

# BRIDAL BUYER

ISSUE 1 2020

## Closer look...

Meet Rembo Styling, Ivory & Co, Ronald Joyce, Cizzy Bridal & many more

## STYLE WATCH

HOT NEW COLOURS AND NEW SEASON SILHOUETTES

## WHITE GALLERY

Get set for the iconic global event

## Ethical fashion

Sustainable styling for your modern brides

## RETAIL FOCUS:

BOUTIQUE SECRETS, REAL SHOPPING & LEAD GENERATION

# Designs of the decade

TAKE AN EXCLUSIVE LOOK AT SOME OF THE GREATEST GOWNS, ACCESSORIES AND SHOES FROM THE PAST 10 YEARS

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VIEW THE FW20 COLLECTION

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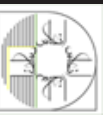


To make an appointment to view any of the collections please contact:  
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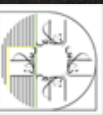


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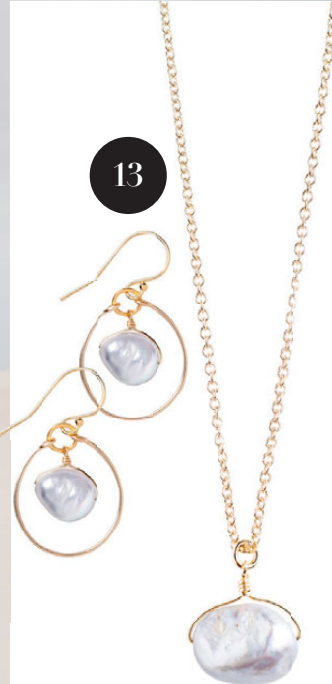
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There is so much to be excited about over the next 12 months. Of course, the main thing on my mind is London Bridal Fashion Week and White Gallery in March. Building on the success of the event over the last two years, this year the show will embrace the slogan 'In unity there is strength', and in doing so, will demonstrate its primary objective – to stage a world-leading fashion event that represents the full breadth of the bridal industry. Last year we saw the show reach new heights, with over 350 global brands and more buyers from more countries than ever before. This year, the boundaries will be pushed even further, with the greatest ever celebration of bridal fashion taking place in the capital. I, for one, simply cannot wait! In this issue of Bridal Buyer you'll get a sneak peek at what to expect at the shows, as well as some exclusive interviews with some of the names that you'll get to meet in March. We've also got a huge business focus - peer-to-peer advice, expert features on hot topics and some real life stories from brides, who discuss their dress shopping experiences. Everything you need to set up for a successful year ahead!

*Anca-Marie*



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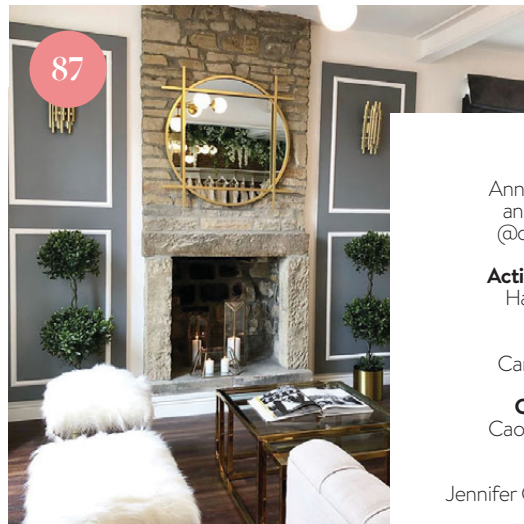
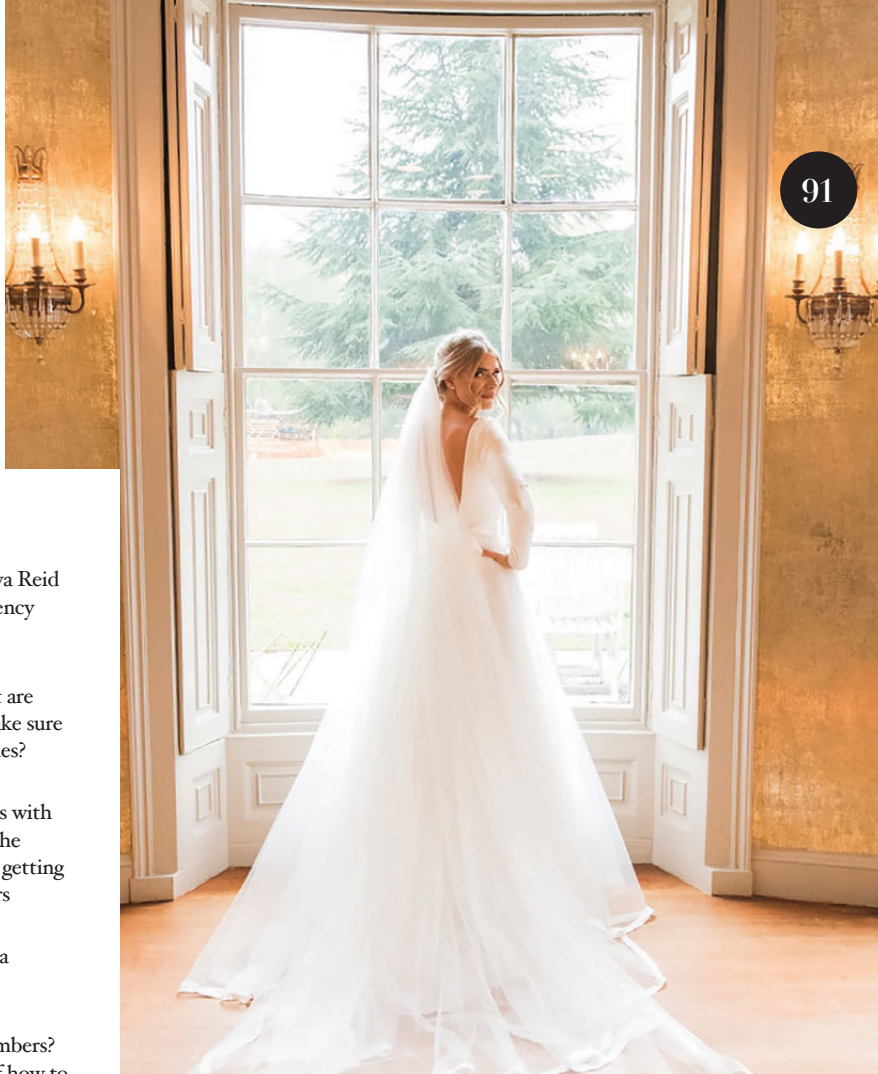
Think pink, think botanic - the dream combination

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# What's NEW



## *Sassi Holford*

Enamour, Sassi Holford's 2020 collection, was launched during an exclusive event at London-based venue, RSA House. The evening, which was attended by industry professionals and friends, featured a spectacular runway show, a host of other wedding suppliers and even a meet and greet with the designer herself to round up the night. Sassi's latest creations are feminine and bold, with every gown making a statement of effortless elegance. Standout features include keyhole backs, turtle necklines, French lace and crystal hand smocking, all handmade in England. ▶

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# What's NEW



## NEW BRIDAL BRAND ALERT: **BON BRIDÉ**

Founder and creative director of Bon Bridé is ex fashion buyer and product developer, Pippa Cooke. Having spent over 10 years immersed in the industry, buying for a number of retail giants, Pippa felt the time was right to adopt her fashion-forward aesthetic. The label creates understated yet striking dresses for women who dress for themselves. With feminist principles at its core, Bon Bridé does things differently, breaking from the norms of the modern wedding.

"I want the brand to offer alternative options and for each collection to evolve with a new generation of modern women. It is not "timeless" and it doesn't claim to create "classic" pieces. It's of the moment and it celebrates the women of this moment in time - the bride of now," says Pippa Cooke. [bonbride.com](http://bonbride.com)



## A TOUCH OF WANDERLUST

Established in 2013, Wanderlust Life offers understated jewellery with a minimalist edge, and now has a brand new bridal collection! Created by a strong all-female collective of 10, every piece is handcrafted in the brand's workshop and store in Devon. The new collection encapsulates timeless design, symbols of unity, balance and new beginnings.

## TRUE BRIDESMAIDS SPRING/ SUMMER 2020

The Spring/Summer 2020 collection from True Bridesmaids sees a move from lace towards an array of beaded designs, floaty skirt shapes, leg splits and more. Our three favourite designs, Fearne, Fifi and Fia are all simple yet elegant, and have been designed with every body shape in mind. This award-winning collection is a glimpse into the future of bridesmaids' designs.



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## MODERN ROMANCE

Whilst white or ivory are the traditional choices for brides, they are by no means the only options at Phillipa Lepley Couture. For those wanting to include a romantic shade of pink in their wedding look, Vienna Pale Fairytale offers something completely unique with its pink floral tulle overlay. Intricate pink, ivory and silver floral embroidery cascades down an exquisitely embellished tulle overlay, which is completed with a sheer scoop neck, cap sleeves and dramatic train.

## NEW APPOINTMENT

British brand Catherine Parry has appointed Billy Fitzsimons as Sales Agent for the UK and Ireland. The appointment follows the label's success at The Harrogate Bridal Show and comes at the end of another year of significant growth, despite challenging market conditions. Simon Ryan, one half of the husband and wife team behind Catherine Parry added, "Maria and I are delighted to welcome Billy to the team. He's one of the most well-known people in the bridal industry and one of the most popular, too – with a big smile, a warm heart and more than a little Irish charm – not to mention many years of experience. We're looking forward to working with Billy to continue to grow our retailer network in both the UK and the Republic of Ireland."



## TRISH PENG

*We caught up with renowned bridalwear designer, Trish Peng, following the launch of her reversible wedding dress...*

### **You have designed the world's first reversible wedding dress! Tell us more?**

Yes, I've just launched a new collection of reversible wedding dresses that can be worn in two different ways. The first, a stunning lace gown and the second, an elegant plain dress – meaning one can be worn for the ceremony and the other for the reception.

### **What was the idea behind this? What was the inspiration?**

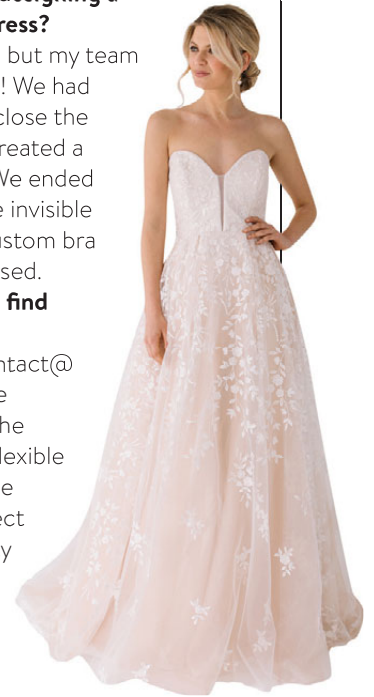
I've specialised in creating custom wedding dresses for many years now and the idea of a reversible gown was born when I had a bride who couldn't decide between a lace gown or a plain gown. During the appointment, a light bulb went off in my head!

### **How easy/difficult is designing a reversible wedding dress?**

It was difficult at first, but my team and I love a challenge! We had to figure out how to close the dress as no one has created a reversible bridal zip. We ended up designing a double invisible zipper along with a custom bra cup that can be reversed.

### **How can UK retailers find out more?**

Simply email us at [contact@trishpeng.com](mailto:contact@trishpeng.com) and we will send through all the information. We are flexible with minimums and we are even offering select stores the opportunity to design their own capsule collection for their boutique.



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Remembering  
the talented,  
inspiring designer

NICKI  
FLYNN

# FOR MY DEAR FRIEND NICKI...

*from Wendy Wallis*

I was very fortunate to know Nicki for 16 years, having met when I was a manager of a bridal store. A few years later, a change in my career would lead me to reach out to her for some assistance and, within two days, I had joined the team at True Bride. Nicki was an incredible mentor and developed not only my career but a team that would take the brand from strength to strength.

Nicki's working career began at Next as a merchandiser, with her playing an integral role in the very first Next Directory, however, it would be her next move to Bridal Fashions Ltd, where her bridal journey began. Working at one of the UK's largest bridal companies at the time, which included labels like Hilary Morgan and Rebecca Harte, the retail chain Brides International and later Berketex Brides, Nicki played an important role in the growth of this company, becoming one of the youngest female directors. Nicki's dynamic attitude to business and design, along with a keen commercial eye, enabled her to oversee and continuously produce balanced bridal collections for multiple labels. She was also instrumental in introducing designer brands to Berketex during the 90s, including well-known names such as Helen Marina, Tracey Connop, Ave Maria, Ian Stuart International

*Nicki was well  
respected and  
loved. The team she  
so lovingly built are  
as dedicated as  
ever to ensuring  
her legacy lives on*

and Elizabeth Emanuel, among others.

On leaving Bridal Fashions, Nicki started her own consulting business, providing invaluable advice to designers to help them grow and expand within the industry. Soon after, in 2002, she worked with Design Portfolio and launched Angel Bride, but

fearless and determined as ever, she soon found it was time to go at it alone.

True Bride was launched in 2005, and with Nicki's years of experience, unparalleled eye for design and undisputed talent, it was destined for success. The brand has gone from strength to strength and she would have been so proud to know that the label she launched and the family she has formed over the years were honoured in September

to win Best Bridesmaid Manufacturer at the 2019 Bridal Buyers Awards. A testament to what hard work, determination, and love can achieve.

Nicki was a true inspiration; her dedication could never be questioned, her attitude unflinching, her sheer determination evident to all. Balanced with kindness, generosity and a genuine understanding of people, Nicki was well respected and loved. The team she so lovingly built and developed are as dedicated as ever to ensuring her legacy lives on. We know she wouldn't want or expect anything less. As a dear friend to myself and many others. It is without a doubt she will be greatly missed.■



# MARK ZUNINO



## MZ

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**Persephone**  
by Alan Hannah

"One of my favourite dresses from the last decade was Persephone. I had the fabric specially designed in France and the idea was to create a spectacular spray of golden leaves to feature as a finale dress, with my theme of autumn colours, for the White Gallery catwalk in 2017. I was totally in love with the resulting fabric and decided to make the dress a simple silhouette with a split skirt and train. The dress made a big impact when it was featured at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 2017, and finally my sister-in-law looked amazing wearing it to her Highland wedding only last month."

**Marguerite Hannah**



**David Fielden's Wallis Simpson dress**

"Our favourite design is style 4626, which is also known as the Wallis Simpson, and is in our Best Seller Collection from six years ago. It's one of our most popular styles because it's very classic in its shape. It is made with a beautiful silk satin, a bias-cut skirt and a silk satin top with ruching in the front, which forms a beautiful rose around the neckline. The back has a slit with a button on the top to make brides feel both sexy and elegant."

**David Fielden**



**Eliza Jane Howell's Sibella dress**

"We nominate the Sibella dress as our favourite style. It is from our 2015 Debutante Collection and is still one of our best-sellers today. The beading on the dress is the most complex hand-beading that we had ever embarked on, as it is positioned to clinch in the waist to give brides the most perfect hourglass figure. In the same year, we also debuted Eliza Jane Howell in the USA, and the Sibella dress was a huge hit there as well."

**Gill Harvey**



**Annabelle**  
by Elbeth Gillis

"The Annabelle gown is one of my favourites from the past 10 years. This silk gown with plunging v-neckline is a bestseller and epitomises the general style of our brand; classic and luxurious gowns with a modern twist. We launched the Annabelle gown in 2016 and the dress is still going strong. Annabelle is versatile and extremely flattering, as it suits any body shape! It literally is the dress that gives brides exactly what they want."

**Elbeth Gillis**

# DESIGNS OF THE DECADE

We talk to some of the best-known names in the industry to find out which of their creations has been a favourite over the past 10 years...

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**Susanna by Ellis**

"This is a modern classic. From our 2017 collection, the Mikado off-the-shoulder ballgown is proof that simplicity is the ultimate sophistication. Our Susanna dress represents the shift in bridal style from ethereal, lace adorned dresses to timeless, clean-cut styles and the revival of the classic Ellis signature. Quintessentially British, Susanna embodies the modern bride. Strong, eye-catching and unforgettable, it is a favourite amongst brides – making every bride feel like the best version of herself."

**James Ellis**



**Bea by Georgia Bridal, part of the LJ Group**

"We have chosen our beautiful Bea gown because she marks the start of a new era for the LJ Group. Bea is part of Georgia Bridal, and her beautiful polka dot cuffs, sheer chiffon sleeves and low square back have made her a best-selling gown. All our elegant, seductive dresses offer our brides the chance to mix high-end fashion with traditional fabrics to give a fresh, modern look." **Helen Lord**



**Fiji by Eddy K**

"Fiji is a gown that completely revolutionised Eddy K, not only for still being one of our biggest sellers all over the world, but also for being the introduction of the Dreams Collection back in 2016, bringing more modern and daring designs than what Eddy K was used to. With a softer lace, a jaw-dropping train and a stunning matching veil, Fiji is still captivating brides for all kinds of weddings. From beaches to ballrooms, Fiji is the perfect fit for a modern bride." **Eddy K**



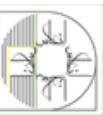
**Enzoani's Dakota**

"Dakota has been one of the most beloved styles in Enzoani history. Both timeless and contemporary, this dress features a universally flattering, intricate tulle and lace overlay in an ultra-chic mermaid silhouette. With exquisitely scalloped hem lace and a soft strapless neckline, the full-length gown is fit for any bridal dreamscape, from a fairy-tale garden celebration to a destination wedding. Over the years, Dakota has also graced the red carpet, being worn by Paula Abdul at the American Music Awards." **Enzoani**



**Sylvie by Debbie Carlisle**

"I've chosen Sylvie as my design of the decade because it's one of my personal favourites and has really stood the test of time – it is still selling well today, almost five years after I first created it. It embodies my natural ethereal handcrafted style, as well as my love for creating effortlessly beautiful pieces that can be worn in lots of different ways." **Debbie Carlisle** ▶





*Mimi by Rachel Simpson*

"Mimi is the last style that remains from the very first Rachel Simpson collection, so holds a very sentimental place in my heart. It's one of the very first designs I drew when I decided to go it alone and launch the brand. Its elegant, understated design has really stood the test of time. It contains all the elements of my signature style and you can see many current styles which have grown from it." **Rachel Simpson**



*House of Nicholas Style 2222*

"This was originally our style No. 1814, in Mikado, and four years later was re-launched in Brocade, as style 2222. It was our first T-length gown, one of just four in the collection, which has now grown to 48! A style that suits all shapes and sizes, from a size 8 to a size 30, it is also available in full length, with or without a train. The first one ordered was from just a little sketch in a Harrogate preview article. Our customer, Mrs. Sweeney, wanted it there and then!" **House of Nicholas**



*M714 from Lo'Adoro by Rachel Allan*

"M714 was not only our best-selling sample, but also went on to be an immediate favourite with brides. Its showstopping fabrics are instantly recognisable and have been a welcomed and dramatic addition to the lace or Mikado gowns we have been selling so well. Everyone still gets a little giddy around the sheer glitz and impact this gown has to offer. It is a fantasy-inspired glitter tulle wedding dress with a v-shaped neckline and fully crystallised straps. The gown finishes with a fully box pleated skirt, covered button closure, and a chapel length train." **James McKenna**



*Style BB14902 from Special Day*

"Our style BB14902 from our Plus Size Collection is almost six years old now. We have sold so many of this dress over the years, that we have nearly lost count. So many of our customers have sold this over and over again. It has brought so much business to us, and made so much money for our customers." **Bernard Kenna**



*Laguna by Bianco Evento,*

"Laguna has been one of our best-sellers since its launch in 2017. The dress – made from high-quality Mikado – has a tight bodice with a thick belt, which defines the waist. To make it modern and seductive, our designers added a transparent cut out at the top of the corset. Year-by-year, we have developed this design according to bridal trends, and that's why we are also able to introduce three new designs in the 2020 collection that have been inspired by Laguna." **Bianco Evento** ■





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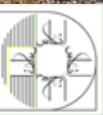
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# Trends

SUSTAINABLE FASHION • NEW WAYS WITH COLOUR • EXCLUSIVE DESIGNER INTERVIEWS & MORE

## 2020 is here...

The new decade is upon us, and it's certainly a time of celebration and reflection. Modern brides have different needs to those who shopped for their gowns 10 years ago, so it is a good idea to keep up-to-date with the latest trends and shopping styles to make sure their needs are met. We take an in-depth look at sustainable bridalwear (such as the design pictured here by Sanyukta Shrestha) and check out the latest colour trends for those who don't want to wear pure white. We also discuss what contemporary ladies are looking for with Cizzy Bridal and take a peek at the latest gowns from Ronald Joyce. ■



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Indian designer Anita Dongre considers sustainability in everything she creates, and strives to ensure her dresses have a minimal environmental impact







**T**he environment is on everybody's lips and couples are beginning to seek new ways to make their weddings more eco-friendly. As consumers question the impact their decisions have on the planet, the bridal sector is meeting demand with inspiring alternatives for conscious brides and grooms.

From seasonal catering to Fairtrade rings, sustainable ceremonies are big business. Yet the leading eco wedding trend is the sustainable gown and there are plenty of diverse labels offering collections that are as beautiful as they are ethical.

"The textile industry is the second largest polluting sector in the world and therefore sustainability is the need of the hour," explains iconic Indian fashion designer Anita Dongre. Sustainable bridalwear is produced with environmental, social, and economic issues in mind, simultaneously protecting the planet and its people.

With a new tribe of eco-conscious brides arising, there's never been a better time to think about your boutique's stock, because failing to provide for mindful buyers could see you lose out. "Wedding day plans say so much about a person and their values," explains Tamsin Blanchard, special events curator at Fashion Revolution, an organisation working to alter the way our clothes are sourced, produced and consumed. "Increasingly, couples want a wedding that has as minimal an impact on the planet as possible." ▶

# SUSTAINING THE SECTOR

As consumers begin to question the origins and impact of their purchases, Jennifer Grimble explores why the time for you to embrace sustainable bridalwear is now







According to Fashion Revolution, modern couples want their wedding days - and wedding attire - to be ethically sourced and as sustainable as possible.



Leila Hafzi is committed to an ethical production cycle - empowering women in developing countries and paying them fair wages

Indiebride uses a variety of ethically sourced organic materials in its wedding attire



LAUREN HENSON PHOTOGRAPHY



Mother of Pearl designs dresses using 100% organic silk with a transparent supply chain



WED's new collection of separates have been designed to be worn again and again



Sanyukta Shrestha is a pioneer of ethical bridalwear in the UK; her gowns are elegant and ultra chic







To achieve this, brides are turning to designers that produce stunning gowns using organic and deadstock materials, including peace silk, which is made without harming the moth. While The House of Anita Dongre sources recycled and natural fibres for its production, British label Mother of Pearl chooses 100% organic silk with a transparent supply chain.

Founded in 2002, the label also places social responsibility, animal welfare and the environment at the forefront of its ethos. "There's no handbook on how to make a brand sustainable," says Amy Powney, the firm's creative director. "But I wanted to know exactly where my fabric was coming from, who was making it, and any social effects along the way."

In order to do so, Amy researched extensively to find the right suppliers and farmers, who shared her passion for the planet and its inhabitants. The label's latest collection, Pearly Whites, is made using socially responsible materials and features an organic ivory silk satin gown with pearl studded sleeves and a bridal shirt with ruffle detailed shoulders and faux pearl cuffs.

Indiebride London is another brand taking pride in producing beautiful, handmade dresses with minimal environmental impact, having launched a new collection of sustainable gowns in November 2019. "When you choose Indiebride London, you work closely with the person making the dresses," owner Miina Laitsaari explains.

Each piece is handcrafted and embellished in the label's London studio, using the highest quality laces and silks. "We also use fabric off-cuts that would usually be thrown away to produce our sashes, veils and headpieces," she says. "We donate everything we can't use to design students or organisations."

Its collection features detailed dresses that celebrate ecology through high quality materials such as organic cotton, lace and ramie. "When designing our collections, we concentrate on green materials," says Miina. "We visit fabric fairs and do countless hours of research, but our biggest inspiration is our customers. We listen and try to incorporate their requests into our designs."

Yet sustainability isn't always about material. Aiming to inspire the industry into a global shift, Leila Hafzi is considered the first high-end, eco-conscious fashion brand to empower women in developing countries. "We believe in continuity as a key factor in achieving an ethical production cycle," explains Leila. "Since the beginning, we've been working to empower women through employment and fair wages to create a long-

term ripple effect."

The brand has also been working with the same team in Nepal for more than 14 years. "This makes the constant search for new techniques and solutions to environmental issues an exciting journey." Mother of Pearl is also dedicated to supporting females. "Many women in cheap supply chains don't get paid the living wage, or have maternity rights," Amy explains. "It seemed wrong for me to create dresses that could cause another woman to suffer, which is why I launched the Pearly Whites line."

Born in Nepal, Sanyukta Shrestha is considered a pioneer of eco-friendly wedding attire. "A bridal gown is the most important and memorable piece a woman will wear in her life," Sanyukta explains. "Brides can rest assured that by wearing a Sanyukta Shrestha gown, they also support Fairtrade, women's equality and an ethical workforce." Each of the label's gowns is also made from sustainable fibres that are renewable, biodegradable and carbon neutral, meaning they can be produced without damaging the environment.

Organic materials and a Fairtrade approach are just some of the ways that a brand can do its bit. The House of Anita Dongre, for example, a member of the Sustainable Apparel Coalition, runs a completely green headquarters, and uses only 100% compostable materials in its packaging. Yet many believe that the most sustainable option is a dress that can be worn again.

Giving gowns another purpose could be the key to sustaining the sector and

the likes of Vivienne Westwood and Charlie Brear are committed to creating pieces that can be worn again, eliminating the single-use nature of bridalwear.

Wedding and eveningwear brand WED is leading by example and will be launching a new collection of separates in 2020, each designed to be worn beyond the big day. "We challenge the notion that a wedding dress is a one-day occasion piece," says co-founder Amy Trinh. "We want to align the industry with the modern social climate, creating bridalwear that can go straight into the wardrobe to be worn again."

So, with plenty of inspiring collections available, providing your brides with ethical options has never been easier! Doing so will allow your boutique to stand out from the crowd, attracting customers with a social or environmental conscience. Offering eco attire is also a fantastic marketing tool, highlighting your mindful business approach and inspiring industry-wide change that could positively alter the future of the bridal sector. ■

*As consumers question the impact their decisions have on the planet, it's more important than ever to offer ethical alternatives*







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Hermione de Paula

# ALL ABOUT COLOUR

Bright and colourful dresses are set to be even more popular in the new season. We take a look at the brands that are leading the way...

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**T**he designers at the autumn exhibitions presented the very best pieces to the bridal community, promising retailers and their brides plenty to look forward to in the coming year. As expected, we saw a dazzling selection of gowns with stunning silhouettes, innovative design and intricate detail in abundance. And the one trend that really made an impact? The addition of brilliant colour.

While colourful gowns were once reserved for alternative brides, now these dresses are a contemporary statement for fashionable women – and as such, the designers have stepped up their game with an impressive choice of styles, covering everything from subtle pastel shades to bold, coloured embroidery.

What started as a small shift from ivory to champagne has continued to evolve, with a myriad of beautifully coloured gowns now available. “Coloured wedding dresses are definitely the big news this season,” agrees Jenn. Y of J’Adore Bridal Design. “While ivory wedding dresses remain the classic, our latest gowns offer a new twist, with mixed colours such as blush, beige and purple, too.”

Pastel shades, and in particular the trend for pink wedding dresses, look set to dominate 2020 as a spectrum of blush and soft-hued gowns have been making an appearance over the past few seasons.

JLM’s Hayley Paige seems to have set the precedence for flirty pink gowns with dreamy options consistently available in previous collections. Fairytale designs from Diane Legrand, Wtoo by Watters, Martin Thornburg and Ronald Joyce, among others, have also been satisfying buyers looking for styles to fill the sought-after princess theme.

The latest collections from Rachel Allan and Mary’s Bridal have similarly ticked the right boxes with classic silhouettes featuring soft pastel tones and fresh detailing. Internationally famed designer Claire Pettibone’s spring collection put the spotlight on ethereal romance – with delicate lace gowns adorned with colourful appliqués.

“Like other brands, we’ve also incorporated more colour into our Charlotte Balbier collections over the past seasons,” adds the LJ Group’s Creative Director, Helen Lord. “The Charlotte Balbier signature style has always been about offering brides the opportunity to let ▶





their personalities shine. Combining pastel hues with unique fabrics has ensured our gowns stand out and it means we can offer an alternative to the classic ivory.”

Alden Misolas of Modeca also recognises the importance of offering greater variety through alternatively coloured gowns. “We added lots of coloured flower lace into our 2020 Le Papillon by Modeca collection” explains the label’s Head of Design. “While we do still offer the option to have everything in ivory if preferred, colourful florals are what’s really new for us.”

It seems that in addition to the much-loved classic gowns, retailers should consider pieces that will turn heads and create impact in store. And of course, for the more daring, there are plenty of even bolder choices from the designers who are renowned for pushing the bridal boundaries yet further still.

Notably, Savin London, Hermione de Paula and Bowen Dryden have all fully embraced the colourful trend over previous seasons, offering brides exquisitely detailed, one-of-a-kind pieces. Across these cutting-edge collections, we’ve seen a plethora of shades, with intricately handcrafted pieces embellished with personalised embroidery, floral artwork and innovative fabrications.

“At Bowen Dryden, we’ve become known for our coloured wedding attire,” explains the label’s designer, Sharon. “Every one of our couture gowns is hand embroidered, with artwork that’s individually drawn and painted, then interpreted in silk threads, beads and crystals. We’re proud that our gowns really are a true work of art, and they have always been well received by our stockists.”

With the designers paving the way for even more individualisation, this creative trend doesn’t appear to be one that will fade any time soon – and it’s not just the bride who will benefit from its appearance.

As modern couples look for more ways to inject their personalities into their wedding day, it’s important that retailers are on top of the style game. With social media dominating the way that brides now shop, variety and impact are certainly key to capturing a bride’s heart.

And luckily, with so many different options available across this colourful trend, it’s easy for anyone to work with, no matter the target customer. Incorporated into a range of cuts and silhouettes, and covering everything from bold and dramatic to subtle and elegant, you’ll definitely be spoilt for choice when deciding what to stock in the coming year. ■



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The incredible  
WA355 with its  
celestial detailing  
was a favourite  
at Harrogate



# CIZZY BRIDAL

We catch up with international brand coordinator Breanne Iredell  
at Cizzy Bridal to find out more about the Australian label

WORDS SOPHIE VENING

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Cizzy Bridal Australia is a family-owned fashion business that began in 2009. Relatively new to the bridal industry, the brand is growing in strength and popularity among UK brides, and it's not difficult to see why. With five collections, each offering something unique and different, there's something for every bride.

"We have five collections, each one offering a unique aesthetic and wide appeal," explains the company's international brand coordinator Breanne Iredell. Cizzy Bridal is a classic range showcasing timeless designs for the elegant bride, while Zavana Bridal was created for the extravagant bride who loves intricate detailing and embellishments. White April is inspired by the modern bohemian bride using modern laces and fashion-forward designs. "Our White April gown WA355 from the Wild Flower collection proved to be extremely popular at the recent Harrogate Bridal Show. Everyone loved the whimsical delicate nature of the material and the unique and flattering silhouette," says Breanne. Wedding Societe appeals to the feminine and free-spirited bride, while the brand's most recent range, Zavana Couture, is designed for the opulent bride who loves to command attention. "Using exquisite laces from Holland, anyone wearing a Zavana Couture dress is sure to turn heads on their special day," promises Breanne.

Cizzy Bridal first started selling its dresses in the UK in 2017 and now has 24+ stores in Britain that represent one or more of its labels. So, why did the company branch out in the UK? "London is the fashion capital of the world," says Breanne. "It also hosts one of the most spectacular bridal fashion shows in the world – London Bridal Fashion Week. We couldn't pass up the opportunity to be a part of such a wonderful event."

Interestingly, even though Breanne recognises a difference between the Australian and UK markets, the company sells exactly the same collections in both



ZC332 (left) is a showstopping option for modern brides, while WA6096 (right) delivers whimsical charm



countries. "We love how the UK embraces the current trends, while still maintaining its loyalty to classic and traditional bridal styles – a splash of modern with a touch of classic. Australia in comparison keeps up with the trends much faster," says Breanne. "It's why we've created collections which all offer different aesthetics and styles to accommodate all of our clients' needs."

The brand will be showcasing all five of its latest collections at London Bridal Fashion Week in March 2020. "It gives us an opportunity to see our beautiful clients and show them our latest designs," says

Breanne. "We also attend The Harrogate Bridal Show each year in September."

So whether you already stock the brand, or you are looking for new designers to sell in your store, make sure you drop by the Cizzy Bridal stand. "Each year we get excited about having a chance to reconnect with our clients in the beautiful setting and atmosphere of LBFW. It's important to us that our clients have the opportunity to see our current collections and we get excited to meet

new stockists and develop new lasting relationships," explains Breanne.

Asked what type of stockist the brand is looking for, Breanne replies: "If you have a great work ethic and a professional attitude, we will love working with you," she says. "We offer exclusivity to our stockists, so have a look to see which stores are in your area and if they stock our labels. You can find this information on our website at [www.cizzybridalaustralia.com](http://www.cizzybridalaustralia.com)."

Cizzy Bridal also prides itself on helping out its stockists as much as possible. "We offer trunk shows twice a year for all our new collections, which our clients and UK brides love and benefit from tremendously," says Breanne. "We also offer our stockists marketing support and keep them up-to-date with everything that's happening with Cizzy Bridal Australia in our monthly newsletter."

And, if you're concerned about the time difference, you needn't be: "We have strong relationships with all our clients across the globe including domestic and international. Despite the time difference, we manage to communicate effectively with all our UK clients. Building and maintaining a strong working relationship with our lovely stockists is very important to us," says Breanne. ■

*"Building and maintaining a strong working relationship with all our lovely stockists is very important to us"*



Both ZB349 (left) and ZB292 (right) from Zavana Bridal promise to turn heads in store



# THE GOWN GALLERY

Take a closer look at the new looks in Cizzy Bridal's latest collections

Deep V-neck styles are the perfect choice for brides that want to look and feel sexy. The pretty 3D flowers add a soft and feminine touch to the WA297.

Lace, glorious lace! The boho style of the WA6125 is so pretty, and the back detail adds glamour and sex appeal. Ideal for beach or summer weddings.

The ultra-chic ZB311 is form hugging and oh so dreamy. This design is both elegant and alluring, perfect for a traditional bride that wants something a little daring.

No princess bride will be able to resist the WA6110. The off-the-shoulder look is set to be a big hit once again in 2020, and we love the layers in this design.

This glorious pattern will delight boho brides who want something ultra pretty. Beading adds an extra level of detail to the ZC348, and the thin spaghetti straps are the look of the season!





The WA296 features on-trend drop shoulders. The floral detail adds an almost ethereal quality to the elegant gown.



The almost geometric pattern on the WA335 gives this gown a really unique finish. Perfect for brides that want to look cool and edgy.



Skimming the body in all the right places, with lace and beading adding all over interest. The ZC317 is a real showstopper.



Long puff sleeves and glamorous lines of sparkle. The ZB349 is something that fashion-forward brides will fall in love with – 70s style for the modern lady.

ZB286 features cape sleeves and a gorgeous array of 3D flowers. It's a simply stunning dress that would turn heads on the red carpet, let alone down the aisle.





# 5 GOWNS

Veni Infantino, the creative talent behind Ronald Joyce, discusses her favourite styles from the Spring 2020 collection

## DALILA Style 69502

### What are the details?

Dalila is our heavy organza and appliquéd tulle ballgown.

### What inspired the dress?

The idea behind this gown was something romantic and delicate. The tulle addition to the bodice gives the illusion that it is a jacket over a plain and simple ballgown. The delicate sleeves sit just off the shoulder and there are 3D flowers and light beading.







**DAFNE,**  
*Style 69501*

**What are the details?**

This simple Mikado gown with lace and appliqué detailing is set to be a bestseller from our new Spring 2020 collection, which is available now in stores.

**What inspired the dress?**

The neckline was partly inspired by Princess Eugenie's wedding gown, but the design is more reminiscent of Charlotte Princess of Monaco's wedding dress. We are seeing our brides opt more for these plain designs at present, rather than fuller lace styles.



**DEVOTA**  
*Style 69527*

**What are the details?**

It is a lace, tulle and chiffon gown featuring a plunging illusion neckline, modesty bodice and overskirt to give the look volume – or to change the look from day to night. The lace detailing features leaves and vines and is a perfect choice for outdoor and forest themed weddings. Simply stunning!

**What inspired the dress?**

This gown was designed with LA based artist Amanda Oleander for her fairytale wedding in California earlier this year. I loved it so much that it has been produced for the new collection. ▶





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### WILLOW Style 18407

**What are the details?**

Again, seeing the shift from lace to plain styles, I designed Willow in chiffon and soft satin. It has a delicate off-the-shoulder neckline tied with graceful little bows. The gown has some slight volume and is finished off with a beaded belt sitting low on the waist.

**What inspired the dress?**

Well, I think the bride who will wear it. I think this would suit relaxed brides with a slight boho theme, perfect for an English summer wedding with bouquets of pretty cornflowers and dahlias.



### WYOMIA Style 18415

**What are the details?**

Our crepe fit and flare gown with halter neckline is a bit of a nod to Meghan Markle's evening gown.

**What inspired the dress?**

I think her look has been the inspiration behind the more minimalist gowns we are seeing. She looked so classic and beautiful she didn't need all the layers and sparkle. I've added beading to the neckline of this gown, meaning there is no need for brides to worry about a necklace. A fabulous beaded cuff and simple earrings would complete the look. I love that this gown feels very Hollywood and wouldn't be out of place on the red carpet! ■





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# BEYOND THE STARS

We take a look at the iconic Pronovias and explore the label's dynamic new collections for 2020



**I**t's no surprise to see that the latest collection from Pronovias - Beyond the Stars - is elegant and utterly alluring. Brides in the UK truly covet gowns created by the fashion house; it has reached iconic status. The company started out nearly a century ago in 1922 as a small, yet high-end, family business. Fast forward to the present day, and after its acquisition by BC Partners in 2017, the Pronovias Group is a much-loved global company, which consists of a portfolio of leading luxury bridal brands including Pronovias, St Patrick, White One, Nicole, and LadyBird.

As well as its flagship store in the heart of London's New Bond Street, Pronovias works with some of the best retailers across the UK - and has a fantastic working relationship with all of its boutiques. Maybe this is down to its customer promise to provide brides with the perfect fit, or maybe it is because the fashion house strives to be as inclusive, diverse and empowering as possible. Its body-neutral clause welcomes all shapes, ages and sizes so that all brides can find their dream dress.

For 2020, a diverse range of new styles has been created, all designed to make women feel the best they possibly can. We take





a closer look at Beyond the Stars for Atelier Pronovias, Pronovias and The Party Edit.

## ATELIER PRONOVIAS

The Atelier Pronovias Collection is the epitome of sophistication; it's known and loved for its use of high quality, unusual and unique materials, coupled with the finest craftsmanship and sublime cuts. The label has always taken design inspiration from the art world, and in particular the grand masters. For 2020, the glorious dresses in the Beyond The Stars collection nod to the brilliance on display at the Museum of Marc Chagall in Nice. Famous for his fantastical paintings of love and joy, Chagall is renowned for celebrating the blissfulness of brides, and portraying their beautiful silhouettes floating in harmonious dreamscapes, surrounded by flowers, birds, and glowing stars.

For the new collection, the Pronovias Design Team re-interpreted Chagall's universe in a unique way, adorning the dresses with stunning beadwork that pushed the skills of the 60 passionate artisans working at the Pronovias Atelier. The result: an array of stars, glowing moons and lovebirds artfully beaded onto the gowns. "There are more than 150 new dresses in this collection, and each one has a unique finish," says the Pronovias Design Team. "We think UK brides will fall in love with the Lxion dress which features little puffy sleeves and a draped heart neckline in magnificent Mikado."

With the desire to create bridal dresses that flatter and celebrate the female form, the Design Team tailored impeccably glamorous silhouettes, crafting them with new materials, such as Crepe Couture, embellished mesh, and handcrafted laces from France. This innovative collection was created with an improved fit for comfort and confidence, plus it is featherlight with a streamlined construction, made for moving with elegance - which is, of course, reminiscent of the dreamy brides in Marc Chagall's masterpieces.

## PRONOVIAS

Still on the dreamy theme, the Pronovias 2020 collection has re-interpreted the house's Star Dresses, transforming them into modern, glamorous designs for today's stylish brides. These gowns have been updated with lighter, more sophisticated fabrics, as well as delicate embroideries. What's more, they feature a modernised construction with precise cuts and lines.



For example, the mermaid silhouette, core to the Pronovias DNA, has been enhanced with refined, semi-illusion laces and a myriad of other stylish design elements. Special care was given to providing a flattering fit, which includes inner shapewear that inspires body confidence.

The classic Pronovias Crepe is celebrated in a range of modern cuts, from sexy to minimalist, designed with eye-catching, fashionable details. Gowns crafted from the beloved Mikado fabric have received a makeover with detachable accessories that transform these timeless classics into high-fashion statement pieces.

In addition to these designs, Pronovias will be introducing three new style chapters for 2020: The Unconventional Collection of short bridal dresses; the Mix & Dream

collection of mix and match tops and skirts; and the Black Carat Collection for brides wishing to celebrate their special day in glamorous noir tones. The Design Team reveals: "We wanted to create a range of black dresses as we know that not all brides want to wear white! This is a dramatic yet elegant colour, and the dresses feature princess, ballgown and mermaid silhouettes, as well as quality materials, for a really sophisticated look."

## THE PARTY EDIT

The Party Edit is Pronovias' completely new take on occasion wear; it is a combination of the fashion house's iconic elegance and impeccable fit, together with the latest trends. The collection introduces eight trend-led families, each offering a wide variety of chic looks for any occasion, day or night. Think jumpsuits with bell-bottoms, pencil dresses with puffed sleeves and fiery gowns with generous drapery.

We love the simple, yet chic looks in a range of versatile colours, as well as the elegant yet modern ruffled dresses and the perfectly cut suits. For brides that want some added glitz, there is a contemporary selection of both metallic and sparkling gowns. Finally, if you want to add some lace to your range, the collection features some of the most exquisite, unique laces giving a new and updated feel.

To complete The Party Edit, Pronovias has introduced a fully re-imagined collection of stylish accessories, including headpieces, shoes made in Italy, and belts designed to complete the look - the whole outfit is taken care of!

**Find out more at [pronovias.com](http://pronovias.com)**





*Semida  
Sposa*

**LBFW** LONDON  
BRIDAL  
FASHION  
WEEK 2020

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Email: [semida.ekaterinadanko@mail.ru](mailto:semida.ekaterinadanko@mail.ru) or [vasilevna.alla@bk.ru](mailto:vasilevna.alla@bk.ru)

آموزشگاه انعکاس منبع جدیدترین اطلاعات، مقالات و دوره‌های آموزشی طراحی لباس و مدشناسی

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# Events

THE ICONIC WHITE GALLERY • MEET REMBO STYLING • IVORY AND CO • TOP TEN LBFW & MORE



## Season of style

*One of the most iconic events on the calendar will soon be upon us.*

*White Gallery is set to turn heads in all the right ways. This year sees some of the biggest and brightest names in fashion gather to display their latest collections – and you don't want to miss out! We catch up with two regular exhibitors, Ivory & Co and Rembo Styling, who give us a sneak peek at what they are working on for the show in March. We also run through the very best reasons to visit LBFW in spring... it is a show not to be missed and we really can't wait! See you there. ■*

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WHITE  
GALLERY  
2020  
22-24 MARCH,  
EXCEL  
LONDON.

# WHITE GALLERY 2020

Showcasing the world's most talented bridal fashion designers,  
and the inspiration behind their forward-thinking collections...

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**W**hite Gallery will return in March for its 11th year, uniting an exclusive edit of bridal, occasion and accessory designers with retailers and press from around the world.

The line-up will be comprised of some of the most renowned names in the luxury bridal market.

Cassandra Denman, Head of Bridal (London) says: "White Gallery designers are extremely unique. It's not just about price point – it's the fabrics, craftsmanship and expertise that goes into each and every dress. At the heart of every collection shown in White Gallery, there is a story – in partnership with our designers, we will use our extensive reach to communicate these stories to the widest possible audience.

"We are incredibly proud of White Gallery's heritage – over the past decade we have built an event that is known and loved by the international bridal community. In 2020 we will go even further to engage with a wide range of fashion press, bloggers and influencers, with the primary purpose of increasing awareness and recognition for the premium, bespoke, artisan bridal fashion products that our designers create."

#### ON LOCATION

White Gallery moved to its new home in ExCeL London in 2018, to co-locate with world-leading bridal fashion event, London Bridal Fashion Week. The move was made in response to market research, which showed a clear shift in buyer behaviour.

Denman adds, "Today's brides don't fall neatly into 'budget' or 'luxury' – they have access to more knowledge and options than ever before, and they're

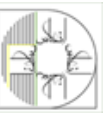
choosing how and where to allocate their spend. Over the last few years we've seen more and more retailers diversify their offering to cater for every bride that walks through their door, regardless of budget. Co-locating White Gallery with LBFW is about offering retailers choice and convenience, so they can make the best buying decisions for their boutique. For the designers, it offers a platform to meet a diverse range of buyers from all over the world, opening up new conversations and opportunities.

"For White Gallery 2020, our focus is on creating a showroom that is harmonious with the premium, artisanal products shown within it. We'll be debuting an entirely new concept, with emphasis on creating a calm, luxurious and, above all, beautiful trading environment. All the while, giving visitors the choice and convenience of being at an industry-leading bridal fashion event, in one of the most exciting cities in the world."

#### ON DISPLAY

There are some amazing names taking part in the show this year – from the best of British including Catherine Deane, Alan Hannah, Ivory & Co, Savannah Miller and Motee Maids, to European labels including Marylise and Rembo Styling, Theia from the USA, Elbeth Gillis and Molteno Creations from South Africa and many more from across the globe.

In addition, White Gallery will run a full Fashion Show programme alongside the exhibition, featuring a selection of the finest UK and international labels. This is the perfect opportunity to spot the latest trends and make the best buying decisions for your business. A full list of participating brands can be found on the White Gallery website.▶







**OPENING TIMES**

**SUNDAY 22 MARCH**  
– 9.30am – 6.30pm  
**MONDAY 23 MARCH**  
– 9.30am – 6.00pm  
(the show will open at 9am  
for the Seminar Theatre only)  
**TUESDAY 24 MARCH**  
– 9.30am – 4.00pm

**APPLICATION PROCESS**

White Gallery is the high-end, couture section of London Bridal Fashion Week; synonymous with luxury, prestige and exclusivity. It is a trading environment like no other, with a standard of excellence that remains unmatched by any event of its kind.

Carefully curated, all designers are subject to an application and vigorous vetting process to ensure the quality and standards of the event are upheld. Once the designer has filled in the application form, it is passed on to a bridal panel consisting of key industry professionals who review it. Factors of acceptance include the number of stockists (both UK and international considered), manufacturing process, years in the industry, price point (wholesale and retail), stockist testimonials and credibility within the industry (awards, acknowledgements etc).

Rose Molteno of Molteno Creations exhibited at the 2019 show, and we can't wait to see what the fashion house has in store for 2020. In order to appear at the show, Rose had to fill out the application form and be reviewed through the formal process – it may sound daunting but she tells us that she found the

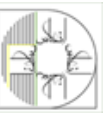
process “smooth, easy and simple to follow.”

“The application offers assurance to know that each designer has been vetted and a certain quality adhered to. This will allow for White Gallery to withhold a reputation of bringing together high-quality designers who can be trusted and who are a valuable resource for business owners.”

When asked about what she is most looking forward to at the show, Rose told us: “I’m looking forward to the chance to meet with my most respected boutique owners from both the UK and the rest of the world. It’s a unique opportunity to get to know my stockists and potential stockists better and display all the new designs I’ve been working on.”

**ESSENTIAL INFORMATION**

You can register to visit White Gallery 2020 at [whitegallery.com](http://whitegallery.com) – entry is free of charge for retailers and press. It is possible to register on the day, but it is strongly advised that you sign up in advance. Your entry badge allows you access to London Bridal Fashion Week, White Gallery, the Bridal Retail Success Academy and the Fashion Show Theatre. ■







**WHITE GALLERY**

EXCEL LONDON

22 - 24 MARCH 2020

VISIT US AT  
**STAND 404**

**BRIAN CHEN**  
BRIDAL

آموزشگاه انعکاس منبع جدیدترین اطلاعات، مقالات و دوره‌های آموزشی طراحی لباس و مدشناسی

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# BELGIAN BRIDAL POWER HOUSE

Take a closer look at our cover star... Marylise & Rembo Styling (MRFG)

In 1926, the De Vlioger family opened a hat shop in Berchem, Belgium. In 1929, the business moved to Antwerp selling hats, flowers and other accessories to neighbouring tailors who made wedding dresses. Over the years, the family business evolved into a wholesale for bridal accessories and, in the 70s, a private bridal collection was born called The Marylise.

Rembo Styling was founded in 1950 in Genk, Belgium. Formerly known for its communion dresses, it later branched out into eveningwear and wedding dresses. The Rembo collections have always been famous for their high level of design. However, when the company took a dip in sales, it was taken over by Werner de Vlioger in 2010. Rembo Styling was given a new lease of life and the brand was extended with three capsule collections, featuring pure and flowing dresses with small details which reflected the vintage, bohemian chic bride.

Merged together, the two brands have more than 150 years of experience in bridal fashion and in summer 2019, MRFG moved back to Antwerp, the city of fashion. "Our wedding dresses can be found in 600 shops in more than 15 countries," says account manager, Viktoria Wildt. "Marylise and Rembo Styling is, in the truest sense of the word, a family run company in its fourth generation, supported by a very efficient team that guards the company's DNA."

Asked what sets the company apart from its competitors, Viktoria answers: "Dynamism, daring and above all creativity. We work with a team of five designers worldwide, each with different backgrounds and personalities. Every designer has their own signature and working method, but their starting point is always the bride. The gown must match her wishes and her personality and, as a trendsetter, we're ready to take risks."

Every dress from MRFG is designed in Belgium and handmade in Portugal. The company has invested heavily in its atelier and head office in Belgium and the quality and capacity of its own production in Portugal. "The fact that we are in control of everything, from start to finish, makes all the difference - we can produce tailored wedding dresses that don't need retouching," explains Viktoria.

What's more, with sustainability at the forefront of everyone's minds, it's refreshing to see a company who is taking eco living into consideration. "We care for our environment. Sustainability is not a temporary

phenomenon; it is the future. Creativity and quality remain our priority, but the consumer is also increasingly asking for ecologically sound products and we want to offer a solution to that," says Viktoria.

If you're attending this year's White Gallery, make sure to pop by the MRFG stand. "We first began working with companies in the UK in 1990 and are constantly seeking to expand our portfolio of brand partners, especially in areas such as Northumberland, Cumbria, Wales and Southern Ireland," explains Viktoria.

The two brands work closely with their UK stockists, supporting them with answering general queries, assisting with orders, providing systems and sales training, offering accounts and financial assistance, organising annual trunk shows and helping clients choose their collections at big events like White Gallery in London. "We have an agent located permanently in the UK, who is able to respond quickly to the majority of queries from our UK and Irish stockists," says Viktoria. Asked what MRFG is looking for in a stockist, Viktoria responds: "We want someone who is passionate and enthusiastic about their own boutique and about our collections and who are keen to offer their brides something a little different."

If you are attending this year's White Gallery, Viktoria stresses that you should pop by the stand where the company's friendly UK & Irish agent, Heidi (who is also the owner of Lace & Co. Bridal Boutique in Yorkshire) will be available to talk to, with the rest of the Marylise and Rembo Styling team, to help assist with any queries. If you want to speak to Heidi beforehand or book an appointment to see the collections and/or catwalk at White Gallery, then email her and her colleague Susanne at [agency@laceandco.com](mailto:agency@laceandco.com).

"We love attending White Gallery. It provides us with the opportunity to meet with our current stockists in one place and build a strong lasting relationship with them, as well as showcase all our gorgeous new designs," says Viktoria. "It also allows us to meet potential new customers, catch up with other industry suppliers, assess buying trends and develop our wonderful unique brand within the UK market."

Asked what will be on show, Viktoria is remaining tight lipped. "We can't tell you too much yet, but 'cool chic' from Rembo Styling and 'sophisticated purity' from Marylise are our keywords for the 2021 collections," says Viktoria. "You'll also get a chance to hear about the ecological solutions and innovative materials we're going to be introducing." ■







WORDS SOPHIE VENING





See more  
gowns and  
accessories at  
White Gallery  
2020

# THE WHOLE LOOK

A regular at White Gallery, Ivory and Co is set to stun in 2020 with its latest styles. Bridal Buyer picked six gowns from the latest collection, and designer Sarah Bussey selected the perfect accessories to match



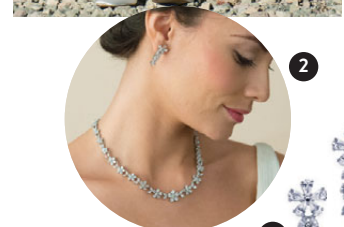
#### THE DRESS

### *Blush Allure*

This gown is all about the romance, but in a cutting edge, current way. It has a timeless A-line silhouette; the modern twist is a blush silk satin bodice overlaid with soft contemporary lace, and it features pockets for contemporary and popular styling.

#### THE ACCESSORIES

For a truly unforgettable look, this design is stunning when paired with a statement cape and sophisticated sparkle. I've chosen the amazing Immortal Kiss Cape (1) and a sparkling Princess Aria Rose Gold Tiara (2) and some gorgeous rose gold drop earrings, Pasadena Rose (3).



#### THE DRESS

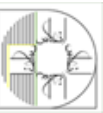
### *Daisy Dreams*

This tea-length gown is a novel take on the 50s look; breezy and channeling retro cool with amazing movement and shape, with pockets added for fun.

Inspired by so many of our brides who now want a more practical, but still beautiful option for their big day. In silk chiffon and French lace.

#### THE ACCESSORIES

To complement the dainty floral pattern of lace I have paired it with a relaxed floral hairline, Ice Rose (1) and daisy patterned crystal jewellery, Cherish Necklace (2) and Earrings (3). These match the fun and contemporary feel of the dress.







#### THE DRESS

### Forever Love

A really sophisticated clinging design, featuring a gorgeous organic leaf pattern and illusion construction. It nods to current trends for feature backs, more relaxed styling and themes of nature. Featuring silk georgette and Italian lace.

#### THE ACCESSORIES

Because of the delicate nature of the gown, and the leaf design, I've chosen to pair with a stunning bronze leaf tiara, Grecian Dream (1) in a Roman laurel leaf style, as well as gold, crystal and pearl jewellery, Aphrodite Pendant (2) and Earrings (3) to give a Grecian feel whilst also matching the best features of the gown.



#### THE DRESS

### Sonoma Sunrise

Pure statement styling at its best, this soft stretch silk combined with the flattering pattern gives amazing shape. Simple and comfortable, but with an air of sophistication and grace, thanks to the stunning feature lace train and hand appliquéd lacework.

#### THE ACCESSORIES

I love this dress with the Patchouli Flower Cape (1), the delicate detailing at the neckline and feature cascade of flowers at the back beautifully complements the dress shape and lace. Continuing the floral theme I have chosen the Forget Me Not Floral Clip (2) for the hair and Waterlily Pearl Bracelet (3).



#### THE DRESS

### Ghost Whisper

This is one of our most versatile designs - a simple column gown in stretch silk for comfort, perfect for our destination brides in beach and garden weddings (light and practical for travelling) and a simple, stunning silhouette.

#### THE ACCESSORIES

This dress can be paired with so many boleros and capes for a variety of mix-and-match looks, but my favourite is the Bohemia Bolero with its vintage styling and retro feel (1), it totally changes the look of the dress. To match this boho vibe I would recommend the Midsummer Dream Clip and Sorbonne Gold Earrings (both picture 2).



#### THE DRESS

### Wildwood

Our favourite "stand out from the crowd" bridal look, this glorious dress features silk georgette and a very unusual Italian lace. It was inspired by a number of our real brides, who search for something different with true impact.

#### THE ACCESSORIES

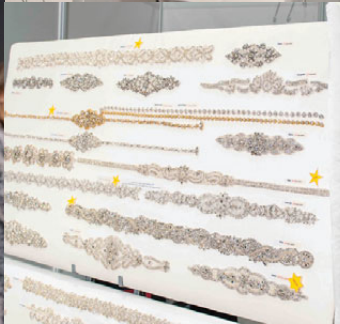
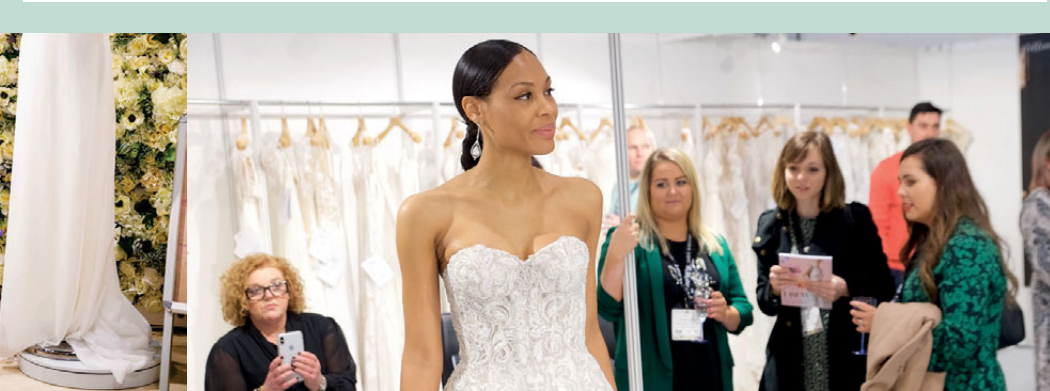
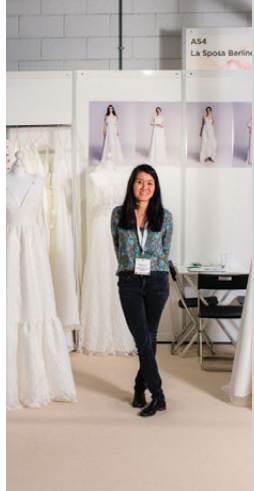
The gorgeous swirling lace pattern on the dress lends itself to accessories that have a natural flowing look, too. So, to match, I would recommend the stunning Nightingale Tiara (1) and Long Island Bracelet (2) and Earrings (3) which all feature a statement feather design. ■





# TOP 10 LEFBW

It's an epicentre for fashion, culture, diversity and more, so it makes sense that London is also home to one of the world's greatest bridal buying events... here's just some of the reasons to visit the 2020 show!



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## 1 BE PART OF IT

Now in its third year, London Bridal Fashion Week has firmly established itself as a global epicentre of bridal fashion. 2019 took the event to new heights, with over 350 international brands launching their latest collections, and buyers from more countries than ever before! In 2020, the event is set to go even further, with a celebration of fashion, creativity and diversity, in one of the most exciting cities in the world.

## 2 THE ULTIMATE EXPERIENCE

This year the show will embrace the slogan 'In unity there is strength', and in doing so, LBFW will demonstrate its primary objective – to stage a world-leading fashion event that represents the full breadth of the bridal industry. This year the show is proud to welcome a plethora of amazing fashion houses, most of whom will be showcasing their new collections for the very first time. Don't miss Justin Alexander, Maggie Sottero, Demetrios, Rachel Allen, Allure and Madi Lane to name but a few.

## 3 FORGE RELATIONSHIPS

If you are looking to add new lines to your boutique, this is the place to find the right new range. You'll be provided with a platform to meet designers and sales agents, meaning you'll be able to get a masterclass in the fashions you'll be selling in store. In addition, this is the best possible place to enhance your relationships with your current suppliers.

## 4 FIND NEW TALENT

All the names you know and love will be at LBFW... what's more, there are new brands from across the globe eager to break into the UK market. This year, expect exhibitors from every continent! You'll be delighted by the sheer diversity.

## 5 FASHION SHOWS

LBFW will run a full fashion show programme alongside the exhibition, featuring a selection of the finest UK and international labels. There will be a range of exclusive designer preview shows, as well as mixed shows comprising a selection of the world's hottest bridal talent! Participating brands can be found on the LBFW website.

## 6 GET EDUCATED

The Bridal Retail Success Academy will support retailers in all aspects of running a successful

business, and LBFW has planned an exceptional seminar programme for 2020. Topics will be announced soon... so watch this space! In addition to the seminar programme, the Bridal Buyer team will be on hand to meet and greet you, as well as answer any questions you may have. We always want to hear about your experience, so please come and visit us anytime at the show!

## 7 ONE-TO-ONE ADVICE

A trip to LBFW is valuable in so many ways, not least because there's the opportunity to gain some tailored advice from some of the best-known names in the industry. The Business Advice Clinic will run throughout the show, and whatever your business concern, we will have the right professional on hand to guide you. Slots will be booked on a first-come, first-served basis, so head over to book your slot at the beginning of the day.

## 8 AMAZING ENTERTAINMENT

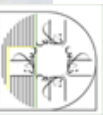
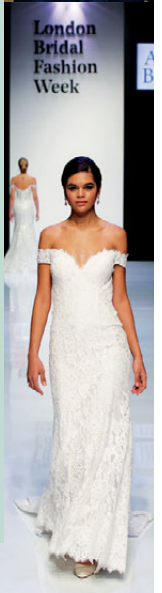
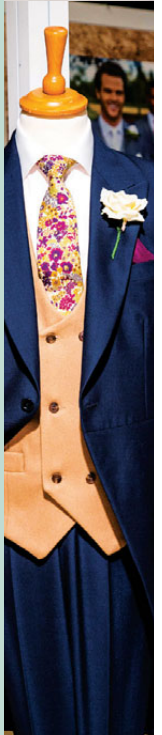
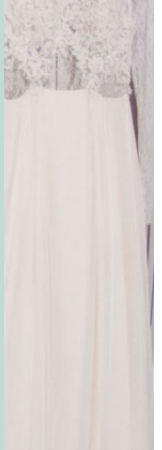
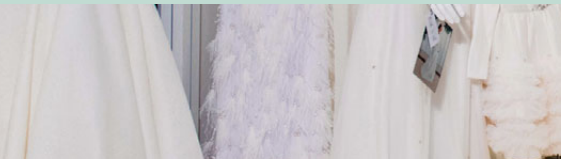
On Sunday 22 March at 6.45pm, the London Bridal Fashion Week team will be hosting a party in the Champagne Bar, with drinks, food and live entertainment. The party will take place after the last catwalk show of the day and will be open to all show visitors. On Monday 23 join us for LBFW's Big Night Out featuring the RBA Awards. To book your tickets, please contact [ella.okeefe@oceanmedia.co.uk](mailto:ella.okeefe@oceanmedia.co.uk).

## 9 MEET YOUR PEERS

There is no better place to meet your industry peers – why not pull up a pew at the bar and discuss everything from fashion to business successes and new collaborations? You can even discuss your top buying tips! One of the very best things about the bridal industry is the fact that retailers know, love and support each other. Share what's working for you and what isn't, ask for advice and trade sales tips. This is the perfect place to make lifelong contacts who really understand you and your business.

## 10 EASY ACCESS

ExCeL London is one of the world's leading exhibition venues, and the perfect space for this international show. ExCeL offers a superb purpose-built exhibition in an easy-to-access location. It is just five minutes from London City Airport with two on-site Docklands Light Railway stations that connect the venue with central London. With the advantages of London on the doorstep, the ExCeL experience makes international business easy. ■





# Elizabeth Dickens

DESIGNERS & MANUFACTURERS OF BRIDAL VEILS

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## JOIN US AT THE FOLLOWING SHOWS

The Bridal Roadshow - Birmingham South  
1st & 2nd March 2020

The Bridal Roadshow - Harrogate  
8th & 9th March 2020

London Bridal Fashion Week - Stand A22  
22nd - 24th March 2020

The Bridal Roadshow - Bristol  
9th & 10th August 2020

The Harrogate Bridal Show  
13th - 15th September 2020



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# Business

ADVICE AND GUIDANCE FOR THE BRIDAL RETAIL INDUSTRY

## NEED TO KNOW

In this issue, we take a look at more of the challenges that today's bridal retailers are facing; employee sickness, working with family members and dealing with renovation work. Don't miss the second part of our series on inclusivity and diversity, plus we have the final installment of Halo & Wren's social media column. We also have some invaluable guidance from Abi Neill, who walks us through the hot topic of lead generation. ■

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# AVOIDING TOKENISM

In the second part of our series on inclusivity in the bridal industry, we take a look at consistency in diversity

**W**e're seeing the stats that diversity is good for business, but many wedding businesses are attempting to diversify without consulting, and often end up getting it wrong – which can be seen as tokenising. This can have a detrimental impact on business reputation and put off potential customers.

## WHAT IS TOKENISM?

The practice of making only a perfunctory or symbolic effort to do a particular thing, especially by recruiting a small number of people from underrepresented groups, for example; in order to give the appearance of sexual or racial equality in the workplace.'

Tokenism is diversity on a superficial level. It is in the absence of consistently making the effort to include people in underrepresented groups. It's being aesthetically diverse, but not attitudinally diverse. It is without any effort or desire to help improve the lives of people in minority groups who experience inequality or discrimination everyday.

## WHAT DOES COMMON TOKENISM LOOK LIKE IN THE WEDDING INDUSTRY?

Common inclusion efforts that end up tokenising include:

- Commissioning styled shoots with heterosexual couples or models pretending to be gay to attempt to attract the LGBTQ+ community.





- An inconsistent use of black or mixed-race models during topical events, like the Royal Wedding, and not using ethnic diversity in marketing at any other points of the year.
- Celebrating minority movements like Pride and using hashtags like #loveislove and not making regular efforts to review language in documentation, such as booking forms and still assuming everyone is in a heterosexual relationship.
- Advertising size inclusive services and not having sample dresses available for clients over a size 14, for example, to try on when they visit.
- An online presence that says a business is welcoming for all, but the store is not wheelchair accessible, meaning only able-bodied people can physically enter the store and changing rooms.

Couples in underrepresented groups can tell when they are being intentionally included, or being used as a pawn, for financial gain, so that brands can appear to be current and 'on trend'. It is the inconsistent inclusion from businesses that 'appear to have cared very little' about diversity previously that generally causes offence.

#### SO HOW CAN YOU AVOID TOKENISM?

**CHALLENGE FEAR:** There is a real fear for many business owners of getting it wrong and of causing offence, and this gets in the way of better inclusion.

A fear that putting out specific casting calls for people in minority groups will discriminate against people in majority groups. This fear actually gets in the way of making any progress. In order to diversify and improve equity, we have to be intentional with who we are speaking to.

The concept of the UK Equalities Act 2010 is to promote equality. The Equalities Act 2010 legally protects people from underrepresented groups from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society (eg. age, race, disability, religion, gender reassignment, sex, sexual orientation). If you are consciously doing something to improve the experience, better include, provide more work, more opportunity for people in underrepresented groups to enable equity – this is called Positive Action. It is encouraged under the Equalities Act 2010. Advocating for equality for an underrepresented group does not automatically mean inequality for a majority group.

Perhaps you want to improve your marketing so that it is more representative of women of colour and / or curvy women and you want to arrange a photoshoot.

Be proactive and just ask for what you need when you contact a casting or modelling agent.

**BUILD RELATIONSHIPS:** If you want more multicultural or LGBTQ+ clients, for example, it goes beyond putting a few images in your marketing or social media. You have to build trust.

**DIVERSITY YOUR NETWORK:** Build relationships with suppliers who already serve those communities. Consider sponsoring or hosting an event or competition to fundraise in that community and work with a publication that serves that niche to get your message out.

**TAKE ACCOUNTABILITY:** If you get it wrong – because you might – take accountability. If someone gives genuine feedback about representation that has missed the mark, it might smart a little, but this is a positive step forward. It means they respect or value your business enough to tell you and want to see it grow. It's far easier to disengage and not say anything to you, but tell their friends to avoid you like the Plague.

If your response to feedback is not to respond at all, to delete comments, or to attempt to fob off and minimise an experience of inequality, you are reinforcing that you are only playing lip service to diversity.

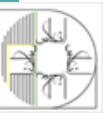
Many couples sadly do still experience discrimination and prejudice in the wedding industry and in wider society, so it's your job to intentionally include them and demonstrate that you are a safe space for them.

If you don't know where to start, take it seriously. Consult with an expert, or read books like *Diversify* by June Sarpong. You can't be expected to know it all, so just like any aspect of your business, invest in it.

Diversity without inclusion is not only tokenism, but it's a form of discrimination and it causes harm. Make sure you build a sustainable business by caring about who you serve, standing out from the crowd with courage, transparency and a desire to keep growing, adapting and learning. ■

[www.novareid.com](http://www.novareid.com) / [www.nubride.com](http://www.nubride.com)

Nova Reid is founder of multi-award-winning wedding platform and London show Nu Bride, the UK's leading wedding platform dedicated to diversity. She is also a diversity campaigner, media expert for BBC and SKY News and a consultant working with small business owners and organisations who want to lead by example and be the change they want to see in their industry and beyond.





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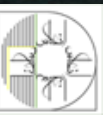
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HOT TOPIC

# SICKNESS & ABSENCE

We all want to look after our workforce, but in terms of sickness, what are the rules? Suzanne Treen of Walker Morris LLP investigates ▶





**A** certain degree of employee sickness absence is a fact of life. But when absence becomes persistent or long-term it can start to cause issues for the business in a number of ways. So, what does the law say about employee sickness and absence?

### CHECKING ON STAFF

When an employee phones in sick then the employer should take the illness at face value, unless there is a good reason to suspect that the employee is not telling the truth. Employers should have a sickness procedure that is applied consistently to all staff. This will set out the procedure that employees must follow if they are too unwell to attend work and make provisions for how Statutory Sick pay (SSP) and any additional company sick pay will be paid. As a minimum, the employee will be required to self-certify the first few days of their absence and then provide a sick note from their GP.

As long as the employee has complied with the sickness notification procedures and supplied the appropriate GP sick notes, they should not be put under undue pressure to return until they are well enough.

### AN EMPLOYER'S RIGHTS

The first thing to consider with employees who are often unwell is whether there is any underlying medical condition at play. If the employee is suffering from a long-term physical or mental impairment which adversely affects their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, they may classify as 'disabled' under the Equality Act 2010. If they do, then they will have additional legal protection against disability discrimination, such as the right not to be treated less favourably and the right to reasonable adjustments. If you think an employee may classify as disabled, then it is always wise to seek professional advice on how best to manage the absence. Disability discrimination claims are not subject to any compensation limit.

### SUSPICION OF ABUSE OF PROCESS

Sometimes an employer has a suspicion that the employee may not actually be unwell and is simply malingering. It is important that employers do not act hastily because this could lead to an employment claim. Also, remember that not every medical condition (or disability) is visible and that many doctors recommend that employees suffering from stress or anxiety spend time on hobbies such as gardening or even taking a trip away. Decisions should always be based on hard evidence and, if you do suspect dishonesty, deal with it as a disciplinary issue, giving the employee a chance to make representations before you make any final decision.

### GENUINE LONG-TERM ILLNESSES

In a situation where an employee has been diagnosed with a terminal illness, it is important for the employer

to keep the lines of communication open with the employee. The employee may feel well enough to continue working and actively wish to do so. It may be that certain adjustments or accommodations are necessary. An open and transparent dialogue with the employee is as important as ever. It is likely that medical input will be necessary from the employee's GP and consultant and possibly from the company's occupational health advisors.

Luckily, most recover from their illnesses. Here, a sickness procedure enables the employer to obtain medical advice once an employee has been off sick for a certain amount of time. One of the questions that can be explored with the medical professional is "when is the employee likely to be able to return to work?" If the employee is disabled, then the employer may be legally obliged to make reasonable adjustments, but many employers will consider adjustments for non-disabled staff as a matter of good practice.

And if an employee becomes disabled, as mentioned earlier, the employee would be protected under the Equality Act 2010 against disability discrimination. The employer should tread carefully and take professional advice in order to avoid the risk of a claim against it.

Employees on long-term sick leave will receive the pay as set out in the contract of employment, whether that be SSP or an additional amount of company sick pay for a period of time. In the absence of any provision in a contract, the basic legal entitlement will be SSP. And if a company car or laptop is provided under the contract for both personal and business use, then the employer would not normally be entitled to take them back during the absence.

### CLOSE FAMILY MEMBERS ARE UNWELL

Another allied issue is what happens when a family member is unwell. In law, employees are legally entitled to unpaid time off to deal with an emergency involving a dependant. This might include a child, parent or other person who meets the definition of a dependant. If the employee wants to take a longer period of time off after the immediate emergency has passed, then they may ask to take it as annual leave or parental leave.

If the employee is caring for a child or family member with a disability, bear in mind that it is possible for the employee to be subject to disability discrimination on the grounds of their association with the disabled person. If in doubt, take advice.

### HOLIDAYS AND SICKNESS AT THE SAME TIME

Lastly, an employee cannot take holiday and sickness at the same time. The absence must be treated as either one or the other. If an employee is sick during holiday, then they would need to notify their sickness in the usual way and obtain a sickness certificate from their GP. It is important that sickness procedures make it clear how the employer will deal with sickness during holiday periods. ■





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# LEAD GENERATION

Abi Neill meets Wedding Belles of Four Oaks, Pure Brides and Emily Bridalwear to discuss getting brides through the doors in 2020...

**S**o much has changed in the world of marketing in the last decade. Those who are brave enough to glance back a few decades will conclude that our marketing landscape is virtually unrecognisable. Back then, an attractive and well-constructed website, a few regular print ads and taking part in wedding shows was largely what it took to drive newly engaged brides over the threshold.

Lead generation in the world of bridal is an entirely different game now. In addition, technological innovation has changed the concept of branding, marketing and customer communication forever. Today, brand building encompasses a different set of considerations. It still starts with understanding your

customers, but is followed by implementing the tech tools, as well as digital and social media content to help drive your personalised brand and unique story.

It's a challenge and with constant updates, new techniques and changes to algorithms, we business owners and digital marketers are frequently scrambling to keep up. So where to start with brand development and how do you know if you've considered what actually matters? Emily Harrison, boss of Emily Bridalwear advises: "First things first, decide who your ideal bride is. Then, when you know who she is and what she likes to see and follow, you can create digital content to appeal to her. It may seem like alien 'marketing speak' and maybe feels too commercial if you're a little shop, but it is important to be consistent





with your content in terms of your voice and your wording. Don't forget that you don't need to appeal to everyone – you only need to appeal to your ideal customer, your 'perfect bride', so taking time to consider who that actually is will be important."

Anna Hare, founder of Pure Brides in Norwich agrees: "In terms of your brand, you must look at the whole picture. Consider what your shop front looks like. Does it tell a story and is it attracting the right customers? Is the shop's feel well matched and designed to appeal to your target market? How about your website – is it fresh and is your brand consistent?"

In the digital world today, social media and the content you generate is key to driving bridal enquiries. The biggest platform currently seems to be Instagram, which is gaining traction. "It's Instagram, Facebook and Pinterest – in that order," explains Emily. "Instagram and Facebook messenger appointment requests now account for 20% of our bookings. With a direct uptake if we post a great image of a dress or link to an event we have. The quality of the appointments has improved since we increased our social media presence. We also allow brides to see what dresses we have available, along with our prices, before they come in to see us. This has meant we have a few cancellations, but it also means we have a better conversion rate and a better closing figure for brides buying first time."

Having ascertained that social media is a really valuable enquiry generator, you also need to know that content is king. But knowing what to post can be a bit of a minefield and you must be careful not to post for posting's sake – it needs to be on-brand, relevant and of interest. Aim to inform and entertain by sharing behind the scenes content and posts that promote your products. Mel Storer, joint owner of Wedding Belles of Four Oaks says: "When posting on social media, ensure you present a good mix of dress images, pictures inside your boutique, fun posts of you and your team as well as real bride images. This mix will really showcase your boutique to potential brides and put you on their must-visit list when dress shopping. Don't forget to celebrate your brides, too! They are planning the biggest day of their lives and wedding dress shopping is very special. Brides deserve to be celebrated and other women seeing this happen all over your social media will want to join the #party and visit your store."

Technically speaking savvy retailers are embracing the use of software to drive automated but personalised communication with brides. Not only can this help with cross-selling in other product areas in-house, but it can also manage everyday administration

*In the digital world today, social media and the content you generate is key to driving bridal enquiries and appointments*



and customer communications, as well as basic product and brand promotion. "I invest in software to allow a seamless approach between our website, email marketing and aftercare," Emily explains. "We use BridalLive, Mailchimp and Later for social media content scheduling. Although not cheap, it means we

have automated systems in place. BridalLive has reduced my admin hours, allowing me to concentrate on the marketing side of the business more. I have found that because I am the owner and originator of our business ethos, managing it myself is much more effective."

Regarding the technical aspect, Anna Hare also agrees: "It's important for your website and social media to engage your

customers and facilitate a pain-free and easy appointment booking system. A chatbot on my website makes this easy and convenient. We have a lot of tech in store too, including an interactive screen which allows us to show dresses as well as other features which brides love."

Paid digital advertising is still a strong and consistent lead generation option. If used skilfully it can produce excellent results, but a good understanding of the platforms on which you create the adverts, and familiarity of the metrics available to monitor performance, is necessary. Without knowledge, money will be wasted and your return on investment will be disappointing. Anna echoes this: "I use paid Facebook, Instagram and Google Adwords to drive leads – but ►



it's taken a lot of time, effort and self-teaching to make sure that the adverts I'm creating are the right ones and are successfully generating leads and enquiries. Be warned, it can be a steep learning curve and you really can't chuck out generic ads and hope they work. You have to use a format and learn the science of digital advertising before you are successful in this area."

Emily of Emily Bridalwear no longer allocates any of her marketing budget to print advertising and instead chooses social media and newsletter marketing to drive leads and customer referrals. In fact, email marketing and lead follow-up play a large part in her marketing strategy. "We send out automated emails reminding customers about accessories and linking them back to our online look book system, so they can favourite them ahead of a styling session," she explains. "I feel that our continued contact with them via mediums such as newsletters, allows us to provide advice as well as reminders of the other things that our business has to offer."

Newsletters are a staple for retailers looking to brand build and drive more business. Segmented data lists combined with personalised email content have been shown to perform better than generic emails sent to an entire list, so don't miss this opportunity to connect with your audience in a more meaningful way. Personalisation also pays off. Many switched on retailers use emails following wedding fairs and shows to follow up and generate appointments.

Appropriately curated content is sent to individuals for consumption on mobiles, rather than bombarding them with lengthy content designed for a desktop inbox. Include social sharing buttons in your emails so subscribers can share your content with others. You can also invite them to forward your emails over to friends.

On your social platforms, let people know you have an email list and tell them what to expect. Brides should look forward to receiving more content from you in the same voice and style that you use for your social media platforms. Although often underrated, newsletters can be really effective in developing your business fan base and they are an informal customer referral programme long after a wedding has passed.

Mel and Claire at Wedding Belles of Four Oaks are totally tuned into their recommendation and referral potential and understand the power of a strong in-store experience to ensure that brides are impressed and leave the store wowed and raving about their time there. "Recommendations and word of mouth is still very much a big part of our business," they explain. "However, as we move forward and work with a new generation of brides, we know that lots of new leads are generated from Instagram and Pinterest so this is where we spend most of our time working on building



our brand. This ensures Wedding Belles is the first shop that brides want to visit when they start their dress shopping."

Emily agrees: "We've been established a number of years now, so we find recommendations are our biggest draw of enquiries. However, brides will often go onto our website via a Google search. So I ensure Google is up to date with good reviews and that each one has been responded to. Having an up to date Google business page, with reviews and a website that is prominent, really is paramount."

Google is massively important in terms of your website page rank. Social media is king and your business reputation is key, but lead generation from your website and your SEO (search engine optimisation) also mustn't be neglected. Don't forget that the metadata and keyword coding that sit within your website needs housework from time to time to satisfy the latest algorithms. Inbound links and blog content need updating frequently, including well written content that positions you as an authority in your field. Content should always answer your customer's needs in-depth and this is what will drive you up that first page of search results.

This is not an exhaustive list of lead generation and marketing ideas. There are many more including the development of strategic partner relationships, event organisation and loyalty programmes and initiatives. I can help you develop a lead generation strategy and master a business development plan for your business if needed, see [abineill.co.uk](http://abineill.co.uk) for more information and feel free to get in touch to discuss how I may be able to assist. In the meantime, good luck with applying some of the above to your business. Here's to a busy and successful 2020 together in bridal.■





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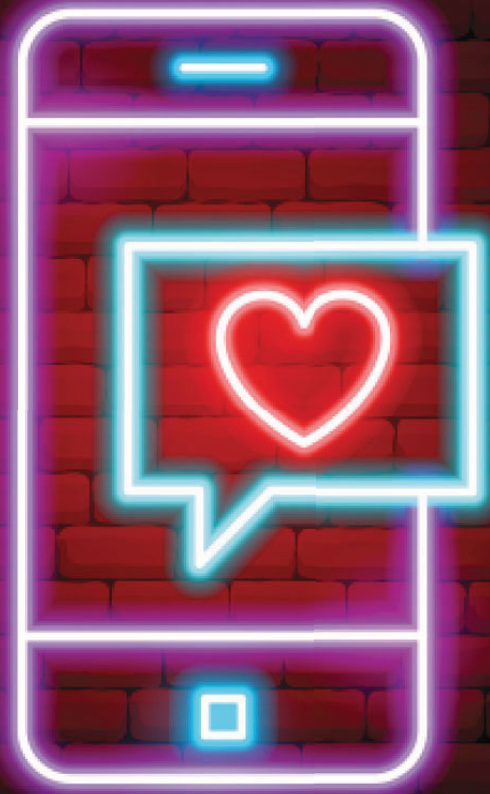
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# GOING LIVE

In the final part of our series on social media, Jemma Palmer of Halo & Wren looks at Live feeds



**S**o far in this series I have discussed why you should embrace social media, how you can create fun and alluring content, and how to make the most of popular apps – Pinterest, Facebook and Instagram. If you've enjoyed using those apps so far, then that is a massive win and a great way to find new brides, as well as ensuring past brides are still connected with you.

In the last issue we discussed getting the most out of Facebook and Instagram – they are two of the most used apps. But, the one thing we didn't look at is a function both platforms have, and which can be a fantastic way of reaching a wider audience... going Live!

Facebook and Instagram Live can feel scary to even the seasoned pro; it's putting yourself out there for judgement and not being able to edit it, filter it, or crop it. But, live videos are not meant to be perfect – they are an insight into reality, and everyone knows that what we put on social media isn't warts and all.

These Live videos allow your audience to get to know you and your brand on a deeper level – they allow the customer to put a face and a personality to a business. I think bridal boutique owners often forget how nerve wracking shopping for your gown can be. Using Facebook Live to introduce a trunk show is a great idea – I still have so many brides ask what a trunk show even is! Instagram Live or Instagram TV can also be used to delve deeper into a designer. On your website you may have a paragraph on a designer or brand, but listening to you talk about why you stock that designer, your

favourite gown and the history behind the label will not only be informative for brides, but it will create the magic word of engagement. Make sure you also ask the audience for their thoughts and enquire into whether they would like more information.

Lives are such a wonderful marketing tool – they're perfect for announcing competitions, exclusives and winners... and the bonus is, they can be saved and used on your highlights again.

Some previous live videos that have proved popular and engaging for us have included teaming up with another supplier for our birthday celebration. Recently for H&W's second birthday we teamed up with a Velvet Ring Box Maker and ran a competition across Instagram and Facebook, with the main aim to increase followers and grow engagement. We then used Instagram Live to announce the winner. The Velvet Ring Box Maker increased her following and awareness of her brand and products, and so did I. It is an amazing way to collaborate with other suppliers and give away a prize, all while gaining new followers and treating your loyal followers, too.

Using the Live functions builds anticipation and excitement, especially if you can promote across all your social media and make sure everyone clearly knows when it will be taking place. If you are lucky enough to have an upcoming designer day or trunk show and the designer visits your boutique, you can also build excitement by asking your audience what questions they have for the designer and then use the Live feature to put questions to them. ■





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# FAMILIES IN DISPUTE

You can choose your friends but not your family. So, what happens if you run a business with relatives? Adam Bernstein investigates

**D**avid Emanuel, chairman and a corporate law partner at VWV, thinks that every family business dispute is different, but there are common themes. The most frequent tend to involve a lack of succession planning, which leaves the next generation feeling frustrated, or uncertain about what comes next - this can be differences over strategic direction or different attitudes across generations on ownership.

But other issues can drive a wedge between family members, and some of them, reckons Philippa Dempster, managing partner of law firm Freeths, may be very trivial but can become significant. And money is often the root cause. She says: "remuneration can often lead to a dispute if one family member feels that they are not being financially rewarded as well as another, or if they feel others are not pulling their weight in the business but are remunerated the same as those that are taking a key role in driving the business forward." On top of this is what happens when one family member feels that they are not being included in decision making, however small that may be.

## DEALING WITH THE ISSUES

As any good lawyer knows, documentation is key. For Emanuel, this could include an obligation in a shareholder's agreement with mediation as a mechanism for resolving disputes. And Dempster agrees, stating that alternative means of dispute resolution are always preferable: "because litigation can be expensive and time consuming and is a distraction."

This point is taken up by Emanuel; he suggests that if the family doesn't want to bear the cost of mediation, that an alternative "is an independent, respected, family-related figure." But as Emanuel explains, "the parties need to be in a frame of mind to mediate for this to have a chance of success."

But before embarking on mediation, Dempster emphasises that it's important for the parties to know what their legal position is. She believes that by knowing, for example, "that a court may not agree with a party's position from a legal perspective they will go to mediation with an open mind."

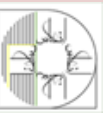
*Families can lower their risk of trouble through good communication and understanding of how the business is run*

## RISK MANAGEMENT

The fact that disputes happen is a given, but families can lower the risk of trouble through a charter which sets out the fundamental principles on which members want to see their business run, and a shareholder's agreement that offers detail on ownership and management rights and responsibilities. For Emanuel, these important governance documents can, he says: "help business and family relationships, and give confidence to face future challenges."

Dempster sees similar value here, too. She thinks a formal business plan should be written "so that the parties have some structure and each party is aware of the direction that is proposed for the business. Meetings should always be minuted to avoid misunderstandings down the line, with minutes circulated and if possible, an independent third-party present."

Both Dempster and Emanuel think that regular communication is critical. Emanuel advocates a "forum for family members to meet, away from home,







to discuss family business issues in the context of their respective roles, whether as family member, employee, or shareholder.” Dempster also recommends openness where “parties can be open and transparent with one another by, for example, having regular meetings to discuss the company’s finances, business initiatives, staff issues.”

### IT’S ABOUT PEOPLE TOO

But what if there’s an irreconcilable disagreement? The end game will vary from family to family and depends on the priorities of each family member. As Dempster has witnessed, for some “family will always come first and for others money and success may be more important.”

But if agreement on business decisions cannot be reached, then it is inevitable that family members may have to exit the business or the business be wound up. Here, says Dempster, “the business will need to be valued so that the leaving party can either be bought out by the remaining parties or the company buys back the shares at value.”

Of course, business isn’t necessarily about the

current generation, it also concerns the future.

Bringing in new family members at an early age can help them feel that the business is very much part of the family. However, as Emanuel notes, to work in a business long term, the family member needs the right skills for their role.

Dempster thinks the same. Her advice is to get younger members of the family into the business to shadow older family members – she says that it’s “a great way for them to learn what is involved with, and what it takes, to successfully run the business.” But shadowing alone may not be appealing to the younger generation “so it might be useful to give them small tasks in the business, so they feel that they are contributing.”

### TO CONCLUDE

So, while blood may be the strongest bond, it doesn’t guarantee success. The reality is that without a firm basis for good communications, an understanding of how businesses are run, and ideally, good documentation, the seeds of destruction will be sown. But each to their own. ■





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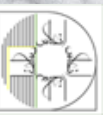
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# SAVING TAX ON RENOVATIONS

Adam Bernstein says, if a business wants to grow, it needs to invest in its premises and, if it follows the rules, much can be offset against tax

Understandably, if you're doing up your boutique, you may take the opportunity to carry out improvements at the same time as repairs. But to Helen Thornley, a technical officer at the Association of Taxation Technicians, there are distinct differences between repairing and improving business premises, each of which can have huge tax consequences.

She says that "the question of whether expenditure on a building is a repair or an improvement is a classic tax problem. Relief for building repair costs is generally given against revenue in the period that the cost is incurred. In contrast, money spent on improvements to premises is considered to be capital and the business will only get relief when it sells or otherwise disposes of the premises."

Yen-Pei Chen, manager of Corporate Reporting and Tax at the ACCA, agrees. She says that replacing or fixing something to get premises back into working order is fine as a repair, "but do anything further and you could stray into capital expenditure."

## TAX ALLOWANCES AND WHAT CAN BE CLAIMED FOR

### • INTEGRAL FEATURES

To reclaim some of the cost of repairs, firms need to pay attention to what the system actually permits. As Thornley points out, until relatively recently there were no tax reliefs for the acquisition, construction or improvement of buildings. However, she says that "since 2008 relief for what are known as integral features within the building has been available through

the system of capital allowances."

Just as with plant and machinery, the law is very prescriptive and there is a fixed list of integral features. Thornley says it includes space and water heating systems; air-conditioning and air-cooling systems; hot and cold-water systems (but not toilet and kitchen facilities); electrical systems, including lighting systems; and external solar shading.

And here's where matters get murky, suggests Thornley: "The problem is that most businesses do not spend more in a year on qualifying plant or integral features than the AIA. If they do, then any expenditure exceeding the AIA will be eligible for writing down allowances instead. For integral features, the writing down allowance is 6%, compared to 18% for most other qualifying plant." It's for this reason that where a business does spend more than the AIA, Thornley says it makes sense to allocate the AIA against integral features first because they get a lower writing down allowance and it takes much longer to get relief for the costs incurred.

### • STRUCTURES AND BUILDINGS ALLOWANCE

Budget 2018 saw the then Chancellor, Philip Hammond, introduce the new Structures and Buildings Allowance (SBA), giving a 2% flat rate annual allowance on commercial structures and buildings over a period of 50 years. The new SBA, says Chen, "is available to offices, retail and wholesale premises, walls, bridges, tunnels, factories and warehouses – as well as renovations and conversions started after 29 October 2018." However, she warns that buildings covered by the SBA won't then qualify for the AIA. ■



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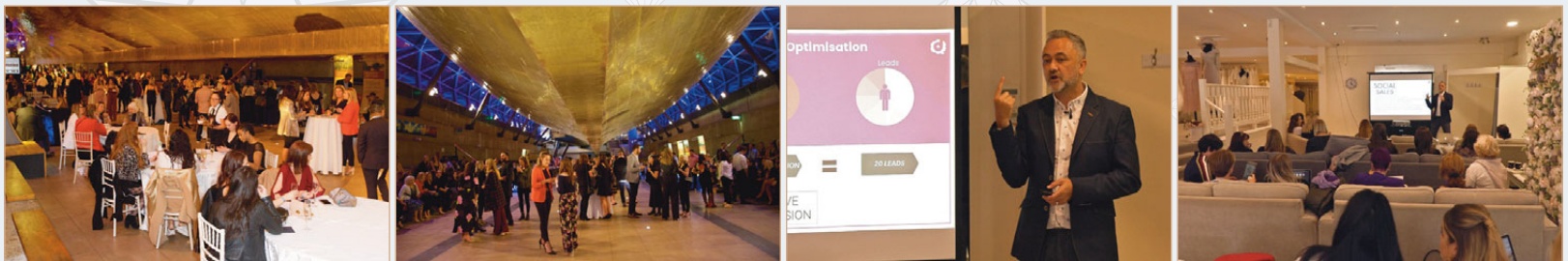
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- ◆ Free use of the RBA members lounge at Harrogate Bridal Show ◆
  - ◆ Free set of RBA Terms & Conditions ◆

If you are interested in joining the Retail Bridalwear Association, we are offering a discounted rate of £250 +VAT for the first year of membership, plus a free copy of our recent Warren Knight Social Media Training presentation on a handy memory stick – it's full of invaluable tools to transform the way you use social media and help your business.

To apply for membership, visit [www.rbaltd.org.uk](http://www.rbaltd.org.uk) and use the discount code **RBA250**



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# THE RBA'S YEAR IN VIEW

As the new year is upon us, the Retail Bridalwear Association reveals what it has in store for 2020

**T**he RBA was formed in 1995 and is still considered the Gold Standard of Trade Associations. Many other 'off shoot' organisations have come and gone over the years, but for many shops, the RBA remains the aspirational organisation to become a member of.

We have exciting plans for the RBA in 2020. We believe we have the strongest UK independent bridal shops in the industry as members and they are members because they had to meet a certain criteria: trading for a minimum of five years, trading from a dedicated retail premises, have a minimum turnover of £180,000 inc VAT, have a good account history with their suppliers and have passed our stringent credit checks.

As well as hoping to grow our membership and welcome more of the best and strongest independent shops, we are working on bigger and better benefits for our members.

We are constantly striving to raise standards within the bridalwear industry by strengthening and promoting strong relationships between retailers and suppliers, as well as addressing the concerns of our members. This is an area we are passionate about dedicating more time to, and are planning to meet with key suppliers to address these issues, and hopefully find the solutions that are so desperately needed in these uncertain times.

As independent retailers, we can often feel isolated and as if we have little support around us. The RBA continues to work hard to change this and has given retailers a chance to join together to combat common issues and talk through difficult and often frustrating situations. An area we started work on this year and want to take to the next level, is business mentoring. The Executive Committee, a team of long-standing bridal retailers who have a combined experience of over 100 years, are eager to visit more of our member shops and offer advice and one-on-one support. Times are tough in retail and now is the time to pull our resources together and help each other to succeed.

*For many shops,  
the RBA remains  
the aspirational  
organisation  
to become a  
member of*

Another benefit we are looking to improve for 2020 is our Brides Protection Scheme. The BPS was introduced in 2011 so that brides could 'Buy with Confidence' from an RBA member store, and that, in the event of an RBA shop closing involuntarily before a bride has collected her dress, the RBA will endeavour to locate a replacement gown, or refund the deposit where possible. The BPS has given wonderful peace of mind and been a great selling tool, but we feel we can do better – so watch this space for a new and improved insurance!

We have held some brilliant training days over the years and have decided to run more in 2020. Back in October, we hosted a highly successful social media training day with media professional speaker, trainer and coach Warren Knight. The all-day event was well attended by our members and they came away with invaluable knowledge on how to use social media to transform their businesses. He covered everything from mastering Instagram and Facebook posts to blogging, creating an engaging website, branding, getting the content right and telling us step-by-step how to create a personalised 30-day social media campaign. Warren taught us so

many indispensable tools that we've decided to offer the two-hour presentation on a memory stick to non-members for just £75 + VAT. To take advantage of this great offer please email [support@rbald.org.uk](mailto:support@rbald.org.uk).

It's going to be hard to beat our RBA Awards bash last year on the Cutty Sark, which was deemed one of the best ever, but we're pulling out all the stops for an even better party in 2020! LBFW and White Gallery is promising to be a fantastic three-day event in the capital and we're looking forward to meeting up with our colleagues and toasting the best in the industry on the Monday evening.

If you are interested in joining the Retail Bridalwear Association, we are offering a special New Year discount of £250 + VAT, plus a free copy of the Warren Knight social media training presentation on a handy memory stick! (normal yearly membership is £330 + VAT). Contact [support@rbald.org.uk](mailto:support@rbald.org.uk). ■





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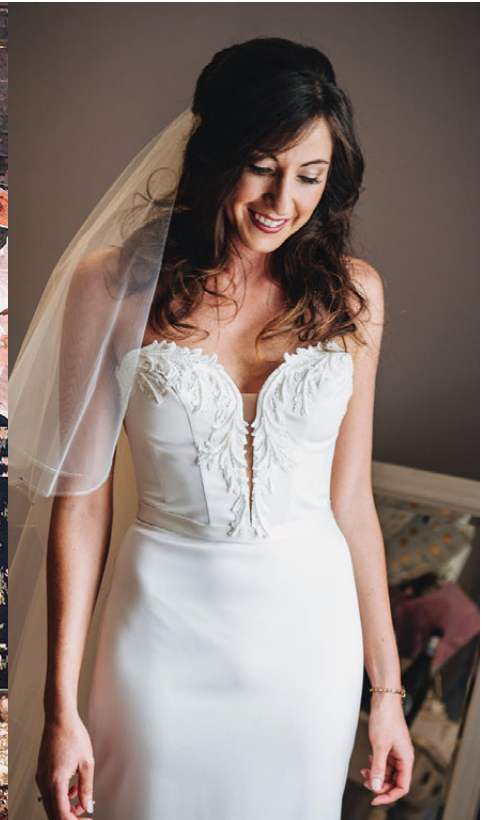
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# Features

ABI SAYS • THREE BOUTIQUES TELL ALL • REAL BRIDES GO SHOPPING • SHOP TALK • THE LATEST DECOR



## *Ultimate style*

Bridal shops in the UK are some of the best in the world... and when we see happy and smiling couples it's clear to see you are doing a great job! The bride pictured here found her dream dress at Wedding Belles of Four Oaks – read her story and meet two other real brides on page 91. Catch up with your peers and see what is working well for them; we meet three inspiring shops this month on page 87. Talking of inspiring boutiques, don't miss this issue's Shop Talk where we meet Bridal Buyer Award winner Pure Brides (page 94). We've also got some sage words of advice from the fantastic Abi Neill, and we take a closer look at some interior trends to get your boutique looking fantastic in 2020. Turn over for more! ■

MARTA MAY PHOTOGRAPHY

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# ABI ON... STAFF MATTERS

This month, our columnist Abi Neill discusses the tricky subject of dealing with your employees

**H**appy New Year one and all! How

were the Christmas festivities for you? I for one really cherish a proper family break over the Christmas period so I really hope that, like me, you will have enjoyed some well-earned time off. I tend to spend Christmas in a food and gin-induced coma! It's the little things for me at Christmas; chilly family dog walks by day and then feet up, log fire lit, a G&T in hand, good ol' Quality Street sweet papers piling up – magic!

You'll know if you read my last column that I was glad to see the back of 2019. It was a turbulent year for a few reasons (primarily because of the fire at the shop) and also because of a few 'staff matters,' but I've got to say that 2020 is looking and feeling really good so far and I'm optimistically predicting a strong year ahead. And now that we've condensed our head count, personally speaking, I'm feeling the best that I've felt about team leadership in a while.

So what thoughts do you have when I say the words 'team leadership' and 'staff'? I'm virtually laughing here as I type, I'm pretty sure that if you've employed people at the very least you'll eye roll and reach for a drink before answering. Console yourself; I don't know many business owners who find it easy. At best, it requires constant focus, energy, creativity and enthusiasm. And when things get tough, it's



all-consuming.

This year (amongst others) I've worked with three retail businesses on challenging staff related projects and situations. One retailer client of mine has been pushed to the brink with tricky team members! It's been really hard going for her and, coupled with her own personal health challenges, it's been difficult and emotional. Employing, managing and training staff is one of those business areas that can sap the very life force from within – and that's on a good day! It's intense. And sometimes extremely difficult. It's exhausting, in part, because you need to work side-by-side with staff regularly, appraise and assess them frequently, so that if you

find them to be unsuitable or surplus to requirement, you can move them on quickly.

If you're readying yourself for your first recruit, you should aim to approach employment formally from the get go, with a streamlined recruitment process and a supportive set of forms and documents. It sounds like a lot of work but I suggest you have an application form, interview templates, job description, contract, offer letter, induction/training documents and performance (or appraisal) process. In my opinion, these are fundamental. They'll help you to stay organised and in control. Most importantly, they'll help you communicate your expectations – plus they'll develop and drive performance (or termination of employment) if required.





Here are a few other staff related pointers, these are the things I often find myself discussing whilst debating the perplexing subject of personnel with clients and friends...

#### RELATIONSHIP

According to management research there's a clear link between caring and productivity and sometimes it's really important to be the 'friend' and to show you care. BUT be careful not to blur the edges and cross the line. Managers earn respect from their team partly through demonstration of positive leadership and this is harder to achieve when your relationship status becomes one of 'friends'. You will, and can, forge close relationships with your team without becoming their 'friend'. For me this is important. I consider myself close to our team and we socialise too, but first and foremost I want them to respect me as a boss and figure of authority.

#### LEADERSHIP

Avoid being a 'do as I say, not as I do' boss. It's important to practice what you preach – after all, how can anyone trust a manager who talks about one thing and does another? If you ask a member of your team to do something, make sure you'd be willing to do it yourself. If you implement new rules or office systems, or change how sales appointments are carried out, then you need to follow those rules and methods too.

#### MOTIVATION

As owners/managers (and ultimately the leaders of our bridal businesses) it's essential to approach our workplace with a positive and upbeat attitude. It's hard when some days you feel as though you could throttle your customers, suppliers and colleagues (or yourself) but enthusiasm is as contagious as a bad mood and it pays to remember that it will transfer to your colleagues. If you aspire to be a 'motivational manager' you need to ensure that staff feel good and take pride in what they do. Happy people are productive people, so taking time to say 'well done' can have a big impact on morale, resulting in more self-motivation. Keeping things fresh at work is also a key motivational instrument, because let's face it, all jobs can become monotonous. So, ensuring a steady flow of new bridal products or sales training throughout the year can keep staff focused and interested.

#### MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

Do your employees know exactly what's expected of them? I think this is one of the biggest problems in teams. Having concrete goals empowers your employees and keeps them focused on their work. It's imperative to explicitly outline what you expect from your team, including relevant deadlines and duties.

Sales staff must know what you're striving for in terms of revenue and/or sales units. And it's extremely important for them to know what your business goals and tasks are, and to be able to relate that to their own contribution. Our sales team know their own (and company) conversion rates by product, as well as our monthly targets against last year. On a good day, they're laser focused and work together to achieve it.

#### PRAISE & REWARD

Excluding Christmas, when did you all last go out for a drink or a meal? It's essential to treat your staff and reward them for hard work and there's a myriad of ways that you can say thank you, whether that's a random group text after a long and successful event or day, a few surprise yummy cakes, lunch out, or a gift voucher... The point is, whatever you decide to do, it doesn't have to be costly. A small surprise token gesture can make an impact if it acknowledges hard work. Motivationally speaking people tend to do their best when feeling valued and where recognition is given for a job well done. Praise isn't just a reaction to a great performance, it is the cause of it! Plus it's one of the oldest known management mantras and it is critical in terms of self-esteem.

*People tend to do their best when feeling valued, so it's essential that you treat your staff and reward them for their hard work*

Like many, I'm constantly striving to be a better boss. But sometimes, along with all of the other life roles that we play, it's so exhausting; mummy duties, friend and family duties, wife duties, domestic duties and God knows what else! I must be mental because I've just launched a book club for my friends called the 'Bookaholics' so that's yet another role to play – but luckily, it is great fun and a really worthwhile gathering of 14 bonkers, fun-loving friends chatting books and quaffing way too much wine on a school night. Off topic though it is, I highly recommend it.

To conclude; being a business boss and a good leader in our industry is bloody hard work, but to be frank, what a fabulous adventure it is, too! Advice from me regarding staff is that as you build your brilliant business and head into 2020 all guns a' blazing, you would be wise to invest time in securing the staffing element within your business (even from just the first employee) because it will literally go from strength to strength and can help prevent employee problems further down the line. Shout if I can help with any of it. Good luck with smashing 2020 and Happy New Year - I think it's going to be a brilliant one!

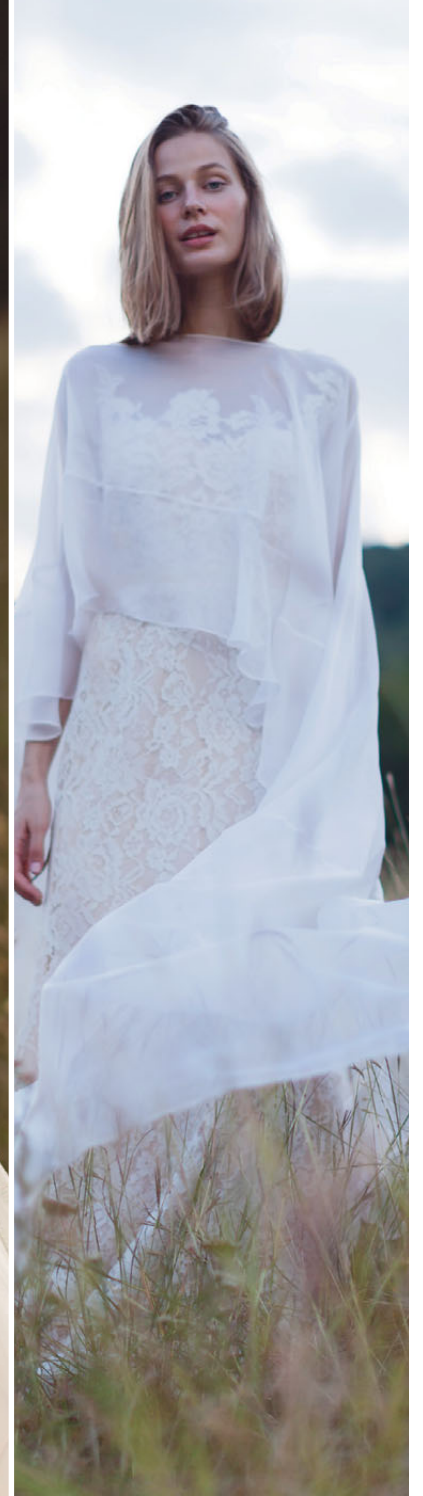
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# THREE SHOPS TELL ALL...

Running a bridal boutique comes with its fair share of challenges. We speak to three retailers about their business approach and their plans for 2020 ▶

WORDS JENNIFER GRIMBLE

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**Helen Williams**  
*Willow Bridal Boutique*  
**LOCATION** Middlewich, Cheshire

**Years in business** Three.

**Tell us a little about your shop** We offer an unrivalled luxury bridal experience, with the same high level of service regardless of a bride's budget or time frame. We also provide full in-house alterations.

**Who do you stock?** Allure Couture, Allure Romance, Ivory & Co, Watters, and Wtoo.

**Are you planning to change or add to your existing labels in 2020?** We have great relationships with our current suppliers. We like to carry no more than three suppliers at a time, although we have several labels from each to create choice for our brides. During 2020 we may add more if a designer fills a gap in the market for the boutique.

**How active are you with your website and social media?** Our website was nominated for Retailer Website Of The Year at the 2019 Bridal Buyer Awards. It was designed by me and I maintain all the content.

I plan my social media strategy a month ahead to ensure we're posting content that matters. We also add to our stories daily and share videos



and live interactions, so we can create a relationship with our brides prior to them visiting us in-store.

**Do you take part in trunk shows, designer days or any other special events you can tell us about?** We like to have a designer weekend or a trunk show every month. For us, it's a great way to promote our store and our collections to prospective brides.

**How many brides buy accessories from you?** We run styling appointments for every bride. Currently 80% of brides who purchase gowns from us go on to buy additional accessories.

**How has the past year's trading been?** We moved into larger premises in April 2019 and have seen a dramatic increase in sales. We were definitely restricting the business's growth by remaining in our old store.

**What would you like to see suppliers doing to support their retailers?** For us, suppliers need to speed their lead times up and have holding stock available for last-minute customers. Brides want things now – not in six months' time!

**From your point of view, what trends do you think will be big over the next year?**

Fashion-forward sleeves will definitely be a hit. I also think deep plunging necklines will be popular.



**Amber-Louise Moreton**  
*Louise Victoria Couture Bridal*  
**LOCATION** Tiddington, Stratford-upon-Avon

**Years in business** Less than a year.

**Tell us a little about your shop** We're a luxurious bridal boutique located in Tiddington, just a mile and a half from the beautiful and historic town of Stratford-upon-Avon.

We have our own forecourt parking right out front and a beautiful yet modern showroom with an exquisite collection of sumptuous dresses.

We stock gorgeous gowns from the very best designers around the world and concentrate on a bespoke shopping experience. Our focus is always on the happiness of our brides.

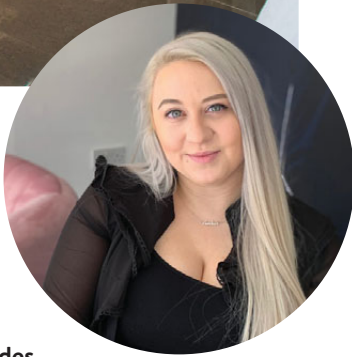
**Who do you stock?** Blue by Enzoani, Morilee, Wtoo by Watters, Randy Fenoli, Nicole Spose and Tiffanys.

**Are you planning to change or add to your existing labels in 2020?** Yes, we're looking to add one more designer to our boutique's collection.

**How active are you with your website and social media?** VERY! We're constantly updating our website and social media pages with images of our dresses, details of new events or trunk shows, as well as any other exciting news. It's a really great way to target our brides and get our business noticed.

**Do you take part in trunk shows, designer days or any other special events you can tell us about?** We really enjoy doing regular designer trunk show weekends and





also really love exhibiting at the National Wedding Show in Birmingham.

**How many brides buy accessories from you?**

Near enough all of our brides purchase some sort of accessory from us. We find that a lot of our brides buy their veil and hair pieces from us, but other items, such as jewellery, are gifted to them by a family member instead.

**How has the past year's trading been – have things been better or worse than expected?** The past year for us has been much better than expected! Our quietest month was August, which we had anticipated due to the summer holidays. Our best months for business were definitely June and September.

**What would you like to see suppliers doing to support their retailers?** One thing that I definitely think would be a great benefit for retailers would be for suppliers to send out bigger sized sample dresses when we loan them for trunk shows and events. Dress sizes, especially in bridal, need to reflect today's average woman and unfortunately we are finding that's not always the case.

**From your point of view, what trends do you think will be big over the next year?** We are predicting that A-line dresses, big trains, oversized bows and lots of sparkle will be in full demand with brides over the next year.



**Lisa Veitch**  
*Elisa Belle Bridal*  
**LOCATION** Barrowford, Lancashire

**Years in business** Eight months.

**Tell us a little about your shop** My boutique is housed inside an iconic building in the fabulous village of Barrowford. The interior was styled with a view to bringing luxury city style to Lancashire brides.

**Who do you stock?** Halfpenny London, Savin London, Sassi Holford, Caroline Castiglano, Stephanie Allin and Pronovias.

**Are you planning to change or add to your existing labels in 2020?**

We're a new business and it's been a steep learning curve. I've had a fantastic first season learning to understand my brides and what they want and I'm planning to use this knowledge to fine tune my collections.

**How active are you with your website and social media?** Social media is crucial to developing brand awareness. I largely keep my social media product specific, with a view to delivering meaningful content that will reach out to my target bride.

**Do you take part in trunk shows or any other events?** I embrace trunk shows and the value they deliver. It's a special experience for a bride.

**How many brides buy**

**accessories from you?** Most of my brides opt to wear a veil on their big day and will choose their accessories from my selection. An accessory appointment can be a brilliant way to bring the bridal entourage back together and allow the bride another memorable occasion.

**How has the past year's trading been?** It's my first year, so I have no previous trading experience to compare. However, I'm incredibly pleased with how my business has performed so far; it's been a very successful start.

**What would you like to see suppliers doing to support their retailers?**

When I started, a huge investment was needed to achieve the desired level of stock and choice of styles. Going forward, I have a keen eye on sustainability and whilst I'm mindful of the need to ensure strong brand representation, it would be good to see lower minimum order requirements alongside greater stock purchase incentives.

**From your point of view, what trends do you think will be big over the next year?**

Texture and fabulous fabrics – my brides are embracing the amazing array of materials that are available and I think a beautifully unique textile can really set a dress apart. ■







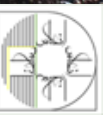
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# REAL BRIDE Q+A

Three real brides tell us about their wedding dress shopping experiences - find out what they loved



**THE BRIDE:** *Catherine Emily Thompson*  
**BOUTIQUE:** *Halo and Wren*  
**DRESS:** *Arabella by Wtoo by Watters*

**BOUTIQUES VISITED:** One.

**WHAT DID YOU LIKE ABOUT THE BOUTIQUE YOU PURCHASED YOUR DRESS FROM?**

I was aware of Halo and Wren before I was engaged and before it had even opened. I loved everything about the shop. I knew it was the place I would find my dream gown!

On the day of my appointment, I felt extremely anxious. I had watched a lot of *Don't Tell The Bride* and I was worried about what this shopping experience would bring. Although I knew I loved everything about Jemma's shop and what it offered, I felt anxious about the process of finding my dress. However, this anxiety vanished straight away in Jemma's company – she made me feel extremely comfortable and at ease.

Halo and Wren also has a smaller selection of dresses, which was excellent for me as I am extremely indecisive. I tried on eight dresses in total and in that mix I found my gown and, with a few little tweaks, the dress became my dream dress. Jemma made this possible for me as she has an excellent seamstress called Sarah. They both shared my vision.

**HOW DID THE BOUTIQUE MAKE YOU FEEL EXTRA SPECIAL?**

Jemma goes above and beyond and does not only help you find your wedding dress, she also offers you support. During my wedding preparations, I messaged Jemma numerous times, not only about my dress but also about other wedding details. Jemma happily listened and provided advice. She even came to my wedding to 'floo' my dress!

**WHY DID YOU NOT GO TO ANY OTHER BOUTIQUES?**

This was just my personal preference. I knew I'd love Halo and Wren and knew it would be where I would find my gown. Although I did not go to other bridal boutiques, I looked at many shops online but most of them had rails full of stock that put me off instantly. ▶





NAME: *Kelly Sian Blumberg*  
BOUTIQUE: *Wedding Belles of Four Oaks*  
DRESS: *Paloma Blanca 4743 in Beaded Satin*

**BOUTIQUES VISITED:** Two.  
**WHAT DID YOU LIKE ABOUT THE BOUTIQUE YOU PURCHASED YOUR DRESS FROM?**

They were a stockist of the designer/ dress I had seen in Australia, and I had wanted to find a store locally so I could show it to my mum. Turns out I went for a totally different dress in the end! The team at Wedding Belles of Four Oaks were so lovely and I just had the best experience from the moment I arrived. And of course, I found the dreamiest dress!

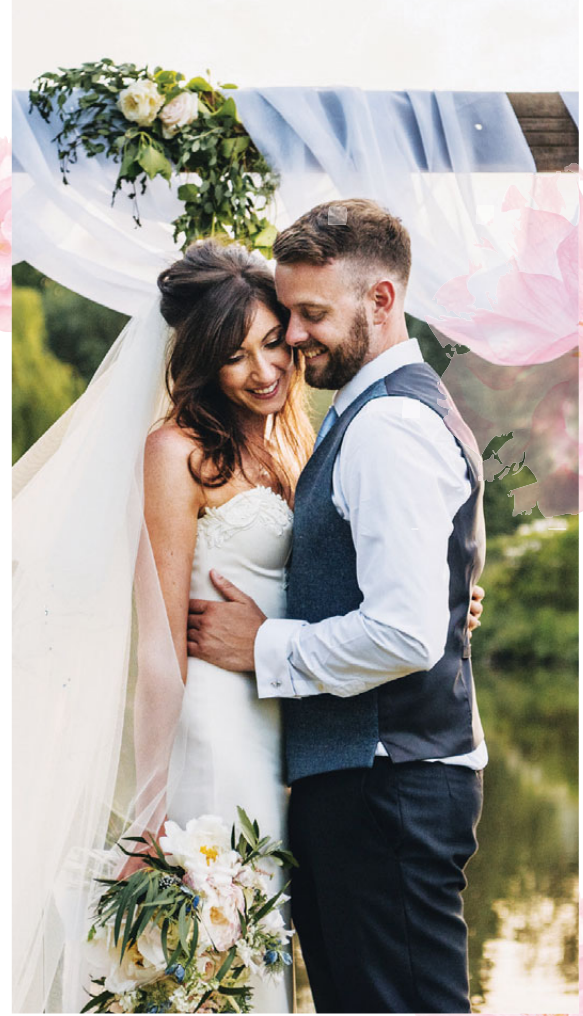
**HOW DID YOUR BOUTIQUE MAKE YOU FEEL SPECIAL?**

On arrival they welcomed me by name and asked details about my big day. I had fantastic service from the moment I entered the boutique, to the day I collected my dress. They

made me feel like I was welcomed into their family. The store is also stunning and their dress collection is perfect, with so many styles to suit every individual. I really loved that they chose the dresses for you and always gave you plenty of time - retrying dresses on until you found 'the one'.

**CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT EXPERIENCES IN OTHER BOUTIQUES?**

The first boutique I visited was a small store with limited dresses and you had to choose dresses you wanted to try on (which puts pressure on you!). Wedding Belles of Four Oaks choose the dresses for you based on what they think would suit, and I personally think this was a much better approach!



MARTA WAY PHOTOGRAPHY

THE BRIDE: *Sabina Piwowarczyk*  
BOUTIQUE: *Eden Bridal, Belfast*  
DRESS: *Lotus by Enzoani*

**BOUTIQUES VISITED:** Six.  
**WHAT DID YOU LIKE ABOUT THE BOUTIQUE YOU PURCHASED YOUR DRESS FROM?**

I really liked the fact that Kimberley and her staff took the time to get to know me and gave me the opportunity to try on different dresses. The whole atmosphere was really relaxing, I didn't feel uncomfortable even for a minute. Kimberley is very experienced and knowledgeable - she even helped me choose a lovely headpiece to complement my hairstyle and go well with the gown. From start to finish the whole experience was superb.

**HOW DID THE BOUTIQUE MAKE YOU FEEL SPECIAL?**

Eden Bridal was actually the first boutique I went for an appointment. I really didn't know what to expect... I was really nervous, but Kimberley made me feel very welcome and helped me relax and enjoy the experience! It was nice that the staff wanted to get to know me, asked about the venue and my wedding

plans. Being able to choose a few dresses that I wanted to try was also great - again I didn't know what to expect, but they set a very high bar for the other boutiques I visited afterwards.

**CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT EXPERIENCES IN OTHER BOUTIQUES?**

Some boutiques were not really interested in finding out what style I liked - instead they just tried to get me to buy a dress they thought I should like. I even experienced some ignorance, by not having enough time to see myself properly in the mirror or being able to discuss how I looked or felt with my maid of honour. Some stores don't seem to care that you're buying a dress for the most important day of your life - they are only interested in a sale. It was really disappointing - brides-to-be should be enjoying this experience, celebrating that they're getting married and not feeling sad dealing with a rude salesperson. ■







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#### RETAIL FOCUS

# PURE BRIDES



Anna Hare's customer service background stood her in good stead for bridal retail and now her award-winning boutique is setting a precedent. We speak to Anna about her business approach

WORDS JENNIFER GRIMBLE

IMAGES RICHARD JARMY PHOTOGRAPHY

With a corporate background, Anna Hare spent years running a customer satisfaction programme for British Telecom. "The client experience has long been at the heart of what I do," she explains. After taking voluntary redundancy, she began project managing a barn conversion, which is now her family home. "I absolutely loved it, but after the house was finished I needed a new challenge."

After considering her passions and skills, Anna decided to set up her own business, creating bespoke wedding stationery and shoes. This led her to The Harrogate Bridal Show, to gain inspiration and contacts for her new venture. "Harrogate is where my love affair with the sector began," says Anna. "I fell in love with the gowns and I knew that instead I should open a bridal shop."

Anna had studied textiles and garment construction, so had a keen eye for quality, fabrics, and workmanship. "It was just a case of finding designers I had confidence in," she says. Anna sourced collections that were both affordable and well suited to the Norfolk market. "There were very few bridal shops in the area at the time, so there was a real

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Chic, feminine and serene, Pure Brides blends luxury labels with a relaxed and approachable atmosphere



opportunity for me to offer local brides something different.”

Once Anna had found the right designers, everything started to fall into place. “I had my eye on a central shop and my bid was accepted. It was all systems go until I opened the doors in January 2004.”

Anna’s resilience and commitment to adapting has helped her stay focused, overcoming numerous hurdles along the way, to secure a handful of accolades, including Bridalwear Retailer of the Year - England at the Bridal Buyer Awards 2019. “It’s taken 15 years to get to where we are today. It’s been a long, hard slog and the industry has changed almost beyond recognition, but I still get a buzz out of running my own business.”

### CUSTOMER CARE

From their first contact with Pure, each bride is made to feel valued, and everything Anna does is aimed at ensuring that happens. For her, owning a boutique isn’t just a business, it’s a way of life. “Energy and enthusiasm is infectious and I always try to lead by example,” she says. “I have the most brilliant team and when you walk into my shop, you can really feel the difference.”

For the team, social media has become a huge part of its approach to client communication, both to encourage brides through the door and to respond to key questions and comments in a speedy manner.

Always on the look-out for ideas on how to gain an edge over her nearby competitors, Anna also decided to develop an app. Pure Weddings launched 18 months ago and the tool is aimed at enhancing the overall customer experience. “To my knowledge, we’re the

only store in the region to offer something like this,” she explains. “It’s another way for us to stay in touch with our brides and it gives them handy wedding planning tools and tips, too.” The app also provides a trusted supplier directory, a digital dress catalogue, and

an appointment booking system, allowing her brides to browse and make decisions in their own time.

In store, the boutique boasts an interactive screen, which Anna also designed. “It allows brides to access pictures and videos of our dresses, watch our designer catwalk shows and promos, check in on social media and much more,” she says. “It’s just another means of engaging with our customers in a modern and functional way.”

In a bid to be more eco-friendly, Anna is also striving towards going paperless. “I’m really excited about our sustainability options,” she explains. “I want to minimise and maybe even neutralise our carbon footprint. I think it’s important for our brides to see that we’re forward-thinking.” These things combined help Pure Brides stay fresh and relevant. “I’m confident in what I offer and my passion never fades. My focus is what gives me the energy to move forwards.”

Being quick to adapt to the ever-changing expectations of the modern bride means continually evolving. For Anna, it’s never been just about hanging dresses on rails and now, the experience she creates for her brides

is of the upmost importance. “After 15 years in business, I love it as much as I ever have and I genuinely feel that sets my store apart.”

### A BRIDE’S JOURNEY

At Pure Brides, the clients’ journey starts long before ▶

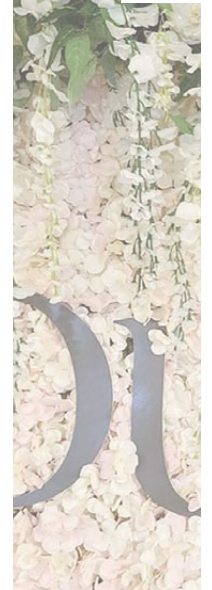


### A TYPICAL TUESDAY

“Tuesdays vary every week, but I’m always in store. I’m often at my desk, setting up marketing campaigns, proofing copy, or getting on top of my filing, accounts and inbox! I’m on the shop floor less nowadays, but recent staffing challenges have meant I’ve seen many more brides recently. This has been invaluable in understanding how the store works and has helped me to appreciate the small things that make a big difference.”



This boutique is always one step ahead, offering innovative options for today’s demanding modern brides





Pure Brides offers a variety of high quality styles from the industry's leading designers



### TOP TIPS

- Be resilient and confident in your plan and don't worry about what everyone else is up to. Self-belief is everything and energy is infectious, so lead by example.
- As a small business, you can react quickly to market pressures and changes, so use that to your advantage. Be quick to adapt and fully embrace your brides' outlook.
- Know your numbers and measure your results. If something isn't working, then stop doing it. You won't know what works unless you have key measurables in place.
- Set yourself real targets that are meaningful and challenging. Always aim for the stars!

they enter the boutique. "Most of our brides reserve their appointments online, but however they do so, we always follow up their booking with a telephone call."

During this conversation, Anna and her team explain to the bride exactly what she can expect from her visit, easing the stress and anxiety often associated with wedding dress shopping. "This chat is also the perfect opportunity for us to glean some useful information about the bride, prior to her arrival."

Each customer also receives a special gift in the post ahead of their appointment. "This creates more work for us, but it allows us to stand out from other stores. From that point on, every interaction a bride has with us is positive."

After finding her dream dress, each bride is given an appointment with the boutique's self-employed seamstress, Michel, who has worked with Anna for over a decade.

And throughout their journey, even beyond their wedding day, the store stays in contact with each bride, reinforcing their trust in what the boutique is about. "Alongside that, staying in regular contact also strengthens our image and reputation. Our brides know they can get in touch any time and always receive the same exceptional level of service."

### THE GOWNS

When selecting her stock, Anna makes sure every gown meets her high standards. "We have a bit of a reputation with our suppliers for taking ages to make decisions," says Anna. "That's because each dress has to pay its way. Gone are the days of taking risks. This is a tough business and dead stock taking up valuable space can quickly lead to failure."

For Anna, all her designers are selected based on the quality of their gowns and the service and support they provide. "Over the years I've learned the hard way that talk is cheap. If a label can't back up its promises, then they're not worth it."

In fact, Anna always asks around before taking on a new label. "I never make snap decisions. I'm not saying that I don't buy a gown if I love it, but I always do my homework."

The result of this controlled approach is clear to see. An array of stunning dresses from iconic designers can be found decorating the store's rails. Essence of Australia, Eternity, Enzoani, and all three Maggie Sottero labels make Pure

Brides all about excellence and reputation.

Offering something for every bride, from chic and modern silhouettes to sexy and sassy plus size options, the store aims for luxury at a range of price points.■





22-24 MARCH 2020

# WHITE GALLERY

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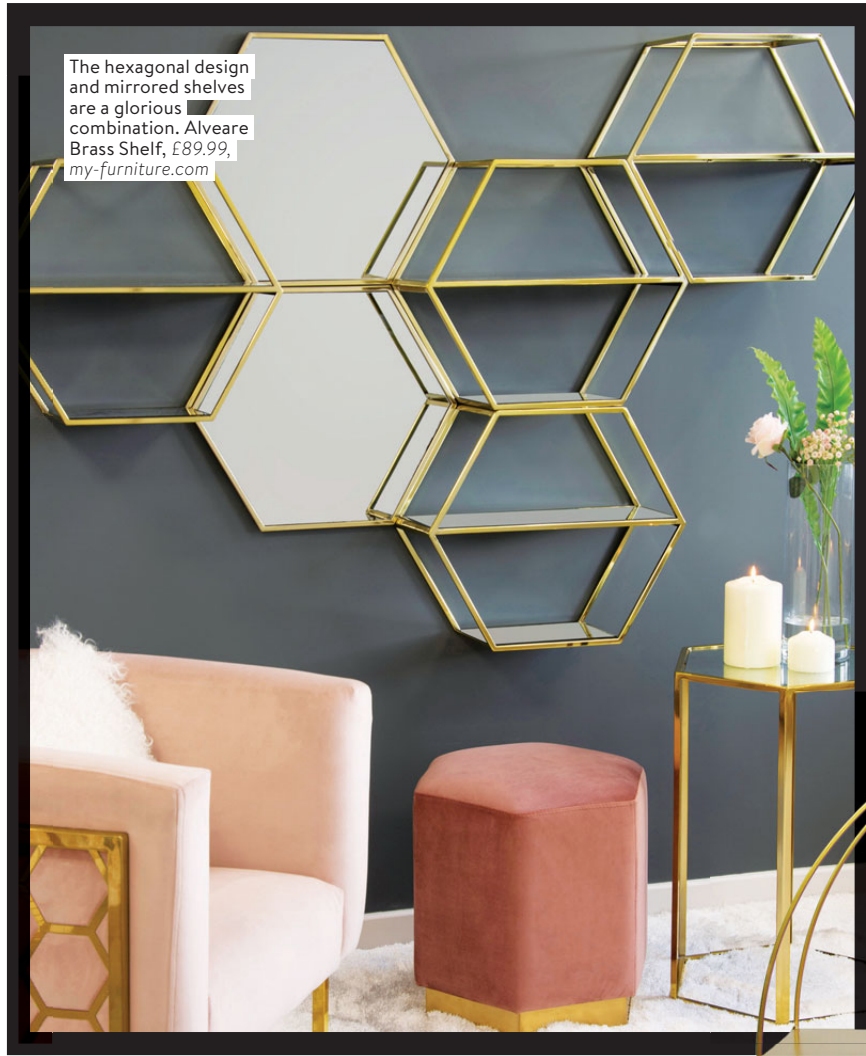
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So elegant! We love this shabby chic sage green unit. Tall Slim Glazed Display Cabinet, £586.95, [melodymaison.co.uk](http://melodymaison.co.uk)



The hexagonal design and mirrored shelves are a glorious combination. Alveare Brass Shelf, £89.99, [my-furniture.com](http://my-furniture.com)



This glamorous Art Deco-style piece is the epitome of elegance. Kyla Open Shelving Unit, £399, [cultfurniture.com](http://cultfurniture.com)



Glamorous and bang on trend. We adore this tactile style. Round Metal Display Unit, £132, [giselagramham.co.uk](http://giselagramham.co.uk)



This tall ladder shelf unit is ideal for a contemporary interior. Tall Ladder Bookcase Shelf Unit, £94.95, [melodymaison.co.uk](http://melodymaison.co.uk)

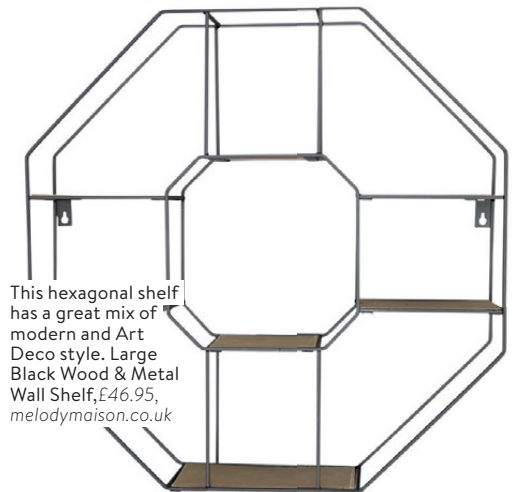
SHOP THE TREND

# Out on DISPLAY

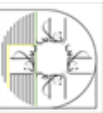
Show off your accessory options in style!  
Check out these amazing cabinets



We just can't get enough of marble! This small white shelf with gold brackets will add a touch of glamour. Small White Marble Shelf With Brackets, £45, [audenza.com](http://audenza.com)



This hexagonal shelf has a great mix of modern and Art Deco style. Large Black Wood & Metal Wall Shelf, £46.95, [melodymaison.co.uk](http://melodymaison.co.uk)





This distinctive design will add an ultra-trendy industrial edge. Searle Free Standing Shelf Unit, £396, wooden furniture-store.co.uk



Brides will love this candy floss pink and gold display. So pretty! Circular Wall Shelf, £36.95, melodymaison.co.uk



If you're bored of traditional horizontal shelves, look no further! Pascal Multi-Shelf Unit, £1,334, sweetpeaandwillow.com

Original vintage display cabinets really don't come more colourful than this. Vintage Green Display Cabinet, £185, caramangashop.co.uk



This mid-century style cabinet has huge retro appeal. Miniforms Juno Display Cabinet, £2,120, gomodern.co.uk



This concertina-style unit is ideal for contemporary settings. Chevron Shelving Unit, £549, atkinandthyme.co.uk



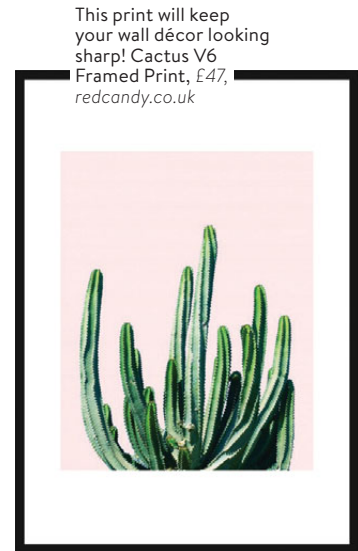




We love this cactus-inspired dot design pot. Bohemia Enamel Hanging Planter, Lilac, £16, [bohemiadesign.com](http://bohemiadesign.com)



This vibrant set up would make the perfect welcome area. Products from £22-£228, all [audenza.com](http://audenza.com)



This print will keep your wall décor looking sharp! Cactus V6 Framed Print, £47, [redcandy.co.uk](http://redcandy.co.uk)



These cute little hand-painted pots are perfect for small plants. Small Concrete Geometric Plant Pot Pink, £25, [roseandgrey.co.uk](http://roseandgrey.co.uk)



With its textured palm leaf design, this is the perfect piece for jumping on the botanical style trend. Round Glass Embossed Vase, £39, [cultfurniture.com](http://cultfurniture.com)

SHOP THE TREND

# Blush BOTANIC

Who knew this combination could be so pretty? Perfect for a new year makeover



This wallpaper is the perfect twist on the tropical theme. Graduate Collection Toucan & Beecatcher Wallpaper, £125, [limelace.co.uk](http://limelace.co.uk)



This pink artificial wax flower stem is so realistic you will not notice the difference! Wax Flower Stem, £12, [tch.net](http://tch.net)

Bring a sense of drama to your floral display with the faux pink amaranthus spray. Faux Pink Amaranthus Spray, £24.95 for three, [audenza.com](http://audenza.com)



As elegant as it is adorable, the gold and green monstera leaf pattern is bang on trend. Elizabeth Scarlett Jungle Leaf Cushion, £50, [sweetpeaandwillow.com](http://sweetpeaandwillow.com)



Soft, snuggly and the perfect colour. Blush Pink Tibetan Sheepskin Cushion, £75, [audenza.com](http://audenza.com)





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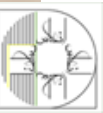
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# Instagram INSPIRATION

We've been out and about snapping the world of bridal. Here's a few of our favourite posts from the past few weeks



Head to [bridalbuyer.com](http://bridalbuyer.com) to find out more from affordable bridal fashion label, [@missstellayork](https://www.instagram.com/missstellayork)



We have a preview of the [@catherineparrybridal](https://www.instagram.com/catherineparrybridal) 2020 collection... take a look online



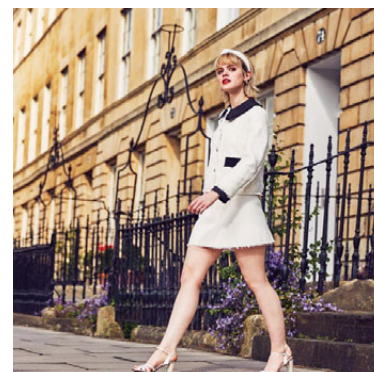
[bridalbuyer.com](http://bridalbuyer.com) meets Merche Segarra, the designer behind Spanish bridal brand [@jesuspeiroofficial](https://www.instagram.com/jesuspeiroofficial)



See a sneak preview of the latest designs by [@victoriakaygowns](https://www.instagram.com/victoriakaygowns) on the [#bridalbuyer](http://bridalbuyer.com) website



Head to [bridalbuyer.com](http://bridalbuyer.com) to catch up with Jenn.Y, the proprietor behind [@jadorebridaldesign](https://www.instagram.com/jadorebridaldesign)



We have an exclusive online interview with Rainbow Club on the rebrand of their well-established bridal shoe brand

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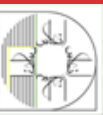
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