' websites, pinterest, and other sites, then we are just letting those sites have all the data.

If we give these brides what they want, which is the ability to look at different dresses before booking an appointment, then we can start tracking down to the specific style number what exactly is bringing them into the store. So step 1, start reaching out to your designers each season and get all of the imagery for their latest collections. I recommend adding every style from each collection to your site, instead of only adding the styles you have in store, because we are going to start analyzing what styles have draw power. There might be styles that you did not buy that are doing an excellent job and bringing people in. The only way you'd ever know that to be the case, is by listing all of the styles on your website.

Now, you should absolutely make it clear that this ‘gallery’ that you’re adding is for inspiration purposes only and that not all styles are carried in the boutique. Save yourself a few headaches and just make a large notice on each style that asks your brides to call you first if they want availability on a specific style.

Once you have all the styles independently added to your site, you have two real options to start tracking the interest level: use a Wishlist tool, or use Google Analytics.

Having a wishlist tool on your site works for you in a few different ways. One, it becomes an excellent way for you to get brides’ contact information. If you simply require that people make an account in order to use your wishlist tool, then you’ve just turned your website into a 24-7 lead capturing machine. That is to say that, every potentially qualified bride who is actively looking at dresses on your website is going to now give you their information so they can keep track of the dresses they like.

Further, a wishlist helps with engagement. You’ve transformed your website from this brochure into a tool that these brides can use to keep track of the types of styles they like the most.

Remember, they don’t shop for wedding gowns every day. This is a completely new experience for them. Let them keep track of the styles so they can show mom what they’re gravitating towards.

Lastly, if you use a wishlist tool, then you can now pull reports on which designers, and which styles, are generating the most ‘adds’. Meaning, you can see the amount of times someone has added a particular designer, or specific style, to their wishlist. In the case where you’re adding the entire collections from your designers to your site, you’ll now know if there are styles out there that you should consider getting for your store. And that information is all specific to your brides, in your market. Now you’ll know if there’s extra value in that one designer you have that just doesn’t do great in store. Maybe that designer is actually the biggest draw for your store, and you need to make sure to maintain your minimum.

The point is, we have to step up our game in 2022, and we have to start making data-driven decisions. Your knowledge and expertise is half of the story -- The other half is being able to understand changing consumer behavior and capitalizing on trends.

If you don't have the capability to implement a wishlist feature on your site, you can also use Google Analytics to look at which pages are getting the most attention. You can use the 'behavior' report in Google Analytics to track this activity over any date range that you'd like.

8. YOUR REVENUE IS DOWN YEAR OVER YEAR

Remember those problems we wish we knew about so we can adjust before it's too late? If there was ever a problematic situation that we wish we knew about beforehand, low revenue for a year is certainly one of them.

When we look at revenue for your store, there are so many factors that come into play. In 2022, let's focus on what we can control and optimize what we are actually able to optimize.

For a bridal shop, here's what we need to be concerned with:

OF APPOINTMENTS
CLOSING RATIO
AVERAGE GOWN PRICE

These three key numbers are all within your control, and all play into the revenue that you're going to earn this upcoming year.

Start tracking your appointments by month, or even week, so that you can adjust accordingly. Have fewer appointments in a given week as compared to the previous year? Increase your marketing budget. Have more appointments than you can handle? Decrease your marketing budget. If you're not tracking the numbers of appointments you're booking for the shop, how will you know what to do with your marketing spend?

Start tracking your closing ratio. Many of you already do this, so start expanding on the way you track. What is your closing ratio on the second appointment? What are the chances you'll close someone if they leave after a second appointment without buying? It's a simple metric to track, and not only will it help you project your revenue, but it will help you understand where you have room for improvement.

Times are not changing.. They've already changed. Your new generation of customers is out there -- You have to know is where to look.

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