



POP UP SHOPS:

Gain Bridal Buzz in a Temporary Storefront

Retailers and vendors alike have been going crazy for pop up shops. From jewelry designers to gourmet store owners to home décor vendors, pop up shops have proven successful in offering temporary storefronts without long term commitments. No leases, no staffing dilemmas, no seven day work weeks. Instead, pop up shops create a quick buzz that leads to publicity, sales and new customer interest. For floral boutiques, this offers a great opportunity to reach a target market of brides while also introducing more product assortment versus what your business traditionally offers alone.

Pop Up What?

First thing's first. In order to create a pop up shop, you need to first understand what one is. Pop up shops are temporary stores that typically occupy vacant commercial real estate spots in high traffic locations such as strip malls, indoor shopping centers or downtown areas. Additionally, some pop up shops have started to open near special events, such as community festivals or large sporting arenas. Many pop up shops open and close within three days, though some stay open for as long as a few months. Any longer than this takes away from the novelty of a store opening and closing pretty fast, so it's best to consider one month your maximum timeframe in terms of hosting a pop up shop.

While the lack of long term commitment is most appealing, there are also many other advantages to opening a pop up shop. For starters, it's a great way to explore new neighborhoods, cities or even other states in an effort to test new markets for a permanent storefront. Additionally, pop up shops offer multiple vendors a chance to display their products together, creating powerful merchandising opportunities that translate into sales. Some vendors, such as jewelry artists, use pop up shops exclusively to sell their product and have found this to be a huge success. Jewelry designer Anne Keane from Boston, Massachusetts, has participated in a variety of pop up shop events, with her favorite being bridal themed. "Working with other local vendors in one collaborative effort gives us all great exposure and introduces us to new clients," says Keane. "Repeat business is often a perk as well," she states.

Another perk is that budgets are not as pressed when opening pop up shops since they are much more limited in their overhead than traditional stores. When opening pop up shops in a collaborative effort, your expenses are lowered simply because you share the financial commitment between a few participating pop up tenants. How you divide the expenses is up to you. One way is simply to prepare and execute the event with equal responsibilities all around. An alternate approach would be for you to prepare and execute the pop up shop alone but to invite bridal focused vendors to sell their product for a fee. This fee helps reduce – if not eliminate - your overhead. Some ideal vendors to include in a bridal themed pop up include jewelry designers, fondue fountain vendors, independent musical talent, photographers, stationery designers and candle creators. These products combined make a fabulous bridal themed pop up, offering brides no excuse not to visit your temporary

store. Let's not forget about what you gain here, either....new clientele. And what better clientele to gain than brides?

A Walk Down The Aisle

Brides are everywhere, which is lucky for you. This said, brides tend to swarm to places that sell things for their big day. A pop up shop is the perfect addition to their checklist of things to do in preparation for their walk down the aisle.

When planning to open a pop up shop, consider where the brides are. Is there a big event in your community that takes place annually for brides-to-be? How about just outside of your community? Chances are attending brides-to-be will take day road trips just to attend a bridal event, so it's very likely you will meet some local ones even outside your neck of the woods. A pop up shop is the perfect addition to already existing bridal events. While you may not be able to gain direct, on site access with your pop up shop, you'll likely be able to find a space close enough that will still lure in a bridal crowd.

No events already on the calendar? That's okay! Creating your own, unique pop up shop without any additional events surrounding it can be just as lucrative. The hype created by you and your participating vendors can do wonders without any other noteworthy events to mention. The catch is creating a buzz, not just waiting for foot traffic.

The best pop ups are marketed weeks before and during their event, with the week of the event putting in additional marketing time. The power of press is amazing, so make sure to get your local media on board with your pop up. Send out press releases, use social media and reach out to all your email subscribers. If you have other vendors sharing your pop up space, make sure they also reach out to their unique customer lists. And don't forget to follow up on all press releases you send out! Communicate to the media to ensure it has been received, to answer any questions they may have and to secure their visit at your pop up shop.

Creating a Temporary Retail Store

Plain and simple, your pop up shop can backfire on you if you don't plan for a great merchandising floor plan. Now don't get scared and think big bucks are in order. The reality is you can create a dynamic bridal pop up space without breaking your budget. The key is to plan in advance.

Once your space is identified, create a floor plan-o-gram that allows all participating vendors to see just how much space they will have to feature their product. As the organizer, it's important to remember that in creating your floor plan, you should consider your cash wrap area, the entrance and exit of your pop up, what limitations in merchandising may exist and how much space each vendor truly needs to maximize their product. Additionally, it's important to provide fixtures that will lend themselves to showcasing all product adequately. Without proper fixtures, your products won't display as strong as they should. In turn, sales won't take place as often as possible. Fixtures can be rented, but it's likely between you and your participating vendors that you can borrow bits and pieces from your own shops, inventory or even homes. Be creative here while still being professional in your overall displays. It can save you money!

Aside from great display pieces, keeping an eye on overall visual appeal is important. Brides love white, so creating a crisp, white backdrop to showcase all product could be the perfect touch. Of course, the best accents to white are beautiful flowers... which is the main reason you are having this pop up shop anyway, right?

Contributor Nicole Leinbach Reyhle is a freelance writer and retail consultant based in Chicago, IL. Follow Reyhle on Twitter at @RetailMinded and visit her retail blog at www.retailminded.com, which is recognized by Forbes.com as a "Thought Leader" in retail.