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While hotel and resort weddings are still popular wedding venues, many properties struggle with how to attract brides to their property.

Some believe they are doing everything right, and yet, ballroom and event spaces sit open on Friday and Saturday nights. Or, conversely, other properties are simply not sure where to begin attracting quality brides to their properties. Today on the blog we share our top tips for tackling the ever-changing wedding industry.

Telling a Story Through Your Brand

The largest shift in the wedding industry over the last number of years has been the re-focus on all things visual and digital. In an ideal situation, all of a hotel or resort's sales, marketing, and public relations points should point back to the brand story. However sometimes marketing teams tend to leave behind elements or segregate brand messages when it comes to weddings. Today's bride wants to know **why** she should be getting married at your property, which means she wants the full picture – rooms, amenities, culinary options, history and all of the special touches you provide. The biggest mistake that hotels and resorts can make is to not tell the full story to a bride. By investing in a bridal media kit, developing top-notch event menus and keeping brand elements updated online (current photography, legible fonts, social media presence) roadblocks are eliminated on the path to building increased wedding revenue.

Your Digital Presence

Beyond presenting your story to a bride, the wedding industry now outlines some key digital markers for attracting leads and capturing the attention of your prospects. Most brides now are creating visions boards on Pinterest or researching wedding venues on Instagram. For wedding marketing plans, it is sometimes best to create the list of digital platforms and how you plan to use them. There are so many options available to properties that it can be a bit overwhelming. Start with the core: Website, blog, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest. Then move in to the wedding specific areas, such as: Weddingwire.com, TheKnot.com, etc. It is also advised to check on your market's local opportunities including lifestyle magazines and wedding publications.

The pictures tell the story so it is crucial that properties highlight who they are and what weddings on property look like. As for wrangling content like images, be sure to partner with brides and their photographers so you have a consistently updated look for all media. You don't always need to have large scale expensive photo shoots for weddings since they are already taking place. Should you find yourself with a surplus of marketing dollars, you could hire a photographer to come to weddings and shoot for the venue. Ideally, they would be capturing photographs of the overall setup and the look and feel of the venue. Additionally, all photography will come in handy when you reprint collateral or create print ads. The key is to be authentic and what better way than with existing weddings held at your property?

Know Your Market

Hotel Ballrooms, Country Clubs, Barns, and Municipal Centers all have specific markets. Trying to be all things to all brides can lead to brand confusion and less profits. The key is to know what you are good at and what bride that would appeal to. This will require a little research on the part of you and your team. Many times, it is easy to analyze the market segments for group and transient business to a hotel, but less emphasis is placed on analyzing who the specific bride is for a property. This information can be helpful, not only in deciding where to spend advertising dollars, but also to get a sense of what properties can expect in extra revenue from rooms, outlet food and beverage, and other services offered by the hotel or resort.

Get the Right Team in Place

This is one area that cannot be stressed enough. In most markets in the U.S., Finding an retaining qualified team members is a hot topic at conferences and GM brainstorming sessions. Without the right, motivated team, any sales and marketing effort is dead in the water. Pointing back to knowing your market, your wedding sales and execution team can be your greatest ally for the brand. Just as all venues cannot hit all markets, be aware of the individual strengths in your team. They can be the greatest asset when working to increase wedding revenue and close on a lead.

For those without an abundance of resources or manpower to market and sell their wedding program in line with the latest industry research, it's advised to seek an outside consultant. Overlooking the impact of your wedding program on overall sales and food and beverage revenues can be a costly mistake. Seek help to bring your marketing materials up to speed, establish a digital foundation, or hone in on your target bride to set your hotel or resort up for future revenue gains and success in a changing industry.