WED INSIGHTS
Industry data from WeddingWire

VOLUME 4

TURNING LEADS INTO BOOKINGS

Understanding the impact that your response time and communication style have on booking clients

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 **turning your leads into bookings** and offer insights into questions such as:
- When in the planning process are most leads submitted?
- What is the preferred method of communication for most couples?
- When do couples expect a reply from a vendor after submitting a lead?
- How does response time affect likelihood to book?

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 dedicated team of data scientists, we're able to calculate overall estimates which we present throughout this report.

NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF MARKET INSIGHTS:

"Whether you are a part-time musician wanting to perform a few weddings each year or a Marketing Manager of a corporate venue aiming to host multiple events on the same day, leads from WeddingWire contribute to the top of your funnel giving you more opportunities to book the business you want. While some couples still prefer to pick up the phone and call, we've learned that most couples are comfortable sending emails or submitting leads online to gather information from multiple professionals at once. This means you need to have a strategy in place to interact with these different types of potential clients. In general, couples who call prefer to get a call back; couples who email prefer to get an email response. Regardless of the channel, couples expect to hear back within 24 hours or less. And personalizing the conversation from the very first interaction conveys your professionalism and interest in working with the client."

Andy Whittaker
Director of Market Insights

HOW COUPLES CONTACT VENDORS DURING THE PLANNING PROCESS

COUPLES SUBMIT THE MAJORITY OF LEADS IN FIRST FEW MONTHS AFTER ENGAGEMENT

• During the wedding planning process, **50% of all leads are submitted 1 - 5 months after engagement.** Surprisingly, a small percentage of couples even submit leads prior to their engagement - proving it's never too early to get your name out there.

• As we discussed in WedInsights Volume 2, couples contact an average of 25 vendors while searching for their team.

📊 **DISTRIBUTION OF LEADS SUBMITTED**

NUMBER OF MONTHS BETWEEN ENGAGEMENT MONTH AND LEADS SUMITTED
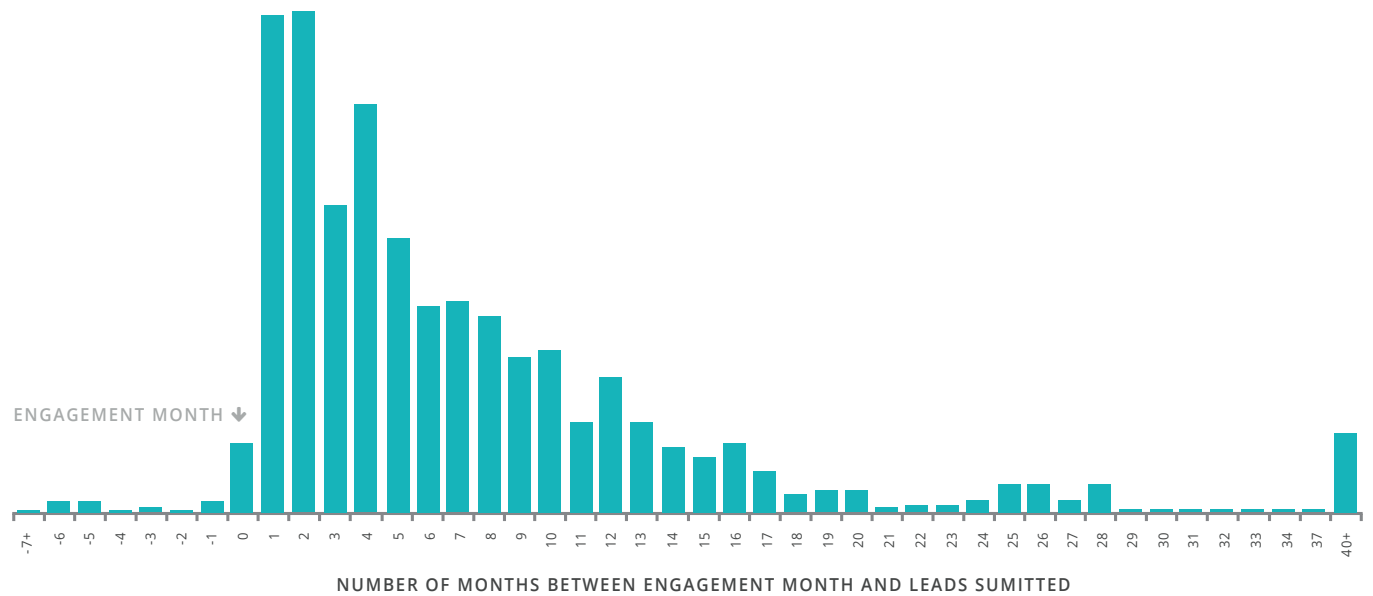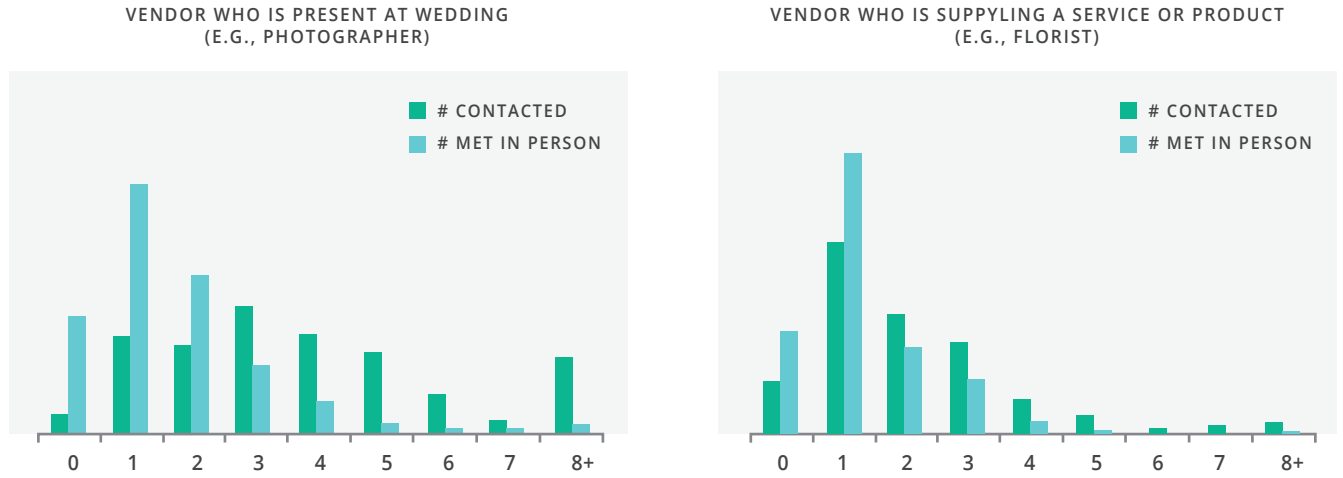
Source: WeddingWire Behavioral Data // 2014

• The number of leads submitted by a couple tends to differ by vendor category. Interestingly, when a couple is searching for an officiant or photographer (someone who will attend their wedding or have a role in the ceremony), we see a varying number of inquiries submitted. Some rely on a few recommendations while others have a more thorough vetting process to find the right professional who will match their personality and attitude.

> *"He was my favorite [photographer] from looking at the online portfolios, and [I] thought it was important to meet in person to see if we had chemistry. Luckily we did!"* **- Megan B., Texas**

📊 # OF VENDORS CONTACTED VS. MET WITH BASED ON CATEGORY TYPE

**VENDOR WHO IS PRESENT AT WEDDING
(E.G., PHOTOGRAPHER)**

■ # CONTACTED
■ # MET IN PERSON

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8+

**VENDOR WHO IS SUPPLYING A SERVICE OR PRODUCT
(E.G., FLORIST)**

■ # CONTACTED
■ # MET IN PERSON

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8+

Source: WeddingWire Planning Survey // 2014

• Regardless of whether a couple reaches out to 2 or 10 vendors per category, **most couples only meet with 1-2 of them in person before booking.** This process is typical as couples start by gathering as much information as possible before narrowing down the pool to a couple final contenders.

COUPLES PREFER CONTACTING VENDORS INITALLY BY EMAIL

• When it comes to the initial outreach to vendors, approximately **80% of couples use email to inquire about their products or services.**

• **Couples searching online for vendors default to email or online lead submissions mainly out of convenience.** They are often multi-tasking (usually at work) or looking to get information from many vendors in a short amount of time. Plus, many couples like to have their initial conversation via email so they can easily reference it at a later date.
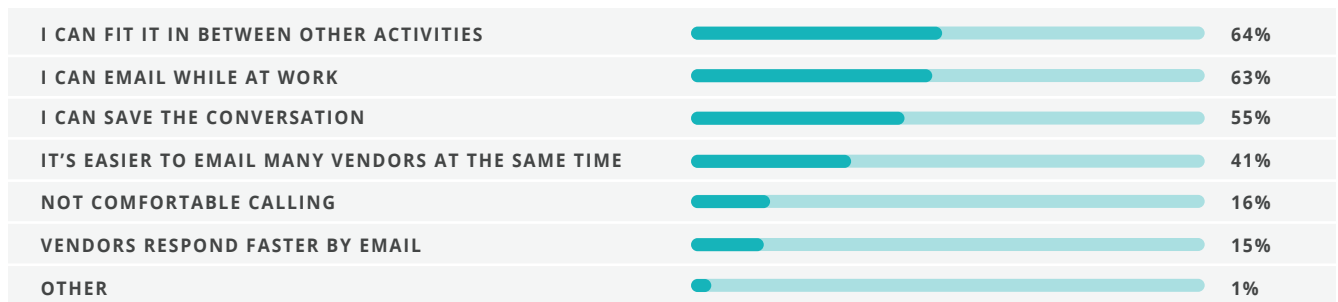
> *"Email is my first choice of communication...but yes, I will call if it's truly time sensitive and I need a quick response. Otherwise I'll wait for an email response."*
> **- Sara A., North Carolina**

📊 WHY COUPLES PREFER TO EMAIL VENDORS DURING THE PLANNING PROCESS

I CAN FIT IT IN BETWEEN OTHER ACTIVITIES	64%
I CAN EMAIL WHILE AT WORK	63%
I CAN SAVE THE CONVERSATION	55%
IT'S EASIER TO EMAIL MANY VENDORS AT THE SAME TIME	41%
NOT COMFORTABLE CALLING	16%
VENDORS RESPOND FASTER BY EMAIL	15%
OTHER	1%

Source: WeddingWire Communication Survey // 2015

WHAT COUPLES EXPECT FROM PROS AFTER SUBMITTING A LEAD ONLINE

COUPLES EXPECT A RESPONSE WITHIN 24 HOURS

- Over 70% of engaged couples find vendor responsiveness to be one of the most important characteristics to look for while researching professionals.

- **Most couples expect to hear back from a vendor within 24 hours of** sending an online request for more information.

- After submitting an online inquiry, **40% of couples say they don't hear back from a vendor within 5 days,** leaving a negative first impression and giving other wedding pros the opportunity to win their business instead.

Given the importance of response time, WeddingWire is committed to developing new ways to get you in touch with your leads faster. **Quick Leads** allows you connect instantly with potential clients by initiating a phone call the moment you receive a lead from WeddingWire. You can choose to connect if you are available or receive a text notification to follow up at a later time.

THE QUICKER THE RESPONSE, THE HIGHER THE LIKELIHOOD OF BOOKING

- Interestingly, couples have an all-around more positive perception of a vendor when they respond quickly. As a matter of fact, data suggests that **the quicker a vendor responds, the more likely a client is to perceive the quality of the product or service to be higher.**

- If you respond to a client within 5 minutes, rather than 30 minutes, you're 100X more likely to connect with a qualified lead. If that's not compelling enough, approximately **50% of buyers choose the vendor that responds first.**[1]

COUPLES WANT A RESPONSE TAILORED TO THEIR QUESTIONS AND NEEDS

- Whether your client likes to email or talk on the phone, data shows it's important to take a cue from your clients and respond to their inquiry in the form you received it. **48% of couples express frustration when their vendor does not reciprocate their preferred communication type.**

"I prefer to be contacted in the same way that I contacted the vendor unless I specifically ask them to call me. I like having my initial questions answered in writing and then will make arrangements to meet the vendor in person or will call them if I have further questions." **- Private Engaged User**

[1] External Source : Insidesales.com // annual 2014 lead response report

• Clients know you're busy, but **responding to an email inquiry with an auto response may not have the positive impact you intended**. About 25% of couples don't like generic automated responses, as they can be perceived as impersonal and often provide little added value.

⭐ **Tip:** Customers want a response from a real person and not an auto-reply that states obvious information such as "Thank you for contacting us, we'll respond back as soon as possible." If you feel the need to have an auto-reply, make sure you tell them something they don't already know or can't find on your website.

• The best way to leave a great first impression is to personalize your response. **1 in 4 couples felt as though the response they received from a vendor was not personalized,** creating little desire to continue
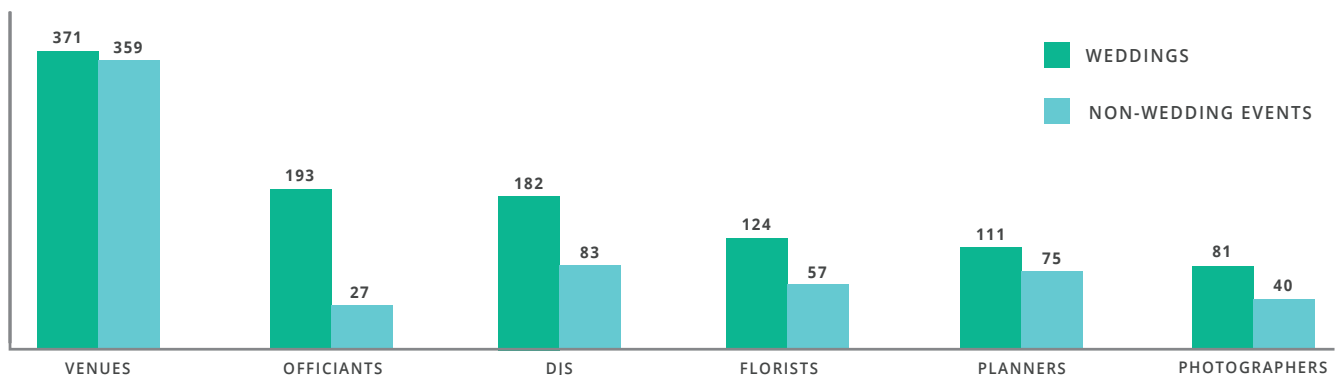
HOW PROS RECEIVE AND RESPOND TO ONLINE INQUIRIES

PROS RECEIVE THE MOST LEADS IN THE BEGINNING OF THE WEEK

• **Roughly 33% of all online leads are submitted on Monday and Tuesday.** During the weekday, lead submission is generally the highest between 11am-4pm; however, a second peak occurs after couples are home from work between 8-10pm. These patterns are consistent across all categories of wedding professionals.

• **69% of wedding professionals say they track where their leads come from,** allowing them to see how their clients find their business and what advertising and marketing channels are working best.

• According to event professionals, the average number of wedding leads a year can range from 80 to over 300 based on category type. Venues report that they receive the most leads; fitting, since couples also report that they research and compare more venues than other category.

📊 **AVG. # OF LEADS REPORTED PER YEAR BY WEDDING PROFESSIONALS**

	WEDDINGS	NON-WEDDING EVENTS
VENUES	371	359
OFFICIANTS	193	27
DJS	182	83
FLORISTS	124	57
PLANNERS	111	75
PHOTOGRAPHERS	81	40

Source: Wedding Professional End of Year Survey // 2014

MAJORITY OF PROS DO NOT MEET COUPLES' RESPONSE TIME EXPECTATIONS

• When it comes to responding to inquiries, 39% of professionals say they respond to an inquiry within 24 hours. However, **the majority take longer than a day to respond.**

Tip: If you're not able to respond within 24 hours, try sending your prospective client a quick message thanking them for their interest in your business and letting them know you will respond with more information specific to their questions soon. This small effort can go a long way with clients who expect a timely response, especially if you know you won't be in front of your computer for a few days.

"I am a wedding coordinator and every vendor in my book should always contact a couple within 24 hours or at least acknowledge your email or phone call if he/she is too busy. We are here for YOU."
- Days Remembered by ND, Wedding Planner, Florida

• **Over 60% of wedding professionals respond to an email inquiry with general information, pricing and availability.** However, around 10% don't respond to the questions asked by the couple but reply with alternative information or ask to set up a phone call - both which can be discouraging responses for potential clients.

INFORMATION VENDORS SENT IN RESPONSE TO ONLINE INQUIRIES
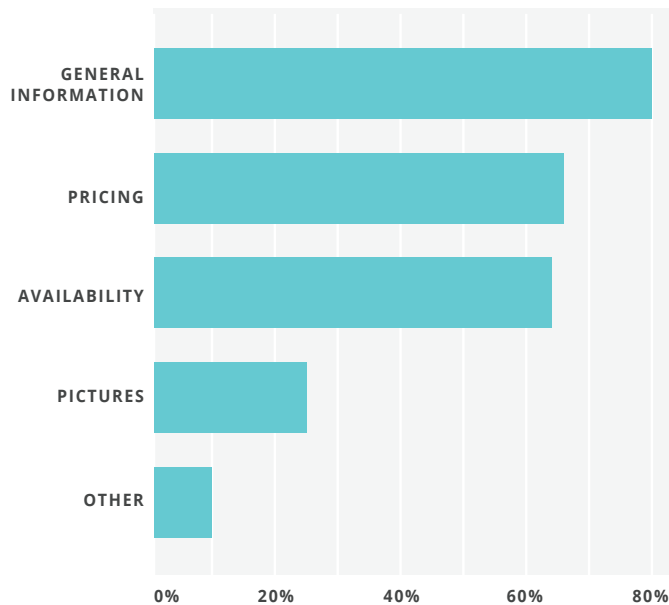
Source: WeddingWire Lead Submission Survey // 2014

A busy schedule shouldn't stop you from seeing your leads. **The WeddingWire Client Manager for Pros app** available on iOS and Android allows you to get notified of your new leads instantly and quickly respond to your clients from even while you are on-the-go.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR WEDDING PROFESSIONALS

Couples send out dozens of online inquiries during the planning process trying to find the perfect vendor team for their wedding day. While some couples may know a little (or a lot) about your business prior to submitting a lead, how you respond will determine the likelihood of booking. As a wedding professional you can maximize your online leads and outshine your competition by responding quickly, making it personal and adjusting to their preferences.

Key Take Aways:

1

A prompt reply results in a higher likelihood to book
One way to increase your likelihood of booking a client is to respond quickly – within 24 hours to be exact. The faster you respond, the more likely your prospective client is still thinking about your business and will continue the conversation. Think about the leg up you'd have if you've already had two conversations before your competition has even replied.

2

Make your clients feel important with a personalized response
Responding to an inquiry with a personalized response could be the difference between winning and losing a client. When a client reaches out to learn more about your business, they want to hear back from you and know that their business matters – they want to feel important. This doesn't mean that you can't have a template to help speed up the process, but make sure you take the time to customize it, answer specific questions and get to know the couple. Treat every lead like they're already your client and you'll quickly stand out.

3

Use your prospective clients' preferred method of contact
Anyone going through the planning process knows that there is a lot to do in a short amount of time; and a big portion of that time, is spent finding vendors. As a result, couples become expert multi-taskers and take every opportunity they have to do research and submit leads. Since they won't always have the time to schedule a phone call with you, make sure you're responding to inquiries in a way that's convenient for your prospective client.

"As a Sales Manager, understanding the importance of response time is invaluable. Typically, I get to work and immediately respond to emails. Thanks to WeddingWire, my focus has shifted to responding to new inquiries first, as response time is key! Couples are eager to hear from us - what an important reminder!"
- Kristyn K., Venue, Boston

For questions or to submit a future topic suggestion, please email
wedinsights@weddingwire.com.