

Blissful Commissions

Now Is The Time To Market Weddings, Honeymoons, Divorcemoons...

By Steve Crowhurst

During a recession, planning a wedding for the bride and groom is much like a travel agent planning the couple's honeymoon. In both cases money is the object and at this time in our lives there are deals to be had and offered by all suppliers.

If you want to secure your share of the wedding and honeymoon market this year, you'll have to show concern and demonstrate fiscal responsibility to your clients as you spend their money. Now, keypoint – you have to do this without coming across as cheap'n'nasty, low-cost and/or fly-by-night.

Get Married or Basement Reno? Either one will cost thirty-grand! One is kissed goodbye – the other will be home to the wide screen TV! You are up against a couple of hefty challenges this year. Some couples may want to wait it out due to funds or lack thereof. But wait! Now IS the time, now is the year to get married, go travelling and honeymoon on island locales such as Kauai, Maui and Cuba. The incentives are too good to miss out on – and that's one marketing theme you can use.

Sell Price!

For years now we've advised don't sell price...sell value, sell service, sell expertise and so on. However there comes a time when you have to reverse the order and you need to know when that should be done, and it's about now. Selling price is good.

The skill in selling price is not by blasting "ISLAND WEDDINGS – TEN BUCKS OFF!" out to all and sundry. It's slightly more subtle, and no, I don't mean going from caps to upper and lower case. No, what you focus on are the reductions brought on by the recession. You must state that NOW is a great time, the best year or month to get married, take a honeymoon because PRICES ARE DOWN. To cap this off you'll need to be on top of your game when it comes to which suppliers have increased their incentives and what offers are available at the destination of choice. You might even choose to use the SuperClubs phrase, "weddings included" – now that's nice.

Selling Island Weddings

Selling an island-based wedding gives you the opportunity to close on additional revenue – the wedding and the honeymoon. In fact it's one and the same. Chances are the wedding couple will get married onsite at the resort and stay there for their honeymoon. The actual wedding site could also be off-site, away from the resort, using a backdrop of a gorgeous waterfall or special place.

Your marketing focus would be the backdrop. The image must pull the couple into the page and mentally put them in that location. Coupled with 'wedding included', you have the makings of an excellent promotion



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You might use slogans such as: "Kauai'ing Over You" or "Forever Maui'ed" or "Join the Cuban Re-vow-lution" as you push your promotion out to your customer base.

Everyone Knows Someone...

You know about the Six Degrees of Separation I'm sure. It means we are only six people or six steps away from everyone else on the planet. In other words, I know someone who knows you. Everyone on your mailing list is connected to someone getting married or planning a honeymoon and this validates the reason to turn every promotion you create into a viral marketing campaign.

A viral program means you request the recipient to "pass it along", to "send to a friend", to "if you know anyone getting married this year please forward...". You should add the "send to a friend" button to every promotional e-mail.

The European "I Do"

Might be a good time to reinvent your wedding/honeymoon offerings and for certain

How To Sell – Weddings & Honeymoons

clients woo them away from sun, sand and palm trees to the elegance and old world charm of Europe. Transat offers Santorini for instance and other European destinations where a wedding in a 16th-century church might just top the list. Once wedded, the couple could honeymoon in the same spot or head to another classical city, or any one of many Riviéras. You'll need a decent slogan once again to generate interest and pull the customer to you.

People of certain faiths might opt for a wedding in a small Italian village, a French city or on a Greek island. How nice and different is that? So many classical icons to wed by and such history to blend into the honeymoon. Another WOW when it comes to showing the wedding photos. Imagine this, wedding couple, white dressed bride, well groomed groom captured as they run towards the camera along a narrow cobbled street with locals looking on from small balconies...printed in sepia tone for that classical look and perhaps even matted and framed in the French style. More WOW!

Window, Web and WOW!

If the statistic still holds, 20 per cent of Canadians who do marry, get married in August. Other than that stat, we must assume that 80 per cent get married based on time off, seasonality of their honeymoon destination and so on. But you do have August for sure as a month to focus on. That means planning your promotions as you read this line.

Your message has to hit your agency window, website, newsletters, e-mails all at once. The images must be large, the slogans eye catching and large...put people in your images. Learn Photoshop Elements and layer the images. Ask your suppliers to supply the images. Ask the tourism teams of Kauai, Maui and Cuba for the images. Just do it. Post it. And WOW!

More Stats Stated

Click to www.weddingbells.ca/results/ and check out the statistics. Very interesting. Here's a couple that pertain to this page:

- **Who is She?** Average age is 29 among engaged women in Canada. Seventy-seven per cent already live with their fiancé/significant other. Average household income after marriage is \$83,811.
- **The Big Day:** Average expected cost is \$19,038. Average wedding size is 145 guests; 22 per cent have 200+ guests.



Don't shy away from marketing to those "seeking happiness a second time around"

MAUI VISITORS BUREAU

Fifty-six per cent of weddings occur between June and August: June (15 per cent), July (15 per cent), August (26 per cent) – it's risen from 20 per cent. Forty per cent of engagements occur between December and February: December (22 per cent), January (seven per cent), February (11 per cent) – this is when you start marketing! Average length of engagement is 18 months – you've got from 0 to an 18-month selling cycle.

- **The Honeymoon:** The average honeymoon lasts 8.7 nights away from home. Seventy-one per cent plan to spend their honeymoon outside of Canada. Fifty per cent plan to stay at an all-inclusive resort. Hey that makes it easier to target eh?
- **Things That Make You Go Hmmm:** 24 per cent claim not to be completely over past relationships! Okay now this is a good Hmm? Read on...

The Renewable Resource

Most marriages work. They say after 40 years of marriage you ain't going nowhere. Chances of divorce at this anniversary are 2 in 1,000! However, Stats Can advises

the dangerous time is 4.5 years when most divorces in Canada occur. Average age of the male 44 and female 38. So what does this mean to your weddings and honeymoon business? MORE CUSTOMERS!

Don't shy away from marketing Second Time Around or Divorcemoons and Vacations! Come on this is good. It's a segment of the industry that repeats. It's renewable. Offering a service to those "seeking happiness a second time around" could be your new niche! Hey, been there, done that and, er, lost the T-shirt and if I ever catch that dentist (!)... but that's another story. Your story is to grow your weddings and honeymoon business along with your re-taking of vows plus your new niche of re-weddings and re-honeymoons.

Final Word

Sell SuperClubs, Transact with Transat, Go Kauai, Go Maui, Go Cuba... pitch your services to all of your customers, initiate the viral marketing approach, then target market known brides and grooms and when the banker says to you, "Would you like to make a huge deposit?" you can say, "I DO!" ✈