

VOLUME 11

# GROWING YOUR BUSINESS IN 2016

How wedding professionals are using reviews,  
referrals and advertising as key paths to growth

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# INTRODUCTION

The WedInsights Series is designed to provide wedding professionals with relevant consumer and business insights. Each month, we'll focus on a particular topic – drawing on data from consumer behaviors and opinions, and provide actionable insights for your business.

In this report, we focus on **our wedding professionals path to growth** by offering insights into questions such as:

- What are wedding professional's top priorities in 2016?
- Why are reviews so important for growing business?
- Why are professionals working on expanding their network?
- How much are professionals spending on advertising?

In order to provide the most relevant and up-to-date data, WeddingWire conducts a variety of research throughout the year with more than 50,000 wedding professionals, engaged and newlywed couples across the country. Together with behavioral data analyzed by our own data scientists, WeddingWire uses internal data to calculate overall estimates which we present throughout this report, unless otherwise noted.

## NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF MARKET INSIGHTS:

*"To-date, our WedInsights Series has contained data and statistics about couples, planning trends, marketing channels and more. This edition is all about YOU - our WeddingWire professionals. Six thousand of you responded to our 2015 Annual Vendor Survey and we are sharing back what you had to say. We hope this report provides insights about your industry colleagues. Finding new customers, maximizing advertising spend and growing the business is common across all WeddingWire professionals (whether you are a sole entrepreneur or work for a multinational organization) and we are glad to be a partner in helping to reach your goals."*



**Andy Whittaker**  
**Director of Market Insights**  
**WeddingWire**



For questions or to submit future topic suggestions, please email [wedinsights@weddingwire.com](mailto:wedinsights@weddingwire.com).

# WHAT BUSINESS GOALS PROS ARE THINKING ABOUT IN 2016

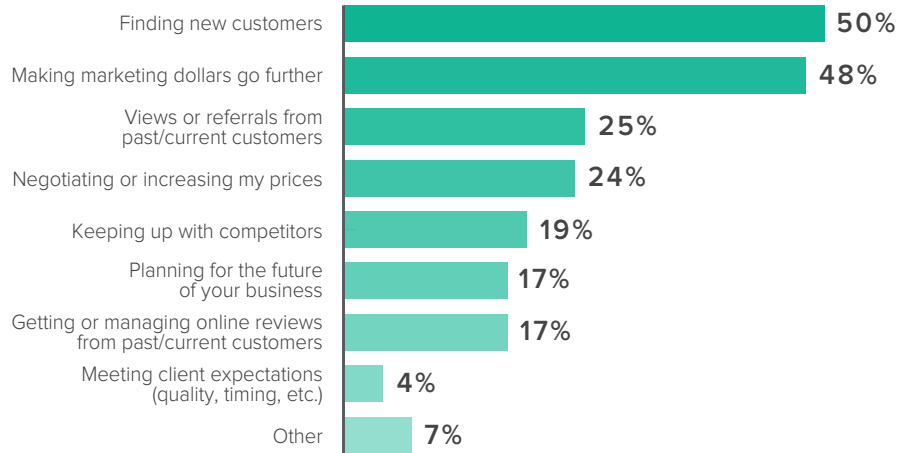
## THE MAJORITY OF PROFESSIONALS ARE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO ACQUIRE NEW CUSTOMERS

- When it comes to the business goals of wedding professionals, maximizing advertising efforts and increasing customer acquisitions are clear priorities for the majority of them.
- Acquiring new customers is even more of a focus for favors and gifts retailers (76%), photographers (61%), wedding planners (60%) and videographers (60%).



### BUSINESS HARDSHIPS

(Those surveyed could select up to two choices)



## PROS WANT TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF WEDDINGS BOOKED, BUT WEEKEND DEMAND LIMITS OPPORTUNITIES

- Both full-time and part-time wedding professionals express their desire to grow the numbers of weddings they book in 2016.
- When looking at venues in particular, pros averaged 30 weddings and 35 non-weddings in 2015 but would like to increase both by roughly 40% in 2016.



### VENDOR TIME ALLOCATION

	ALL	FULL-TIME	PART-TIME
Percent of Time Booked with Paid Businesses	50%	50%	30%
Number of Weddings Worked in 2015	25	30	12
Number of Weddings Want to Work in 2016	40	50	25

- On average, full-time wedding pros state that only 50% of their available time is spent with paid business; a large part due to the high-demand of weekend wedding dates.
- In fact, 65% of all 2015 weddings were on a Saturday, 12% on Fridays and 11% on Sundays. Even though consumers are aware that prices may be lower on off-dates and off-season, brides and grooms continue to demand peak time slots, giving vendors fewer dates to book additional business.

# WHY PROS AIM TO BUILD BUSINESS THROUGH REVIEWS

## REVIEWS ARE A VITAL PART OF GENERATING NEW BUSINESS BUT CHALLENGES PERSIST

- Over 90% of professionals say online reviews are critical to their business, however a quarter say that getting reviews is a major strain on their business, especially those in jewelry (43%), transportation (34%), beauty/health (32%), event rentals/ photobooths (31%), and venues (29%).



Collecting reviews shouldn't be daunting. [The WeddingWire Review Manager for Pros app](#) provides the technology for you to easily request, track and manage your online reviews from the palm of your hands - allowing you to focus on your true passion while keeping your reputation thriving.

- 65% of wedding professionals collect the majority of their reviews on popular 3rd party review sites like WeddingWire, Yelp, Google, etc.
- Despite the well-known importance of collecting reviews, wedding professionals admit they are not as confident about collecting and managing reviews. Nearly 25% say they could use help in this area.



*"Since I have started actively going after reviews I am averaging one out of every ten. I put my review information in the packet I give each bride, then after the wedding I send a follow up. [If I don't get the review] I try to find the silver lining and move on."*

- **Officiant, Ohio**

## PROS VALUE REFERRALS AND LOOK TO EXPAND UPON IN-NETWORK PARTNERSHIPS

- The majority of pros rely on referrals as a key to customer acquisition. While 94% of pros say that referrals are important to their business, only 74% feel they are well-connected to other pros in their local area.
- Interestingly, monetization of referrals is one way to see growth in 2016. One-third of professionals are considering (or already) providing a financial incentive to garner more word-of-mouth business.
- Bands, beauty & health pros, entertainers, favors & gifts retailers, rehearsal dinner locations and videographers appear to be most receptive to this type of agreement.



### ATTITUDES ABOUT NETWORKING AND REFERRALS

Referrals from other wedding professionals are important to my business	94%	I feel connected to other wedding professionals in my area	74%
I would like to be paid by other professionals for referred business	33%	I would be willing to pay other professionals for referred business	30%

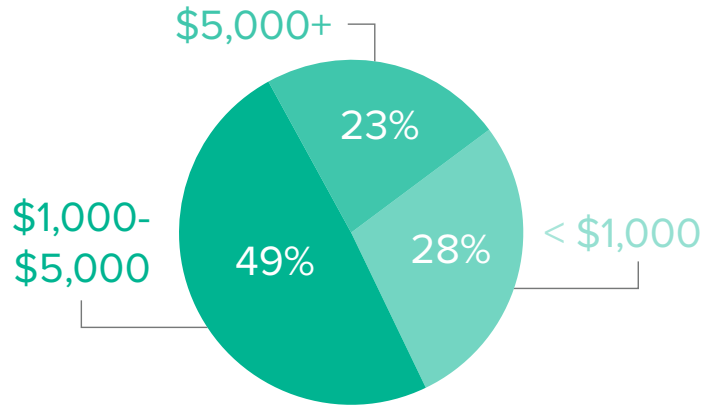
# WHAT PROS ARE SPENDING ON MARKETING & ADVERTISING

## PROS EXPECT TO INCREASE ADVERTISING SPEND SIGNIFICANTLY IN 2016

- In 2015, the majority of wedding pros spent between \$1,000 - \$5,000 on advertising and marketing for their business.
- Data from our survey suggests that venues, caterers, dress/attire, jewelers and transportation professionals have higher advertising spends, as vendors in these categories tend to work in larger corporations with larger employee counts and annual revenues. Sole proprietors invest slightly less in paid marketing/advertising opportunities.
- However both groups expect to increase their advertising spends in 2016 by around 25%, with larger investments into wedding planning sites, social media, SEO and blog advertisements to attract more business and grow their customer base.



2015 ADVERTISING & MARKETING SPEND, BY ALL CATEGORIES



*"I am always promoting and marketing myself off and on. I do google Adwords express, Google plus, boosts on Facebook along with ads, Twitter, even Craigslist. There's no secret way to attract business, we have to be in the here and now constantly."*

**- Beauty & Health Professional, Texas**



2015 ADVERTISING & MARKETING SPEND, BY TYPE OF BUSINESS

AMOUNT SPENT	SOLE PROPRIETORS	ALL OTHER BUSINESS TYPES
< \$1,000	34%	19%
\$1,000 - \$5,000	50%	41%
\$5,000 +	16%	39%
<i>Expected Increase in 2016 Spend</i>	26%	25%

# HOW WEDDING PROS PLAN TO CAPTURE MORE BUSINESS

Based on the feedback from our professionals who responded to our Annual Survey, it's clear that many of them hope to grow their business in 2016 and beyond. Pros not only expressed their desire to book more business and increase revenue but provided insights into what they're doing to make their goal a reality.

## Key Take Aways:

# 1

### Collect more reviews to stand out

In today's modern world, reviews function as online recommendations for your business from past clients. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that couples not only rely heavily on reviews during their decision making process but data shows us that the more reviews a business has, the higher likelihood of getting more traffic and in return more bookings. Increase the likelihood of capturing client reviews by incorporating it into your sales process from the start. Promoting the importance of reviews throughout your clients experience will make them more likely to submit a review for you in the end.

# 2

### Work with other professionals to generate referrals

Referrals are huge in the wedding industry. Wedding professionals in most cities or regions have a lot of choices when it comes to other Pros to work with, so it's important for you to meet more people in your area to identify opportunities. The connections you make through networking can be the reason your business gets a referral over another local business. Working together will not only help your bottom line, but gives you an opportunity to learn and grow with some other top-notch businesses.

# 3

### Spend more on advertising to increase exposure

Whereas in years past only about 4% of marketing budgets were allocated towards social media, today promoted posts, social ads and new online opportunities such as SEM (Search engine marketing) are getting more attention and a bigger piece of the pie. While there are various ways for wedding pros to advertise, individuals are finding the specific formula that works well for their business and investing more money into getting their brand name out there.



*"Throughout the last couple of months I've paired up with a major rental company and the number one venue in my area, and my relationship with them has really grown. With that, my business has grown! I've never been so busy! For those of you who seem to be trying everything and getting no results, work on your vendor relationships and partner up with mature vendors for referrals and support."*

**- Key Destination Wedding & Events, Wedding Planning, Florida**



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