

# A PERFECT MATCH

Weddings offer an opportunity for volume business

by Amanda Baltazar

**T**he cost of the average wedding is \$26,327, according to a 2005 survey by The Fairchild Bridal Group. This represents a golden opportunity for New Age retailers, because it can lead to large-volume orders. With a little creativity and some lateral thinking, ratcheting up your sales by selling products for weddings—and other events—could be a match made in heaven.



## Song of Ireland

Many engaged couples visit Song of Ireland in South Chatham, Mass. looking for Celtic wedding bands, but other products suitable for weddings then draw their interest, owner Kathy White-Burke explains.

The biggest sellers are stones printed with the couple's names and the marriage date, but White-Burke also sells throws with an Irish wedding blessing, wedding CDs, and more. She also carries two cabinets of wedding gifts in the store, one displaying Galway crystal and a unique item—wedding bells engraved with a saying stating that if there's a disagreement between the couple, one of them should ring the bell for harmony.

Her biggest business is in favors, which are typically either the engraved stones or personalized bookmarks.

While building a wedding business isn't a lot of work, it does require some. Wedding products are displayed on a table and Burke-White also mentions this business on her website ([www.songofirelandonline.com](http://www.songofirelandonline.com)). She also runs a continuous advertisement in a local newspaper.

Burke-White produces a Celtic wedding brochure, which provides ideas to people planning weddings or looking for gifts. She gives this to prospective brides for free and sells it to other customers for \$2.95. Contrary to what you might expect, the wedding business is a year-round business, "because people are always planning ahead," Burke-White says.

## Lammers Glass and Gifts

Bride-and-groom sun-catchers that stand on the top of the wedding cake are popular according to Kristin Lammers, who helps run Lammers Glass and Gifts in Powells Point, N.C. "After the wedding the couple can hang it up in their home, or it becomes their first Christmas tree ornament," she explains. Sun-catchers are also popular favors, but are typically only given to the bridal party, since they cost around \$30 each. They are good favors, says Lammers, because they aren't thrown away like so many other types of favor.

Also popular at this store are candles and sachets with potpourri. "But this isn't necessarily less costly," Lammers points out. One person wanted real lavender from the fields, which can be expensive. Average prices for candles and potpourri are \$3 to \$4, and putting the candles in small bags can increase their prices.



Stones

### Before and After

Place card holders and favors are the best-selling wedding items for Brenda Burlaugh, owner of Before & After ([www.beforeandafterannapolis.com](http://www.beforeandafterannapolis.com)), an online retailer based in Annapolis, Md.

River, marble, or glass stones make the most popular tokens, she says, either printed or engraved with positive words like “believe,” “imagine,” “hope” or “passion.” Stones can also be customized (which takes six to eight days), but “love” is by far the most popular word. Some brides opt for an assortment of words so each table at the wedding reception gets a variety.

Brides can order any amount with no minimum, although orders are usually for around 100 stones. Each stone costs \$1.25-\$1.50 (less for bulk orders). “They’re really inexpensive wedding favors that pack a punch,” Burlaugh says. “They’re motivational, attractive, and very positive.”

Pocket tokens are also popular, Burlaugh says, particularly angels. The tokens cost \$1.10 each, although prices drop if customers order in bulk. For a slightly higher sale, she sells small organza gift bags (40¢ each), which cinch at the top and look great holding the token.

Because it’s not a huge part of her business, she doesn’t do a lot of advertising. She has linked her website with search engines—a paid service, which means her store will be listed if someone searches for something relevant. She also sends out a print catalog to around 20,000 existing customers. Nonetheless, she gets orders from all over the U.S., as well as other English-speaking countries such as Canada, the U.K., and Australia.



### The Blue Trumpet

The Blue Trumpet ([www.thebluetrumpet.com](http://www.thebluetrumpet.com)), a wholesale business in Needham, Mass., finds that the most popular wedding and event items are small lotus tea lights, which are often used as decorative accents and as favors.

Owner Bill Bright recommends that retailers looking to boost sales with some wedding or event business put up a display in their store, along with some signage. Emailing customers is also a good idea. “This concept should be very attractive to retailers because they can sell in volume,” he says.

The challenge, he adds, can be how to encourage customers to think about New Age products in terms of meeting wedding requirements. “It’s not an easy and quick path for retailers, but you can take three or four products with a good price point and cluster them in the corner of the store. It’s a good way to get people thinking.”

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