



THE VENUE BUSINESS BOOT CAMP

Smart, usable advice for running your wedding venue.

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venuebusinessbootcamp.com



How to Curate a Standout Wedding Gallery

Image Curation + Storytelling Strategies for your Venue's Photography

We all know the importance of high-quality, professional images, but did you know it's *equally* as important that **your photography is backed by a curation strategy and storytelling approach?**

Here's why:

Couples have access to endless wedding content at their fingertips. They need to be able to place themselves at your venue as they plan and envision their wedding day.

Storytelling brings out the *emotional* component of the wedding planning process to help couples connect with your venue.

Are you ready to curate a standout wedding gallery?

Let's do this.



If you are an Established Venue

Go through your current inventory of professional photos and ask yourself:

Do you have the following establishing shots?

- External shot of your venue
- Getting ready spaces for the couple
- Favorite first look and / or wedding party locations
- Ceremony setup
- Ceremony shots (may include multiple locations)
- Cocktail area
- Romantic couple shots around the property
- Reception setup (may include multiple locations)
- Reception moments (dancing, cake cutting, speeches, etc.)
- Couple's exit

Do these images show off your venue's superpowers?

- **What physical features of the property get mentioned most?** This could include event spaces, views or panoramas, flora and fauna, design or décor elements, etc. Make sure your photos highlight the best points about your property—from the wide open views to the thoughtful details.

Are your images current?

- **Updating photos annually is ideal**—perhaps staggering the seasons to capture your venue in all its year-round, seasonal glory.

Other considerations:

- Depending on your venue, you may want to include **aerial or wide angle shots** that show the layout of your property.
- If your venue is more of a **blank slate**, be sure to include a few different wedding styles or setups to showcase your venue's versatility.
- Be sure to pay special attention to **diversity and inclusion**. Couples want to see themselves represented! This includes race and ethnicity, age and generation, identity and orientation, culture and religion, socioeconomic status, and people with disabilities.



If you are a New Venue

Some tips for building up your photo inventory:

Connect with a Photographer

As soon as you feel your venue is camera ready, you'll want to find a photographer you jibe with! Do your research to find a seasoned photographer with a style and portfolio that matches your venue and vision.

Come up with some type of collaborative plan (maybe you'll pay their rates, maybe you'll do some type of trade). Use this as an opportunity to pick their brain about your property's setup and lighting. If you're not ready to plan a styled shoot, you can still do a lot with basic photos of your property. Even showing off internal "blank canvas" shots of your venue can help wedding planners and potential couples envision the possibilities of the space.

Get Headshots of your Team

If your team is available when you're working with the photographer, grab a few quick headshots to have for your website or to post on social media. People love getting an idea of who they'll be working with and smiling photos of your team begin to establish a connection with your venue before couples even reach out.

Consider a Styled Shoot

A styled shoot is a photoshoot at your venue of a mock wedding setup, created and designed by a team of wedding vendors. This is a great opportunity to highlight your venue's style and superpowers, to strategically position your visual marketing, and to illustrate the possibilities of hosting a wedding on your property.

These images can be used on your website, blog, social media platforms, and even submitted to blogs and magazines. If there is a popular local publication in your area, you can submit your styled shoot photos to help get your venue some extra exposure and also to build social proof for your business. These shoots provide you with fantastic marketing materials!

→ So should you take the plunge and host a styled shoot? Keep reading...



Should you do a Styled Shoot?

Some key things to consider:

What does a styled shoot cost?

Styled shoots are usually collaborative, which means that everyone covers their own expenses and donates their time and talents. However, sometimes it involves extra out-of-pocket costs. If you are the one organizing the shoot, you may want to consider offering to cover some of the costs for the vendor team (e.g. travel expenses or specialty products). Or at least provide them with a good dinner + drinks for their hard work!

Styled shoots can also be time intensive and may require months of prep work. You'll need to curate a vendor team, create a mood board or lookbook, layout the logistics and timing of the day, figure out a shot list, research submission opportunities, etc. etc.

However, we believe that for both new and established venues, they're a great way to curate the type of visual content that will showcase your venue in its best possible light.

Who organizes the shoot?

There are a few ways to put together a styled shoot. Picking the way that serves your venue best will save you time and ensure you get the type of photos you need. As a venue owner / coordinator, you can organize everything yourself and put together a team of vendors in your area that you feel will help create your vision. You could also collaborate with a local planner or wedding designer and have them plan the shoot. We've also seen venues do open styled shoots through their local networking groups, or hiring a styled shoot company to coordinate everything for them.

When is the best time to host a styled shoot?

Time of year is an important consideration. Most people prefer to do styled shoots during the off-season, but try to schedule a shoot for the time of year when you feel your venue is at its peak. For example, outdoor Virginia venues tend to look a bit bleak in the winter, so spring styled shoots are best. And if you're a venue in Vermont, consider the timing of the fall foliage.

Time of day is important, too! The lighting can make or break your styled shoot, so get with your photographer to suss out the best time of day to get the gorgeous, glowing photos you desire.



Getting Your Venue Photo-Ready

Tips to get the best shots possible:

Follow the Light!

Carefully consider the time of day when the photo session will take place. You may need to schedule outside of normal business hours if it accommodates better lighting for photos.

Be Wedding-Day Ready

Make sure your venue is clean and camera-ready as it would be on a wedding day. This may require your team to plan logistics a bit more—from bringing in a cleaning crew to removing anything unsightly or perfecting the landscaping—but it will make things a lot easier for you and your photographer.

Plan Carefully & Communicate Clearly

Have a solid plan in place, and communicate clearly with your photographer to ensure you get all the shots you want. You may want to map out the many uses of these images in advance. For example, if you plan to use them on your website, you'll most likely need a mix of portrait and landscape-oriented images to fit the different pages. And if you're going to design marketing PDFs or graphics, having blank "copy space" will allow you to add text over the images. Things to think about!

Have Fun!

Take a deep breath and enjoy the process of procuring new, fabulous images of your venue! Not only is it a great opportunity to build your portfolio and allow your venue to shine, it's also a way to build relationships with talented photographers. Win-win.

Pro Tip: All of these considerations can be applied to videos and relationships with videographers, too! Short-form video is all the rage these days, so it's something to consider. You may even find a photographer that does both! #twobirdsonestone

