

Be better presented at Wedding Shows

When you're organising a church presence at a wedding show, keep it as your goal that your stand will be at least as good as anyone else's. Here's how:

1. Choosing a team

Clergy are presentationally vital because research tells us the Vicar makes the difference to the welcome couples experience when they contact a church for a wedding. A good encounter with one of your Vicars will make people more comfortable to seek out their own. So hand pick your team.

2. Looking good is good

'Uniform' is appropriate, and impressions are everything. Ask your clergy to wear their dog collars and a black or plain clerical shirt. Only put your smiliest people on shift. Our research shows people are nervous about meeting their Vicar for the first time. Make sure your team looks inviting. To make sure your stand looks the part, you can borrow a professionally produced exhibition display from the Communications office at the Archbishops' Council. Contact Suzanne Gray for more information at suzanne.gray@churchofengland.org.

3. Making connections

For this event we need clergy who can make the first contact with passers-by. They should not hold back and wait for questions, but not be too arresting either. They shouldn't sit down and wait for people to come to them. Don't forget to provide them with name badges. Find the logo under the 'Resources' heading at <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/links/cofebade.html>.

4. Connect people with their special church

www.yourchurchwedding.org features the parish postcode-finding website www.achurchnearyou.com. So make sure you have internet and printing all worked out on the stand.

5. Giveaways

If there isn't an obvious reason for stopping at your stand, your team will find it more difficult to engage passers-by. Have something to grab their attention, so your clued-up clergy can use the few seconds it gives you to start conversations. This can be anything from a technological innovation (like the online Ceremony Planner: www.yourchurchwedding.org/planner), to something simple like giving out chocolate or loveheart sweets (you'll find that many companies will happily give you free samples if you ask).

Couples often ask what they need to do to organise a church wedding, so it's very important that you are able to fill them in on the details. The Weddings Project have produced a Wedding Show pack which contains all the information they need, gift-wrapped in ribbon to make sure it stands out from everything else that they will pick up at the show. Contact Suzanne Gray for more information at suzanne.gray@churchofengland.org.

6. Sundays

It is always more difficult to staff Sundays. You should fill this part of the rota first when you put together your team. Do not skimp on Sunday shifts because it's not organisationally convenient. Make sure you are as well staffed on this day as any other: Sunday mornings can be the busiest time. Always have clergy in reserve and on call in case of last minute changes.

7. Flowers

Don't skimp on flowers: order a pedestal display and put it centre stage. If you are up against the budget ask through your churches or get free flowers in exchange for giving out a business card: it is a good advertising opportunity for a local florist.

8. Keep it clean

Busy stands generate litter. A smart contribution to the effort is to remove coffee cups and rubbish, water the flowers and keep the literature tidy and well stocked. When you brief your clergy let them know the stand is a place to meet people considering a church wedding and not a place to store their coats and bags. There are cloakrooms for that...

9. Say thank you

Make sure your clergy take the initiative to make friends with co-exhibitors. Pop into the organisers' office and thank them personally at some point over the weekend and buy a thank you card afterwards. This is absolutely essential if you're taking advantage of free stand space, and advisable in every other case.

10. Prayer

People might ask for a prayer or a blessing. Feel free to oblige!

If you need some advice or more ideas, we can put you in touch with someone who has done this work before. Contact Suzanne Gray on suzanne.gray@churchofengland.org

[Listen to Suzanne's podcast on taking part in Weddings Shows](#)