

One Objection, Six Responses



She found “the one” ... but doesn’t buy because she wants the experience to continue.

With the bride’s increasing and some say insatiable desire for an “experience” during her gown shopping, it’s also becoming more prevalent for her to object to buying from the first store she visits out of desire to keep the party going. . . even when she’s found “the one.”

Though we’ve touched on this in recent articles on developing and evolving the experience you create and offer in your store, we thought we’d dive in a bit deeper and reach out to key bridal business consultants for their suggestions on how to best handle this objection, presented in their own words.

As you might expect, there is a bit of overlap in the guidance offered, but we’ve chosen not to edit out those minor redundancies as those points are

You must uncover the root of her objection.

worthy of emphasis.

Contributors include:

- **Alan Berg**, wedding and event Certified Speaking Professional and Global Speaking Fellow
- **Ann Campeau**, director, National Bridal Retailers Association; Strut, Tempe, Ari. and Long Beach, Calif.
- **Beth Chapman**, Beth Chapman Styling + Consulting; White Dress by the shore, Clinton, Conn.
- **Lynn Crandall**, Lynn Crandall Consulting; The Bridal Collection, Denver
- **Nayri Kalayjian**, Wedding

Fashion Expert; Lovella Bridal, Glendale, Calif.

- **Michelle McFarland**, president, Better Bridal Group; The Wedding Shoppe, Michigan

Alan Berg

CSP, Global Speaking Fellow

While it’s frustrating as a sales consultant to know that a bride has found “the one” but wants to keep shopping, it’s important to understand that not all of the objections are the same.

People buy in different ways, so the root of her objection is where the answer will lie. It’s also important to have the self-awareness to realize when you’re dealing with someone who buys in a very different way than you do. Some people are impulsive,

Don't let her leave without setting an expectation for the next step.

some are not. I have two sons and one is a financial analyst, the other a graphic designer. My analyst son analyzes almost every decision. My graphic designer son is more impulsive.

How important is this decision ... to her?

Another consideration is how important this decision is to this particular customer. In the book *"The Paradox of Choice,"* Barry Schwartz talks about people who "maximize" – wanting only the absolute best choice, versus those who "satisfice" – quickly finding an acceptable choice. Most of us vary between those two, depending upon how important this particular decision is to us. A maximizer will want to keep looking, always feeling that, while there's a perfectly acceptable solution in front of them, there may be a better one around the corner. A satisficer wants to get the purchase done and move on to the next decision.

What's their buying style?

My best friend's future daughter-in-law saw a wedding dress she liked in a shop window. She made an appointment and was going to go by herself, but family intervened, and she went with a small posse (mom, future mother-in-law, maid of honor, etc.). She tried on the dress in the window and wanted to buy it, but the posse had her try on four other dresses. She still ended up buying the dress in the window that day. She 'satisficed' the decision, which is how they're making most of their wedding decisions. They also booked the first venue they went to see.

So, what's the real objection?

If you've spent any time on

Amazon.com, you know about decision paralysis. That's when there are so many choices that you can't decide, and actually choose not to decide at all. Too many sales consultants cloud the decision by bringing yet another dress, when she's found "the one." The implication is that there may be another "one" that's better than this one. The key here is to reduce the choices, not increase them.

But I want to look around: I once had a sales consultant tell me that when she was personally dress shopping (before she worked at that shop), she had found "the one" and wanted to keep shopping, because her friends had all told her that they went to four or five shops before they found "the one." She was at her first shop, maybe the third or fourth dress, so she wondered how it could have been so quick for her. The consultant said: "You can keep looking around, but aren't you just going to be trying to feel as good as you do right now, in this dress?" So, she bought that dress, that day.

But I have other appointments: For some brides, the objection is merely one of obligation. They made other appointments, so they feel they need to keep them. My favorite way to handle this came from a shop where I was doing sales training. They'll say something like: "You've clearly found the perfect dress, and we know that you have other appointments, so why don't we just call and cancel them for you and get this one ordered?" That takes the pressure

off the bride. Now, whether you call from your cell phone, or your shop's phone (with caller-ID coming through) is up to you!

Better follow-up

If all else fails, and she does decide to keep looking, the key is to have better follow-up. Don't just let her leave without setting an expectation for the next steps.

Step one: try to get a return appointment for her to try this dress on, one more time, before making her final decision. If you can't get the return appointment, try to get an appointment for a phone call to discuss what she's found.

If you can't get that, ask: "When are you looking to make your final decision on your dress?" to get an idea of her timeline. Ambiguous next steps get ambiguous results! If you can't get any of those, be sure to follow up, but always try to add value to every contact.

Don't just be "checking in." Tell her: "I was thinking about your dress (or wedding, or hobby, or passion, or something she mentioned) and wanted to share this with you." Include some information, a photo, a link to an article or blog. . . something that connects you with her as a giver. Following up is key. Most shops don't follow up well, if at all. The more times you reach out, the better. You want to get a Yes or a No – Maybe is the worst place to be.

Alan Berg has been called "The Leading International Speaker and Expert on the Business of Weddings & Events". He's presented in 14 countries, 5 of them in Spanish, and



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is the wedding and event industry's only Certified Speaking Professional®, and Global Speaking Fellow, one of only 36 in the world!

Alan's 25+ years of industry experience includes publishing 2 wedding magazines, 11 years at The Knot, most as Vice President of Sales and Education, and now, as a consultant and Education Guru for WeddingWire, the leading wedding technology company. He also speaks and consults for websites in Ireland, the U.K., Australia, India and Dubai.

Alan is the author of the books "If Your Website Was an Employee, Would You Fire It?," "Your Attitude for Success", "Shut Up and Sell More Weddings & Events!", "Why Don't They Call Me? – 8 Tips for converting wedding & event inquiries into sales" and his latest book "Wit, Wisdom and the Business of Weddings."

Ann Campeau
Director, National Bridal Retailers Association, owner of Strut

As recently as two or three years ago, closing brides was easier in my store. Now stores across the country are noting a change in the shopping process, as brides routinely are shopping five or six bridal stores.

On the one hand it's a testament to the fact that, more than ever, stores are providing amazing shopping experiences so that brides want to have fun and

Don't get discouraged— use this objection as an opportunity.

be pampered and wowed over and over again.

But on the other, it's concerning for one big reason: there is a cost to stores and industry for this shopping around.

If you run your numbers you can see how much it costs your store to bring a bride in. I recently added up my marketing dollars spent and divided by the number of appointments I had and found that I was spending about \$45 for every bride who came in my door. If a bride shops six stores, that is costing our industry \$270 to get that bride in the door, but only one store is getting the sale.

And if you calculate your cost to service that bride, you might find an appointment costs \$200 in basic overhead like rent and payroll. A bride shopping around is costing \$1,200 for six stores to

service, too. And again, only one store is getting the sale. This really affects our stores' and industry's profitability.

Because the NBRA is focused on improving the health of our industry, I would urge stores to work hard to develop systems, processes and training to help combat this serial shopping.

Some stores in our organization offer a first-visit incentive, while other focus on the pre-sale process, where you can address shopping around directly on the phone.

Other stores focus on designer exclusivity so brides wouldn't "need" to keep shopping - they can't find that dress anywhere else. Others focus on the brides who bought on their first visit or at their first store via their websites and other marketing materials.

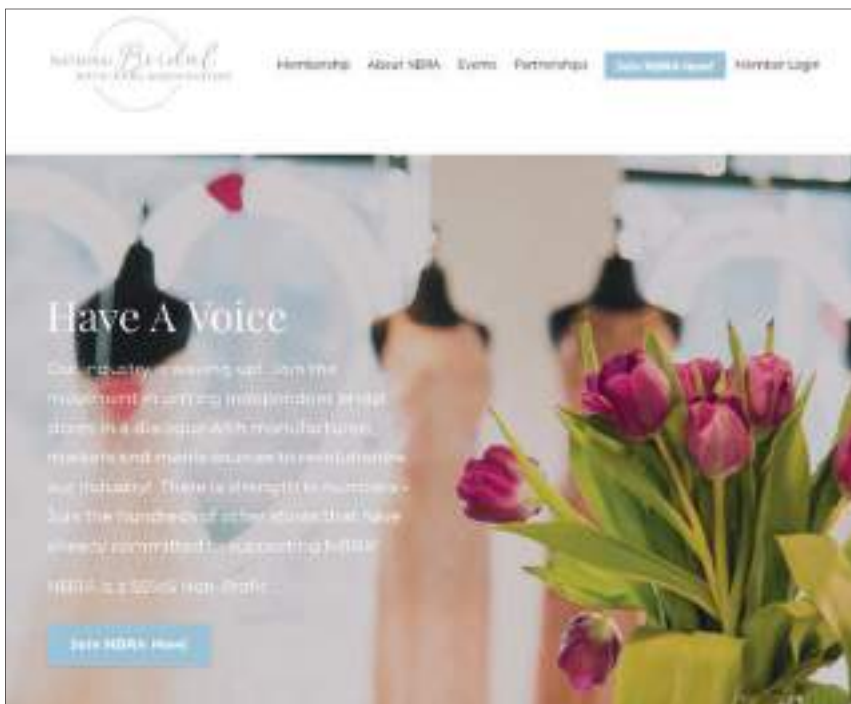
And, at the very least, stores should develop a very strong follow-up process to try and get that bride to return to the store.

There are some really great resources available for you right now, from helpful Facebook groups, to reputable business coaches, groups like the BBG, and of course VOWS magazine, that can help you focus on this challenge and tighten up your sales process to improve your closing ratios.

I hope you don't get discouraged by this trend but rather see it as a reason to grow and find ways to stand out in your market area!

Ann Campeau is the owner of two Strut stores, located in Tempe, Ari. and Long Beach, Calif., catering to plus-sized clientele, and of Garnet + grace in Whittier, Calif.

She is also the director of the recently formed National Bridal Retailers Association, whose mission is to be the national voice of brick-and-mortar bridal



stores to effect change in the industry and thereby strengthen all businesses. NBRA is in an open dialogue with manufacturers, works to stop the spread of misinformation about the industry, and is a touch-point for media sources.

Beth Chapman

**The White Dress by the shore,
Beth Chapman Styling + Consulting**

Millennials and Gen Zers

value the opinions of others and fully vet their decisions before making them. Studies have shown that brides are visiting an average of 3-4 stores before saying “yes” to their perfect gown.

For us as bridal store owners, this is frustrating, because often even if a bride loves a gown in our store, she feels the need to continue to shop. As a result, we are often hearing things like, “I love this, but can’t decide until I visit another store”.

I refer to this as a selling smokescreen. Ultimately, it is one of several objections that we are hearing these days that are blocking the sale.

As difficult as this scenario is, it is possible to overcome this objection with a few simple steps.

The main step is to utilize a sales concept that I have introduced through my video training series for bridal store owners called “Ask One More Question”.

The best salespeople are not salespeople at all. . . they are problem solvers! A great salesperson does not SELL. . . he/she helps a bride to BUY!

The best way to be a problem solver and help the bride to buy is to ask questions.

A huge key to selling is building a relationship. In order to build a relationship and get to know the bride and what she is looking for

Asking questions builds the relationship and uncovers objections.

we need to ask her questions. In doing so, we are creating an open dialogue throughout the appointment that entails asking questions about her wedding, her vision for her look, how she feels in each gown, and how they compare to one another.

Asking her questions throughout the entire appointment builds the relationship and uncovers her likes, dislikes, and any questions or objections she may have.

At the end of the appointment, when the “I need to keep shopping” smokescreen goes up, it

is imperative to not let the conversation end there. We have to “Ask One More Question” (which is often a series of questions) to uncover why she feels the need to keep shopping.

Some examples of questions: “What is this gown missing?” or “Is there something specific that you are looking for at the other store that we have not shown you here?”

It’s also a perfect opportunity to ask where she is shopping and then point out your competitive advantages over that store and why you think you have the best options for her. The key to this is that those have to be observable differences and not opinion. . . we never bad mouth another store.

At this stage, it is best to point



out all of the silhouettes and fabrications that she has tried on and repeat back to her all of the things that she told you that she loved about the gown that she has on.

It is also a good time to advise her that there is such a thing as “overshopping”. You can say something like, “it is fun to shop with your friends and family. If you visit too many stores, it can lead to frustration and confusion. The process can start to become a chore and the gowns will all merge together in your mind like a sea of white that you can’t differentiate between.”

The key is to say this in a compassionate way – speak from your experience – and say it in a way that shows that you are helping her in the buying process.

Sales objections are difficult to overcome. But, if you have developed a rapport with the client and have asked questions all along the way to build the relationship, that “One More Question” will not feel salesy or pushy. It will feel natural and it will feel like you are helping her to buy!

Beth Lindsay Chapman is a veteran of the fashion industry and is known for her work as owner of **The White Dress by the shore**, as a stylist, business mentor, author, and wedding fashion consultant, and the founder of **Beth Chapman Styling + Consulting**.



Through the consulting arm of her business, Beth mentors bridal retailers and launched a series of training videos for bridal store owners and their staff, called *The Series 2.0*. These videos educate bridal store owners on running a profitable business and creating a memorable shopping experience for their brides and provide training on effective sales techniques and product knowledge for their sales associates.

Her work and voice can be seen in: *The Knot*, *Martha Stewart Weddings*, *Inside Weddings*, *BRIDES*, *Destination I Do*, *Cayman Vows*, *Well*

Create FOMO for the bride who doesn't choose your boutique.

Wed Magazine, Bliss Celebrations Magazine, VOWS Magazine, style me pretty and 100 Layer Cake.

She is the co-author of two books, *The White Dress in Color*, and *The White Dress Destinations* and has also contributed to *Wedding Bible* by Sarah Haywood, and *Simple Stunning Bride* by Karen Bussen.

Lynn Crandall
Lynn Crandall Consulting,
The Bridal Collection

Responding to the recent increase in brides’ requests to continue shopping after having the special moment of finding their dress has been an interesting adventure for bridal shop owners and managers to navigate.

And, as with most facets of bridal shop ownership, the problem cannot be addressed with a simple solution; rather it is complicated and multifaceted. We have created a plan at The Bridal Collection and I have shared it with other store owners via my coaching services that has been able to effect change in a positive direction (i.e. increased closing ratios) while keeping our business culture and mission intact.

The first step to focus on is the experience your bride has BEFORE she ever steps foot in your store. Utilizing the power of social media and the incredible resources of online marketing at our fingertips, expose your brides to the experience they are going to have at your store.

Make sure you feature whatever makes your store unique in your online storytelling. Create FOMO for the bride that if she doesn’t include your store

as part of her shopping journey she is truly missing out on something special.

Front load the expectations of what her experience is going to be like in your store by showing brides saying “yes” and celebrating. You are literally showing her before she arrives what her special moment will be like at your store.

When she books an appointment, invite her to follow you on your social-media channels so you can keep delivering this content and excitement. Reach out to her and build a relationship via text, e-mail and phone calls. Use this time to front load expectations that she absolutely will find her dress at your store and figure out subtle ways you can make her experience even more special.

The next step focuses on the experience she has once she is in your store. As bridal store owners we need to empower our sales team members with the best products and training that we can provide them. They need consistent expectations they can meet that describe what we want them to accomplish during a bridal shopping experience.

In order for them to do this, we need to provide education and tools they can utilize.

Once the stylist team is masterful and confident in their product knowledge and the experience they are to provide, the biggest differentiator in their success is their attitude.

We must be their cheerleaders encouraging them to approach each and every bride as a unique individual and opportunity. If a consultant starts off the appointment running a narrative

Your goal: come up with a solution to her problem.

in her head of excuses as to why the bride won't buy today – “we are her first stop, her entourage is too large, her mother isn't here, our store is too expensive. . . etc,” – the bride absolutely will not purchase her dress that day.

We as owners must encourage our teams to approach each bride with confidence that they absolutely will find their dress today. Encourage your sales team to change a few of the words they choose to say: instead of “let's go shop for your dress” or “let's go play”, say “let's go find your dress”.

Allow your brides the freedom to say “yes” and explain that it is normal and okay for her to not shop around to seven different stores by sharing authentic antidotes of other brides' shopping journeys that she can relate to. Continue with the expectation that she will be buying a dress today until she tells you otherwise.

So what do you do when she says; “this is my first stop and I want to continue shopping”? If you have diligently done all of the steps listed above, then respect and honor her decision while finding out if you can solve her problem of why she can't purchase the dress she just fell in love with.

Empower your stylists to become her bridal hero! Ask her what is keeping her from purchasing the dress she just had a special “yes” moment with? Then stop talking and trying to convince her and simply listen to what she says. If she gives you a simple problem and you can offer a simple solution, by all means do so! If she says her grandma is sick and couldn't make it to the appointment, offer to Facetime

grandma so she can be a part of the bride saying yes.

But more often than not, the reason she doesn't want to purchase is elusive, or she simply doesn't want to quit shopping and having fun. Now is not the time to resort to cliches; “dress shopping is like dating, when you find the one, you quit shopping”, or even worse, desperately offering a discount of 10% off if she puts down a deposit today. Those tactics are fine to use IF you have been using them throughout her shopping experience (i.e. introducing the discount up front or delivering comedic one-liners), but please don't switch gears and try to “sell” your brides. Our brides are smart and savvy shoppers, and they can feel that you have left the place of authenticity and have reverted to being “a pushy salesperson,” and it will often backfire. If she feels she needs to keep shopping, graciously and respectfully let her go.

Finally, before she leaves your shop, have a plan. Tell her you will welcome her back later that day after she gets to experience continued shopping with her family and friends.

Book her to come back right at closing time so at every other appointment she goes to, she is thinking about returning to your store and seeing this dress one more time before making a decision.

Make notes of what held her back from shopping and text, email and/or call her, following up to check in and see how her

shopping experience is going. If there was a reason she gave as to why she couldn't purchase her dress, come up with a solution to solve her problem.

If she said she needed her mom to make the decision, ask about if she determined what return appointment time works best to show mom her dress. Keep the experience and the conversation going until she either comes back in and purchases a dress from you or she tells you she bought one elsewhere.

And please don't forget to celebrate the wins along the way! Celebrate your brides when they find their gown; celebrate your stylists when they succeed in selling a bride on her first visit or when their diligent follow-up rewards them with a return bride sale.

*Lynn Crandall's love for people and her genuine concern for the well-being of her **Bridal Collection** staff and guests is reflected in every aspect of the business, making all who enter her store feel welcomed and valued. As*

a well-respected leader in the bridal industry, Lynn is now coaching and teaching other store owners who wish to achieve the same success.



Nayri Kalayjian
Wedding Fashion Expert,
Lovella Bridal

Being indecisive and overanalyzing decisions is something that our clients at Lovella Bridal proudly identify with and admit.

Consequently, we have implemented several preventative strategies when our clients purchase their gowns to prepare them when they feel doubt in their gown purchase or any other

item they purchase in-store.

We tell our clients directly that they may find themselves second-guessing their decision. We say something along the lines of:

“When it comes to your wedding dress, you may have the tendency to zero in on the small stuff, and analyze different aspects of your gown. Most of the time whatever you’re fixated on once you physically see everything again in person, you quickly realize you made the right decision.”

“Often times when we make decisions we look back on them and ask ourselves: Did I make the right choice? Am I wearing the right dress for my big day? The more you analyze - the more doubt you will create in your mind.”

Letting brides know that these thoughts, questions and doubts that may come up for them are common and normal is important. This gives our clients peace of mind and preparation on how to handle the doubt when it seeps into their thoughts.

Another strategy we’ve used to educate brides on the process is featured in my YouTube channel and best-selling book “I’m Getting Married & Have Nothing To Wear – The ultimate guide to finding your perfect wedding dress.”

Here is the entirety of Chapter 15 titled: “I bought a dress I thought I loved and now I’m not so sure”:

I tell every bride who purchases her gown from me

Always focus on giving the bride the best possible service.

to leave her decision in the store. What do I mean by that? Well, what other item do you purchase by placing an order and then waiting months for that item?

Special-order items always take time to deliver, giving you too many chances between purchase and receipt to question your choice.

When you leave the store after you’ve completed the purchase, you may no longer feel the emotional connection you felt when you looked at yourself in the mirror.

The only way to keep even a hint of that connection is to remember the feeling. Remember your own reflection. Don’t go home and look at the photos and analyze the decision. By staring at the photo, you replace those memories by analyzing every detail, which leads to questioning your decision.

If you feel remotely nervous after purchasing your dress, you can always ask to go back in-store and try it on again in person to reassure yourself you made the right choice. When it comes to your bridal gown, you make the decision when you are in the dress, not by looking at a photo or sleeping on it.

It’s a feeling. A feeling of beauty, excitement, and confidence that can only happen when you are in it!

If you have a need to analyze the gown, do so before you purchase. After you have finalized your decision, leave your decision in the bridal store and move on to another element of planning

your wedding.

Nayri Kalayjian, Wedding Fashion Expert, has been named by The Knot-Wedding Wire as an official Pro Educator. She is a best-selling author, sought-after stylist for celebrity brides, and consultant/educator to the industry specializing in providing innovative strategies for creating unique customer experiences. She also advises world-renowned designers, and is a noted speaker for the Mon Cheri Academy educational events.

She is also co-owner of Lovella Bridal in Glendale, Calif.



Michelle McFarland
President, Better Bridal Group

So many owners are expressing frustration over the bride’s need to shop in multiple stores.

Almost every bride who walks through our doors honestly believes she’s not going to find her dress that day. Whether she expresses that out loud or not doesn’t change the fact that she thinks it’s going to be hard to find the perfect dress.

When a bridal stylist hears “I have more appointments” and assumes the bride won’t purchase her dress, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. If a stylist gives up on the bride and doesn’t give her the best appointment possible, she is doing the bride a disservice – and losing a sale.

It’s so easy to give up. Being a bridal stylist can be physically and mentally exhausting. We must give our brides 100% effort at each appointment.

The truth is, when the bride finds the right dress and is having an amazing experience, she will say YES!

My store’s year-to-date closing ratio is up over 2018. Your focus needs to be on solving the bride’s



problem vs. making a sale. When your stylists are working to solve a problem it's easy to ignore smokescreens and objections.

We train stylists to ignore the word NO as much as possible. Statements like "I'm not buying today", "I'm just getting ideas" or "I have more appointments" are often mistaken as objections when in reality they are a self-defense mechanism to protect the bride from a pushy, overbearing saleswoman.

Honestly, you should expect to hear some form of "I'm not buying" at every appointment because that's the bride's truth. How many times have you gotten to the counter to swipe a credit card and the bride is exclaiming, "I never thought I would buy my dress today?" So many – right? Because that's her truth!

The bride truly believes she is not buying a dress that day. Please don't hold it against her when she protects herself by using the "I'm not buying today; I have more appointments" excuse as a shield during the appointment.

She's not really saying NO, she's saying "not yet". This is the stylist's opportunity to dig deeper. You must work past four to five smokescreens before you get to the true objection and uncover a YES!

Michelle McFarland is president of the Better Bridal Group, an organization for bridal gown retailers by bridal gown retailers focused on educating and supporting each other to succeed. She is also owner of The Wedding Shoppe in Berkley, Mich.







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