HONEYMOONS AND DESTINATION WEDDINGS

A N I C H E S P E C I A L I S T C O U R S E
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How Should I Study This Course?

This course consists of several individual lessons that gradually lead you through the information you need to know. Each lesson is designed to provide you with solid information, as well as opportunities for you to think about what you are learning and apply the concepts to your own specialty business.

Work through each lesson, one at a time. Flag pages that you want to use for future reference. No course, not even one with dozens of experts involved, can possibly cover every aspect of specialty sales as it relates to you and your clientele, and nothing can replace the inspirations and plans that come to you as you go through the course.

As you read each lesson, pay attention to the following components:

- **Learning Outcomes:** Read the brief goal statements at the start of each Lesson that describe what you are expected to accomplish after completion.

- **Key Points:** Review the Key Points at the end of each lesson.

- **Brainstorming:** Answer these preliminary questions before you read the material in each lesson.

- **Tips and Tools:** Add these pointers and insider tips to your specialist “toolbox.”

- **Glossary:** Review the definitions of some of the key words and terms in the course.

- **Resources:** Continue your study and develop your specialty by looking at some important resources.

- **Review Quiz:** Use the questions in this quiz to test your knowledge of the material presented in the course. You can verify the correct answers in the Answer Key.
A Niche Specialist designation empowers today’s travel professionals to confidently serve travelers who are looking for an expert in the area they want to explore.

After you have studied this course, complete the following steps to earn your Honeymoons and Destination Weddings Specialist designation:

**For the Specialist Designation**

- Visit [www.thetravelinstitute.com/testing](http://www.thetravelinstitute.com/testing) to request your test. Please allow three business days.

- Take and pass the Honeymoons and Destination Weddings Specialist test.

**How Should I Prepare for the Test?**

- Read the Learning Outcomes at the start of each lesson. Go back and review material for any goals you feel you have not successfully achieved.

- Review the Key Points at the end of each lesson.

- Take the Review Quiz at the end of the course.

The test consists of 25 multiple-choice and true/false questions, similar to those in the Review Quiz at the end of the course. The questions are designed to test your ability to interpret and apply key concepts from the course rather than simply to memorize facts.

The test is not open book and must be completed in one hour under the supervision of a test proctor. The proctor should be a responsible CTC or a person of authority who is neither related to you nor currently enrolled in the same course. A passing grade is 70 percent.
Introduction to the Honeymoon Market

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this lesson, you will be able to:

✓ Describe the size of the honeymoon market.
✓ Profile the typical honeymoon couple.
✓ Identify six basic types of honeymooners.
✓ Compare top honeymoon destinations.

BRAINSTORMING

Please answer these brainstorming questions before you read the lesson. At the end of the lesson, review your answers and make changes as needed based on what you learned.

1. What are your reasons for choosing the honeymoon market as a focus for sales?
2. What do honeymooners value in a vacation?
3. What do honeymooners value in a travel professional?
4. How would you describe a typical honeymoon? Where do honeymooners go?

There are many different facts and figures about the wedding industry, but the focus of this lesson is on a summary of information and statistics about the honeymoon market that you can apply in your efforts to build a successful travel specialty.

The goal is to establish a solid foundation so you can proceed knowledgeably and confidently as you complete this course and delve into the honeymoon market.

The Wedding and Honeymoon Market

Consider some of the following statistics about the honeymoon market compiled from The Wedding Report, Inc. 2012 and 2013 plus the 2012 Real Weddings Study by theknot.com and weddingchannel.com:
The median age of those getting married in the US continues to rise going from 23 (men) and 21 (women) in 1970 to 31 (men) and 29 (women) in 2012.

There are several reasons why the age of marrying is increasing but the primary issues are waiting to marry due to education, career first and high divorce rates of parents.

Couples marrying today are more educated than the general population. This speaks to why both men and women are waiting longer to marry, and getting an education first.

Many couples are choosing to live together first before committing to marriage, if they ever do. Co-habitation is on the rise.

For the most part couples are spending savvy, eager to find cost cutting ideas that don’t sacrifice the quality of their big day, and they’re not ashamed to tell you they want more for their money.

Men that marry today are 15 percent more educated than the general population and women are 25 percent more educated than the general population.

Ethnically speaking, it appears that those getting married are pretty much in line with the general population.

About 60 percent of those getting married today are the millennial population.

It is projected that in 2014 just over 1 in 10 weddings will be destination weddings (more about destination weddings in Lesson 2).

The honeymoon is just the beginning of a potentially long and lucrative relationship with clients in this market, as long as you understand their needs and provide service that exceeds their expectations. Part of providing excellent service is researching as much as you can about the market, including the different types of honeymooners that comprise this niche.

**Types of Honeymooners**

In general, you can divide the honeymoon market into the following six basic types of honeymooners:

1. Do-It-Yourselfers
2. Budget All-Inclusive
3. Comfort Couples
4. Luxury Lovers
5. Adventure Seekers
6. Culture Vultures

Note that these are general classifications and do not take into account all of the factors that can influence the type of honeymoon a couple takes. Nor do they indicate what types of vacations couples may have taken previously or will take in the future. For example, a couple who normally travels on a budget may spend more for their honeymoon, or they may find that they have even more money to spend for their next vacation a year or two after the wedding. Like all clients, honeymooners may change their travel preferences from trip to trip, and it’s your job to qualify them appropriately, each and every time.

**Do-It-Yourselfers**

Do-It-Yourselfers plan and book their honeymoons themselves, but beware—they will consult travel professionals for information and tips.

Anyone with a budget of less than $2,000 should be considered a potential Do-It-Yourselfer. This type of honeymooner can be the most time-consuming, because the limited budget greatly affects and narrows choices. You need to recognize this type of honeymooner right away and then decide either to send them on their way or charge them for your time.

Your decision, of course, will depend on your service charges and the amount of time they require, but remember: Your time and knowledge are valuable.

**Budget All-Inclusive**

The Budget All-Inclusive couple is aware of the all-inclusive concept and will shop around to find the best deal. Their budgets are generally in the $2,000 to $3,000 range. They may say they know someone who got a package for “around $2,000” or saw one on Expedia for “around $2,000.” Their budgets may take them to $3,000, but be aware of their propensity for price shopping.
These are not the greatest prospects, but they can be the source of your bread-and-butter bookings if you don’t spend too much time getting the sale.

To deal effectively with honeymooners of this sort, always ask them if they already have prices from online providers, as this will save you time down the line. And you should always be prepared with a deal that is about to expire. You need to quickly turn these shoppers into clients in order to make them a profitable segment of your honeymoon business.

**Comfort Couples**

Comfort Couples choose honeymoons that are characterized less by the type of vacation than by the comfort and quality of the vacation experience. They tend to know exactly what they want, whether it is total relaxation or an active-adventure honeymoon. They also tend to:

- Have budgets of $3,000 to $5,000 or higher.
- Appreciate value within the parameters of a well-defined experience.
- Be more brand-conscious than the Budget All-Inclusive type.

A typical Comfort Couple might want to take a seven-day honeymoon at a Couples or Sandals all-inclusive resort in the Caribbean, where they can enjoy all the comforts of a luxury vacation without any hassle or inconvenience. Or, a more adventurous couple might choose a spa resort in a popular destination such as Hawaii or Costa Rica, where they can indulge their sense of adventure but still enjoy pampering and comfortable accommodations.

**Luxury Lovers**

Luxury Lovers want creature comforts and personal service, and they are willing to spare no expense to get what they want. Don’t be fooled by the spare-no-expense attitude, however, because these couples are generally well informed and resourceful, and they place a high value on their own time. They will judge your recommendations and levels of service according to their high standards.

Depending on the length of stay and the destination, their budgets tend to
be $5,000 and up. The types of honeymoons they might choose span the spectrum, from romantic beach resorts to intimate ski lodges. This crowd tends to appreciate unusual travel suggestions, especially those that people in their social circles have yet to experience.

**Adventure Seekers**
The sensation provided by the adventure is what defines the Adventure Seeker’s honeymoon experience. Creature comfort, while possibly important, is secondary to the adventure itself.

The nature of adventure travel tends to put Adventure Seekers into higher budgets. Light adventure can be experienced for as little as $3,500, but heavy-adventure experiences can scale upwards of $15,000.

An African safari honeymoon would be a good example for this type of honeymooner, although adventure can certainly be found elsewhere and in different ways.

**Culture Vultures**
Culture Vultures place a high priority on the cultural aspects of a honeymoon, such as ancient ruins, museums, architecture, gastronomy, and sightseeing.

Budgets can start at $3,500 for domestic travel and be even more for international travel, depending on the itinerary and accommodation requirements (though they may spend more once they receive actual quotes with detailed itineraries). A packaged tour may provide good value yet still offer the degree of independence most honeymoon couples desire. Experienced travelers may want complete independence and boutique five-star hotels.

Trips to Florence, Paris, or Egypt are examples of the types of vacations that Culture Vultures may select.
Though priorities, interests, and budgets may vary among the different types of honeymooners, honeymooners of all kinds share a couple of important common denominators.

First, honeymooners want romance, and they trust you to recommend an experience that delivers it. Second, their expectations are high—they want the trip of a lifetime.

Clearly, when you decide to specialize in selling honeymoons, you are taking on a far greater responsibility than if you were selling ordinary corporate or leisure travel.

**Honeymoon Destinations**

Many couples choose their honeymoon based on destination. Honeymooners who want to visit the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, Hawaii, or Alaska, for example, often choose a honeymoon cruise.

As a honeymoon specialist, you should be able to compare and contrast the various destinations that are most popular among honeymooners. We’ll take a brief look at a few of the top destinations, but you must make a concerted effort to expand your destination knowledge through your own research and personal travel.

**Hawaii**

Hawaii is a favorite island paradise for honeymooners from the United States and around the world. The islands offer wonderful beachside resorts, diverse activities, and a casual atmosphere that is perfect for newlyweds. Couples can choose to savor the amazing scenery, enjoy luaus and other unique cultural specialties, or just relax together on any one of the six main islands.

Water sports and recreational activities abound. Oahu is particularly popular for surfing, Maui is world famous for windsurfing, and the Big Island’s Kona Coast is the gateway to fabulous deep-sea fishing.

Land-loving honeymooners can hike on the trails in the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park on Hawaii’s Big Island, Maui’s Haleakala National Park, or along Kauai’s Na Pali coast. No matter how honeymooners choose to spend their time in Hawaii, this beautiful destination is sure to create memories that last a lifetime.
St. Lucia

St. Lucia has an abundance of tropical natural beauty that seems to have been created for honeymooners. The national rain forest stretches from one side of the island to the other, sprawling over some 19,000 acres of mountains and valleys covered with lush foliage. The Diamond Falls come down in six stages through sulfur springs that change the color of the water to brilliant shades of yellow, green, and purple.

Honeymooners with a sense of adventure will want to explore the world’s only drive-in volcano or go bird watching on the Maria Islands Nature Reserve. These tiny islands are home to rare wildlife and birds, including several species that exist nowhere else in the world—one of these is the Jacquot, the island’s own parrot.

The Pitons, St. Lucia’s famous twin peaks on the southwest coast, rise straight out of the sea to a height of almost half a mile. Palm-fringed beaches, elegant old plantation houses, soft tropical air, hypnotic steel-band music, and the tantalizing aroma of Caribbean cuisine combine to make St. Lucia a honeymooner’s dream.

U.S. Virgin Islands

The U.S. Virgin Islands offer honeymooners many options ranging from golf, tennis, scuba diving, and snorkeling to horseback riding, shopping, or just relaxing on the perfect white-sand beaches. A rich cultural heritage stems from the West African, Danish, Spanish, Irish, Polish, and German people who have made the U.S. Virgin Islands their home since the late 1400s.

The rhythms and lyrics of Virgin Island music—including calypso, cariso, soca, reggae, and steel-band melodies—are current reminders of a colorful past. Virgin Islanders also express themselves in painting, drawing, sculpture, and photography. The great Impressionist Camille Pissarro is just one of the Virgin Islands’ distinguished artists.

Honeymooners can enjoy dozens of cultural events throughout the year, such as the Three Kings’ Day festival on St. Croix, St. John’s Fourth of July celebration, and St. Thomas’s annual Carnival.
Jamaica

Though it's the third largest Caribbean island by area, Jamaica remains the most popular honeymoon destination in that region for U.S. couples. Montego Bay offers the primary (international) airport, access to the island's most active nightlife, and a central location among the other tourism cities. On the western coast, Negril features amazing sunsets on a wide range of beaches. The Ocho Rios area features a mix of sightseeing, active excursions, shopping, and the Runaway Bay region for a quieter honeymoon option. Overall, Jamaica boasts an eclectic mix of diverse natural highlights (from Dunn's River Falls to Ocho Rios horseback riding) along with fine dining and shopping in its main cities and luxury resorts - plus, the chance to just relax at the beach.

Mexico

Mexico has such an abundance of history and culture that many honeymooners forgo the beach in favor of other sights and activities. The most popular places for honeymoons, however, usually do have a beach focus. Among the rocky cliffs and sandy coves of the Pacific coast are some exclusive and luxurious beach resorts and hotels. For those who prefer the gentle waters and powdery sand of the Caribbean, there are many well-appointed properties in Cancún and the Riviera Maya region.

Los Cabos has become one of the most elite resort destinations in Mexico. Hot deserts, cool ocean breezes, and waters reflecting several different shades of blue and green make this region a particular favorite among divers, golfers, and those who enjoy sports fishing.

For honeymooners who want to parasail and snorkel one day and visit ancient Mayan ruins the next, few destinations can compare to Mexico.

Italy

More than 3,000 years of history, culture, and cuisine create ideal conditions for a romantic honeymoon in Italy. The Italian honeymoon can be whatever honeymooners want it to be. If they are interested in culture, there are plenty of Roman ruins, Renaissance art, and historical sites. If they want to shop, Rome offers stores and markets of all kinds, and many Italian cities are famous for high-quality products: Venice for glassware, Florence for gold, and so on. Couples who prefer to relax can do so with the best pasta and wine in all of Europe. With their great appreciation for food and the art of hospitality, Italians will warm the heart and soul of any traveler.
If the museums, galleries, historical buildings, and espresso are not enough to occupy honeymooners’ time in Italy, there are plenty of other ways for active couples to work off the pasta and wine they will be consuming. The Italian Alps are great for long-distance hikes and are packed with plenty of excellent ski resorts. Camping and bicycling are favorite activities enjoyed by both Italians and visitors. Honeymooners who choose to stay at any of Italy’s fine beach resorts can take advantage of windsurfing, sailing, and a variety of other water sports.

**Tahiti**

Just south of Hawaii are the islands of Tahiti, which offer a different flavor of the Polynesian experience. Unlike Hawaii, which is larger, more populous, and has all of the creature comforts of home, Tahiti is tranquil and at times appears cut off from the outside world. With the peaceful and carefree attitudes of the Tahitian people, Tahiti satisfies a couple’s desire to relax and escape from the pressures of modern society while simultaneously indulging their senses.

Several islands make up the island group of Tahiti. Typical honeymooners spend only a night or two on Tahiti proper and usually spend the bulk of their time on other islands, such as Moorea and Bora-Bora. Shark feeding and swimming with stingrays or sea turtles are some of the more popular activities on the islands.

For honeymooners, one of Tahiti’s most distinctive features is the signature thatched-roof, overwater bungalow. Surrounded by calm blue waters, these unique honeymoon accommodations immediately evoke feelings of romance. For couples looking at the fish through the floor of their bungalow on Moorea or Bora-Bora, it is sometimes difficult to remember there is an outside world.

**KEY POINTS**

- The median age of those getting married in the US continues to rise.
- Primarily people are waiting to marry due to education, career first and high divorce rates of parents.
- Couples marrying today are typically more educated than the general population.
For the most part couples are spending savvy, eager to find cost cutting ideas that don’t sacrifice the quality of their big day, and they’re not ashamed to tell you they want more for their money.

Do-It-Yourselves plan and book their honeymoons themselves and tend to have budgets of less than $2,000.

The Budget All-Inclusive couple is aware of the all-inclusive concept and will shop around to find the best deal. Their budgets are generally in the $2,000 to $3,000 range.

Comfort Couples choose honeymoons that are characterized less by the type of vacation than by the comfort and quality of the vacation experience. They tend to have budgets of $3,000 to $5,000 or higher.

Luxury Lovers want creature comforts and personal service, and they are willing to spare no expense to get what they want. Their budgets tend to be $5,000 and up.

The sensation provided by the adventure is what defines the Adventure Seeker’s honeymoon experience. The nature of adventure travel tends to put Adventure Seekers into higher budgets, with a broad range from as little as $3,500 to upwards of $15,000.

Culture Vultures place a high priority on the cultural aspects of a honeymoon and can have budgets from $3,500 and up.

Popular honeymoon destinations include Hawaii, St. Lucia, U.S. Virgin Islands, Jamaica, Mexico, Italy and Tahiti.

Many couples choose their honeymoon based on destination. As a honeymoon specialist, you should be able to compare and contrast the various destinations that are most popular among honeymooners.
Lesson 2: Destination Weddings

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this lesson, you will be able to:

✓ Describe the size and different characteristics of the destination wedding market.
✓ Explain some key trends in the destination wedding market.
✓ Research a destination’s legal requirements for marriage.
✓ Identify popular destination wedding locations.
✓ Recognize key aspects of selling a destination wedding cruise.
✓ Describe the characteristics of vow renewal ceremonies.
✓ Identify resources to learn more about LGBT weddings.

BRAINSTORMING

Please answer these brainstorming questions before you read the lesson. At the end of the lesson, review your answers and make changes as needed based on what you learned.

1. Why would a client want to combine a wedding and a honeymoon?
2. Where are the popular places honeymooners go to be married or couples go to renew their vows?
3. Besides location, what other factors do honeymooners need to consider when planning their destination wedding?
4. How can married couples be a segment of the honeymoon market?

Destination weddings, or wedding ceremonies that are combined with the honeymoon, are an ever-growing business.

According to The Wedding Report, Inc., 2013 there are close to 300,000 destination weddings in the U.S. every year.
On average couples have 136 guests at their destination wedding.

The destination wedding market is very fragmented. California and Florida appear to be the top spots with 24 percent and 12 percent respectively.

About 17 percent of couples travel out of the country with the rest staying in the U.S.

About 50 percent of destination weddings are happening within 200 miles of their home.

On average couples spend $25,656 for their wedding. For a destination wedding couples spend about $27,555 or 7.4 percent more than the average wedding.

Because these statistics include destination weddings of all kinds, the average number of guests will certainly vary. Many honeymoon specialists book far fewer than the average of 136 guests and still develop very successful businesses. They have found that their success depends less on the size of the group and more on the continual flow of honeymoon and destination wedding business.

Whether a destination wedding involves just one couple or dozens of guests, destination weddings are worth your time and effort. Typical destination weddings may yield commissions ranging from $2,000 to $10,000. But for one large destination wedding, which may have up to a hundred guests who stay four or five nights at a deluxe all-inclusive resort in the Caribbean, you can easily secure commissions of $20,000 or more.

Fortunately, the popularity of destination weddings is on the rise with both U.S. and Canadian citizens. The growing trend is due in large part to the costs of a formal wedding and the reality that many couples want to spend less time planning the event and more time enjoying themselves.

Many couples are now exchanging wedding vows at tropical island locations, on board cruise ships, and in a wide range of unique and exotic destinations. Also, more and more countries have relaxed their nonresident wedding restrictions, making the process much easier for couples to plan their destination weddings and book their honeymoon packages.
TIPS AND TOOLS

If you plan to specialize in destination weddings and honeymoons, you should visit as many resorts as possible when you travel and ask what they do specifically for wedding and honeymoon guests. Also, many large resort companies now offer wedding- and honeymoon-focused fam trips that you may attend.

While destination weddings are indeed a potentially lucrative market, you should know that they require a great deal of work, special handling of groups, and even a very specific type of bookkeeping and accounting. If you choose to specialize in destination weddings, it is highly recommended that you charge an administration fee or wedding planning fee to cover the additional services you will need to deliver for the wedding couple and their guests.

You’ll learn more about selling destination weddings in Lesson 5, but meanwhile keep in mind that the profits and satisfaction you receive from destination weddings will be well deserved.

Destination Wedding Trends

According to The Wedding Report, Inc., 2013, here are some new trends in destination weddings:

1. **A unique element included in the wedding package.** Resorts are adding new experiences and features into their one-price packages. For instance, many wedding packages are including adventure sports outings for the bride and groom. It might be a private snorkel tour with a guide, or a chance to swim with dolphins during their stay. Or, it might be something in the beauty sector like including wedding day hair and makeup for the bride and mani/pedis for the bride and her bridesmaids. So it’s new experiential perks that are landing destination wedding couples now.

2. **A Foodie Element.** Brides and grooms want to be sure their wedding menu will be phenomenal and it’s not enough to view the menu list on a resort’s website. They want to see what the chef’s create, so resorts are loading up their Pinterest and Facebook pages with professionally shot menu items, including desserts and their cakes, to whet the couples’ appetites and assure them that their wedding feast and other parties will be foodie-fabulous.
3. Another new element is a private foodie experience, such as a tasting party in the resort’s wine room, or an interactive cooking lesson in private kitchen with the chefs. Open kitchens are a great new design element of newer resorts and refurbished resorts, since couples are enamored of all things culinary. Menu items are creative, styled fabulously, often organic, indulgent and true highlights of a destination wedding experience.

4. A personal photographer. Wedding couples want to be able to bring their own photographer to shoot their wedding. They’ll pay for that photographer’s airfare and lodging to ensure that they have their all-important wedding photos taken by a pro they’ve been able to interview and create a relationship with, near them…not a local the resort offers. Pictures are too important to the bride and groom.

5. Another reason for the desire to bring their own photographer is that couples want to be able to easily contact their photographers to order their images, have them created and sent locally, and not experience any kind of heartbreak if a local photographer leaves the island or resort and cannot be found later.

6. The welcome party is a big deal. Couples appreciate what guests go through to be there with them on their wedding day, so more effort and expense is going into a fabulous welcome cocktail party, at the resort, on a champagne dinner cruise, in a stately room or in a scenic vineyard. The welcome party is so big, in fact, that many wedding couples are having a big celebration. So this has become a very big deal and gives the couple the chance to plan a themed party.

These are just a few of the new trends in destination weddings, with more to come as resorts continue to innovate and set themselves apart from other locations, and as wedding experts are consulted to help them create unique destination wedding packages.

Popular Destinations

One of the most important aspects of destination weddings is the destination itself. What destinations are most popular for weddings?

For the most part, these destinations continue to gain in popularity among honeymooners. While the “top 10” list of favorite wedding destinations may change from year to year, the most popular destinations tend to hold their positions as leaders in the destination wedding market, particularly Mexico, Jamaica, Hawaii, and Las Vegas.
As you learned in the previous lesson, many popular honeymoon destinations have a wide variety of all-inclusive resorts. Similarly, all-inclusive resorts also contribute to the popularity of destination wedding locations, particularly in the Caribbean and Mexico.

Several all-inclusive resorts offer free wedding ceremonies, or ceremonies at reduced rates, for couples who bring a certain number of guests.

The popularity of a destination and the availability of all-inclusive resorts are just two factors to consider when deciding where to hold a destination wedding.

Legal requirements for getting married are another important factor, and we will take a closer look at some of the most popular destinations and their marriage requirements in the next section. A very important part of developing your honeymoon destination knowledge, however, is doing your own research to identify the legal marriage requirements of all popular honeymoon destinations, not just those described here.

**Legal Requirements**

Your clients must know the legal requirements for getting married in a destination—in fact, this is the first priority. Legal requirements vary by location, and some countries have such restrictive marriage policies that it would be impractical for visitors to marry in those places. (Of course, if couples plan only to renew their wedding vows or hold a strictly symbolic ceremony, the legal requirements for marriage are not an issue.)

One legal requirement to consider is the waiting period, or the time required for prospective brides and grooms to be in the destination prior to the wedding. Weddings and honeymoons in the Caribbean are very popular, and many islands now offer waiting periods of three days or less.

**TIPS AND TOOLS**

For information on the legal requirements for marrying in various countries, visit www.DWAgents.com.
The following all-inclusive brands offer great properties for family-style destination weddings because they have facilities and activities designed with children and multi-generational families in mind:

- Occidental Hotels & Resorts, including Allegro, Grand, and Royal resorts (Mexico, Aruba, Dominican Republic, Antigua, Costa Rica)
- Iberostar (selected properties, including the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and Mexico)
- Breezes (Bahamas and Jamaica)
- Palace Resorts (selected properties in Mexico)
- Wyndham Hotels and Resorts (St. Lucia, Jamaica, Bahamas, Aruba, U.S. Virgin Islands)
- Beaches Resorts (Jamaica and Turks & Caicos)
- Karisma Hotels & Resorts (Azul properties plus the El Dorado Generations Maroma)
- Dreams Resorts (Mexico, Jamaica, and the Dominican Republic)

The following all-inclusive brands are appropriate for adults-only:

- Couples (Jamaica)
- Palace Resorts (selected properties in Mexico)
- Iberostar (selected properties, including the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and Mexico)
- Sandals
- Karisma Hotels & Resorts (El Dorado properties)
- Secrets Resorts (Mexico, Jamaica, and the Dominican Republic)

Here are the common legal requirements to investigate whenever your clients are considering a destination wedding:

- Waiting period (varies by country)
- Passport
- Certified copy of birth certificate
- Administrative and license fees
- Proof of divorce or copy of death certificate
- Copy of tourist card or visa
Health certificate

Blood test

Witnesses

Authorization letters

Certificate of Consular Inscription (a letter obtained at the embassy or consulate indicating personal data)

Proof of church membership

Some destinations also require non-resident couples to translate their official documents from English to Spanish – a process that can prove very expensive and time consuming.

To avoid any hassles with the legal marriage requirements in other countries, many couples get married in their hometowns (e.g., a brief city hall ceremony) before their departure and arrange a symbolic ceremony during the actual destination wedding trip. By doing so, they can enjoy the trip with their friends and family without any worries about satisfying the legal marriage rules in their destination.

In some islands and countries, in order for a couple to hold a destination wedding ceremony with their guests, local regulations require that a civil ceremony first be performed at a specific location, such as city hall. Some destinations may impose very specific requirements that may make marriage impractical.

Rules that went into effect in Tahiti in 2010 allow non-residents to marry as early as their arrival dates in French Polynesia, provided they submit their city hall paperwork at least 45 days before the ceremony. The legally binding ceremony will take place at city hall there, with the wedding ceremony held later at the resort.

While you may encounter challenges with destination weddings outside of the most popular venues, getting married in many popular destinations is actually quite easy.

Let’s take a look at some of the most popular wedding destinations and their legal requirements for marriage.
Hawaii

Hawaii has long been a popular destination for weddings and honeymoons among U.S. citizens, in part because it is a domestic destination. The recent political unrest in some international destinations has only solidified its position as a leading wedding and honeymoon destination.

Hawaii is particularly popular for second-marriage destination weddings because there are no adults-only resorts and children are welcome in most hotels. However, there are no all-inclusive resorts in Hawaii, so a resort destination wedding and honeymoon can be fairly expensive for couples getting remarried who plan on bringing the kids. Fortunately, there are vast condominium complexes that provide comfortable and cost-efficient accommodations, complete with kitchens, for families attending destination weddings in Hawaii.

In general, the islands of Kauai and Maui are especially popular for destination weddings, and many couples spend time on both of these enchanting islands. Another popular option is a Hawaiian cruise, which offers couples the opportunity to experience several of the islands of Hawaii.

Getting married in Hawaii is easy. There is no residency requirement or waiting period, though couples must apply in person for a marriage license, which is valid statewide for 30 days and costs $60 (at time of publication). Both partners must be over the age of 18. Birth certificates are not required, but a driver’s license or other form of identification should be brought to the licensing appointment.

If either partner has been married before, he or she will have to state the date and the county and state (or country) in which the divorce was finalized for each previous marriage. The license also requires the names of each partner’s parents and the places where they were born.
Jamaica
Reggae music, white-sand beaches, all-inclusive resorts, and numerous ports of call make Jamaica a popular choice for many couples. Honeymooners can enjoy 200 miles of beaches surrounded by bright blue sea as well as breathtaking vistas of mountains, rivers, and natural landscapes. Active couples can pursue water sports, golf on championship courses, and nightlife filled with a variety of entertainment options.

A Jamaican wedding is as easy as it is beautiful. Couples can be married just 24 hours after arriving in Jamaica, provided they have applied for a marriage license in advance (though many resorts may suggest a residency of more than one day to make sure all of the required paperwork is complete). Many hotels will assist with the arrangements and offer special packages that include the ceremony, tax, and other expenses. U.S. citizens must produce birth certificates, divorce papers (if applicable), notarized parental consent if under 18 years old, and death certificates if widowed.

TIPS AND TOOLS
Beyond the Caribbean, Mexico, and other well-known destination wedding locales, more couples are now opting for U.S. destinations for their weddings – from Atlanta, Chicago, and New Orleans to Las Vegas, Savannah, and other tourism-friendly cities.

Mexico
Mexico has surged in the past decade as a popular wedding locale for U.S. couples. For beach weddings, the country offers a wide array of beachfront hotels in its traditional coastal cities (Acapulco, Puerto Vallarta, Mazatlan, Los Cabos, and others), as well as the newer properties in the Riviera Maya and Riviera Nayarit regions.

Meanwhile, your clients may prefer a true taste of Mexican culture in the colonial cities such as Guanajuato or Puebla. U.S. citizens must present birth certificates, divorce papers (if applicable), and death certificates if widowed. Mexico also requires a blood test that must be taken at the resort. Also, there may be a waiting period of two or three days (which varies from state to state within Mexico).
Fiji

Of the more than 300 islands in the Fiji group that are large enough to support human habitation, only about one-third of them are inhabited. Most of the islands look much the way they did 3,500 years ago when the first Polynesians reached these shores. Fiji’s rich cultural heritage is evident in the elaborate ceremonies that are still performed today and in the traditional crafts that have been part of everyday life throughout the centuries, such as mat weaving, wood carving, and canoe making.

While the beach, pool, and lagoon are the usual focal points of a Fiji honeymoon, recreational water sports and onshore activities abound. Honeymooners can swim, snorkel, scuba dive, water-ski, windsurf, sail, parasail, Jet Ski, kayak, or paddleboard. Volleyball, golf, archery, horse trekking, and an endless variety of organized sports also are popular.

Getting married in Fiji requires valid passports, original or certified birth certificates, divorce papers or death certificate if relevant, confirmatory letter on current marital status, witnesses, officially witnessed consent of father (or mother, if the father is deceased) if the bride or groom is younger than 21, and application forms for license.

TIPS AND TOOLS

One emerging trend that can result in unexpectedly high costs for couples is using an outside, independent wedding planner for a destination wedding rather than relying on the on-site wedding planner or consultant working for the resort or cruise ship. Fees for outside planners can be costly, and they will not always understand the local conditions and options that the resort or cruise ship wedding coordinator deals with daily.

Also, the time and expertise of the on-site coordinator is usually bundled into the wedding package price, with no extra charges. Couples might consider using a “day of” planner to coordinate the activities on the actual wedding date, and some resorts may recommend locally based “day of” planners whose fees will be very reasonable.

Bermuda

With miles of secluded pink-sand beaches, hidden coves, and lush tropical gardens, Bermuda is an excellent place for couples to get married and honeymoon. Those seeking adventure can enjoy popular diversions such as diving, golf, and a wide variety of water sports. Because of its mid-Atlantic position, Bermuda has escaped the excesses of many other tourist destinations—fast-food chains are nowhere to be seen, the air is free of pollution, and newlyweds can stroll along the streets without interruption.
Getting married in Bermuda requires a Notice of Intended Marriage form to be filled out and sent back to the Registrar General’s office, which will purchase a marriage license valid for three months.

**Las Vegas**
From quick drive-through weddings to traditional ceremonies with exclusive entertainment and gilded luxury, nearly any type of destination wedding is possible in Las Vegas. After the wedding, honeymooners can enjoy activities ranging from gambling to star-studded shows to thrilling water parks.

Neither blood tests nor waiting periods are required of couples who want to get married in Las Vegas. The legal age is 18 for men and women (proof of age is required), and licensing fees are $50 (at time of publication). Civil ceremonies can be performed at the Marriage Commissioner’s Office at 309 South Third Street. Chapel fees vary.

In most locales popular for destination weddings, the resort or hotel selected as the wedding site usually will have a wedding coordinator to take care of things that need to be done prior to the arrival of the bride and groom. You can work with this person directly on such details as getting your clients’ marriage license and other paperwork in order.

**Destination Wedding Cruises**
Thousands of couples are choosing to invite their guests and get married on board a cruise ship. Most major cruise lines report double-digit growth in the shipboard wedding market in recent years, and they typically offer wedding programs complete with the ceremony, officiant, flowers, photography, cake, and so on.

Even if the wedding must be booked directly with the cruise line, you can still offer your services as a honeymoon and destination wedding specialist by finding ways to add value to a cruise ship wedding.
For example, you can extend the experience by creating custom shore excursions for the wedding party through specialized tour operators. Or you can increase your commission by selling pre- or post-cruise excursions. Also, use your destination knowledge to suggest unique places to marry, such as taking a helicopter for a wedding on a glacier. You might suggest ports, such as Aruba, Barbados, or St. Thomas, where couples can get married the same day they arrive (provided it is early in the morning and the couple spends most of the day in the destination).

**TIPS AND TOOLS**

When you are selling cruises to honeymooners, always recommend an outside cabin—preferably a balcony cabin or balcony suite. This is a once-in-a-lifetime trip for the couple, so don’t hesitate to suggest a more luxurious cabin.

Make certain that you investigate the legal requirements before you recommend a destination wedding cruise. Most cruise lines cannot perform legal weddings at sea. And, because many countries have a waiting period of a few days or longer, weddings in some ports are not possible. Most destination weddings take place on board the vessel in the embarkation port. This provides guests the best opportunity to attend the wedding and enjoy the cruise.

A few cruise lines, because of the country under which they are flagged, can actually marry couples at sea. Most notable of these are Azamara Club Cruises, Celebrity Cruises, Cunard Line, and Princess Cruises. These cruise lines offer complete wedding packages and wedding coordinators to assist the travel agent and couple in planning a shipboard wedding.

You should be aware of two key points that surprise many agents booking their first cruise weddings: Almost every cruise line wedding package (whether set on the ship or in port) is considered a non-commissionable product, and almost every line employs independent wedding planning companies (e.g., Royal Ocean Events [www.royalwed.com], The Wedding Experience [www.theweddingexperience.com]) to make the actual arrangements for your couples’ ceremonies (so, in many cases, you will deal with the cruise line for the blocked cabins and the outside wedding planning company for the ceremony details as you make a booking).

If couples have family members or friends who cannot take the cruise (due to date conflicts or the expense), they can get married in their cruise homeport so that these guests can still join them in the ceremony.
When you book an outside venue for a destination wedding ceremony, always have a “Plan B” option in mind in case of inclement weather or other disruptions. In fact, you should discuss with the wedding coordinators at resorts and on cruise ships how they handle last-minute venue changes, so that you’re prepared to advise your couples if problems occur.

**Vow Renewal Ceremonies**

An important segment of the destination wedding market includes couples who are already married and want to plan a second honeymoon that includes a vow renewal ceremony, in which a married couple reaffirms the vows they made when first married.

A vow renewal ceremony can be a meaningful, touching, and revitalizing event for your clients and their children, family, and friends. Many second honeymooners have found that the ceremony provided them time to pause and reflect on where they have been and where they are going while setting a wonderful example for their children and grandchildren.

Your clients’ vow renewal ceremonies can be as creative and personal as they want them to be; they can be very formal or casual and fun. Since vow renewal ceremonies are generally more spiritual and not official in nature, they are usually conducted by clergy. However, having a judge or a ship’s captain officiate could work nicely as well. The ceremony can be conducted in chapels, temples, or banquet facilities; on beaches, yachts, or cruise ships; or anywhere else your clients may desire. If you are helping clients plan a vow renewal ceremony, encourage them to discuss their vision of a ceremony that reflects who they are, and don’t be afraid to be creative when suggesting appropriate destinations and venues.
There is no set time when couples may renew their vows, so there are no limits on when you might offer a vow renewal ceremony as an option for your clients (though keep in mind that some resorts require a minimum stay in order to set up vow renewals). Some of the most popular times for clients to plan vow renewal ceremonies include:

- Significant anniversaries, from as little as 10 years or less to as much as 50 years or more.
- After a particularly difficult crisis in their lives (such as overcoming a serious illness or a period of estrangement).
- Whenever it “feels right” to reaffirm the love that has matured and deepened with the passing of years.

**TIPS AND TOOLS**

At www.gettingremarried.com, you can find information and ideas about renewing wedding vows. Here are a few tips to consider when helping your clients plan vow renewal ceremonies.

- Involve the children in both the trip planning and the ceremony.
- Ask the hotel to re-create your client’s original bouquet or wedding cake.
- Have clients return to their original honeymoon destination, staying at the same hotel if possible. (Make sure they have realistic expectations about current conditions, so they are not disappointed by any changes that have taken place over the years.)
- Arrange for the hotel to display specially framed photographs of the first wedding on reception tables for guests to take home as favors.
- Find out if the destination has a traditional wedding ceremony that can be adapted to create a very special and memorable renewal of vows. Encourage clients to express their creative desires and ideas; it’s their day, and they should do it their way.

While the popularity of honeymoon destinations may change over time, the popularity of destination weddings and vow renewal ceremonies is on the rise and expected to continue.

Choosing to combine the wedding or vow renewal with the honeymoon can create memories for your clients that last a lifetime—and give you a fresh, creative, and lucrative way to serve the honeymoon market.
LGBT Couples

A growing segment of the destination wedding and honeymoon markets stems from gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender couples. The Netherlands became the first country in the world to offer full legal marriage options for same-sex couples (2001), followed by Belgium. Other countries have followed suit, including Canada and several states in the United States.

The hurdles for helping your clients marry legally in specific countries can be significant, including months-long residency requirements, but in many destinations you can arrange strictly symbolic ceremonies. Check these resources for more ideas if you wish to tap into this niche:

International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association (www.iglta.org)
Gay Weddings (www.gayweddings.com)
Purple Unions (www.purpleunions.com)
Rainbow Wedding Expo (www.rainbowweddingexpo.com)

KEY POINTS

■ The popularity of destination weddings is on the rise with both U.S. and Canadian citizens. This growing trend is due in large part to the increased costs of a formal wedding and the reality that many couples want to spend less time planning the event and more time enjoying themselves.

■ New trends in destination weddings include: a unique element being included in the wedding package; the inclusion of a foodie element plus a private foodie experience; a personal photographer at the wedding and an emphasis on a welcome party.

■ All-inclusive resorts contribute to the popularity of destination wedding locations, particularly in the Caribbean and Mexico. Several all-inclusive resorts offer free wedding ceremonies, or ceremonies at reduced rates, for couples who bring a certain number of guests.

■ Legal requirements for marriage vary by destination. Some countries have such restrictive marriage policies that it would be impractical for visitors to marry in those places.

■ One important legal requirement to consider is the waiting period, or the time required for prospective brides and grooms to be in the destination prior to the wedding.
Destination weddings and honeymoons in the Caribbean are very popular, and many island nations now offer waiting periods of three days or less.

While you may encounter significant challenges with destination weddings outside of the most popular venues, getting married in many popular destinations—including Hawaii, Jamaica, Fiji, Bermuda, and Las Vegas—is actually quite easy.

Most major cruise lines report double-digit growth in the shipboard wedding market in recent years, and they typically offer wedding programs complete with the ceremony, official, flowers, photography, cake, and so on.

An important segment of the destination wedding market includes couples who are already married and want to plan a second honeymoon that includes a vow renewal ceremony.

A new and growing segment of the destination wedding and honeymoon markets stems from gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender couples.
LESSON 3

Bridal Shows

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this lesson, you will be able to:

✓ Analyze key factors to determine whether to participate in a bridal show.
✓ Select an advantageous location and design for your bridal show booth.
✓ Use effective selling strategies during the bridal show.
✓ Collect valuable information from prospective brides and grooms and follow up with them after the bridal show.

BRAINSTORMING

Please answer these brainstorming questions before you read the lesson. At the end of the lesson, review your answers and make changes as needed based on what you learned.

1. What is a bridal show?
2. Why might you want to participate in one?
3. How would you draw prospective honeymooners to your bridal show booth?
4. What materials would you hand out?
5. What is the most important part of participating in a bridal show? Why?

Bridal shows, or events geared toward prospective brides and grooms that showcase a wide variety of wedding-related products and services, are one of the most effective ways to market your honeymoon travel services within your local market. Whether you are a large retail agency or an independent agent who specializes in honeymoons, you will reach a very desirable audience. Bridal shows are a great place to sell your services and to tell the story of why the bride and groom should work with a honeymoon specialist.
How to Choose a Bridal Show

Here are some factors to consider when choosing the bridal shows in which to participate.

■ **Size.** Many larger urban areas offer several shows. Normally bigger is better, since you reach more brides and generate a larger database for the cost of your booth. The fee for most 8’ x 10’ or 10’ x 10’ booths at larger shows is $800 to $1,100 per booth.

■ **Location.** If there are several shows in your area, make certain that you participate in the best ones. Shows in convention centers and hotels where an admission fee is charged are better than mall shows. (Your chances of a successful show will be greatly increased by the financial commitment.) You want brides who are committed and are attending the show to make all of their wedding plans.

■ **Demographics.** Many markets offer high-end shows. What you need to determine is whether the cost per bride is a good value or whether the show is primarily designed to showcase designer wedding gowns.

■ **Season.** January is generally the top month for bridal fairs; attendance is high, and many brides are actively shopping for the services they will require, including their honeymoon. February and March are next in popularity. The prime time for engagements is around the holidays, so shows during these time frames tend to have the best attendance. Normally, January shows will have a high percentage of brides who are looking to get married in that calendar year but have not yet made honeymoon plans—these are your prime prospects.

■ **Duration.** Weigh the costs in time and money of entering a bridal show that lasts more than one day. Longer shows may make it difficult to maintain the energy and enthusiasm needed to interact with prospective clients. If you choose a longer show, consider having more than one person to staff the booth, and alternate schedules to ensure that everyone stays fresh and enjoys the experience.

■ **Competition.** Find out how many travel agencies will be exhibiting at the show, or at least determine the number of companies per business category, such as travel, that the show allows. Obviously, the less competition you have at the show, the better. If ten travel agencies are all following up on the same leads from a single show, it will make producing sales that much harder than if there were only around four or five.
Data Collection. Make sure the show producers will collect enough information to justify the cost of the show and your time. If all you will receive are names, addresses, and wedding dates, you'll be limited in how you can follow up with prospective brides and grooms. To ensure that you don’t waste time and money following up on leads, make sure the data will be separated into brides, grooms, mothers of brides/grooms, guests, bridesmaids, and family members.

Planning for the Bridal Show

Choose your show and make your deposit early, as some shows fill up very quickly. Insist on paying only a deposit, with final payment due shortly before the show, which is standard with most show producers.

When you sign up for a show, choose a booth that is:

- Near the entrance in a main traffic area.
- In a corner (if not much more expensive).
- Not too close to the fashion show stage, since the noise during the numerous shows makes it difficult to speak with prospective clients.

Try to avoid being next to noisy booths with disc jockeys or live music. You are there for business, and you don’t want to have to talk over the music.

Here are some tips regarding your booth design.

- Hang a large 8-foot banner with your agency name, which will fit in an 8-foot or 10-foot booth. Make certain the banner has eyelets so you can use standard “S” hooks to attach the top of the banner to the rail at the top of the booth backdrop.

- Make sure your booth displays colorful travel scenes to make it visible from a long distance. The simplest way to use dramatic color and images is to mount travel posters on Fome-Cor®. Then, attach Velcro to the back of each poster and on several ribbons, and hang each poster from a ribbon.

- Most shows will provide you with a skirted table as part of your booth cost. If not, you may want to rent a table or bring one of your own. Also check to see whether carpet for your booth space is included. Carpet makes the booth a bit warmer and is easier on the feet than standing on hard concrete.
Office displays provided by preferred cruise lines, all-inclusive resorts, or other preferred suppliers can also be used to provide color to your booth.

Identify one or more preferred suppliers with whom you work to approach for co-op marketing funds and other assistance with the booth. Many leading resort companies in particular partner with agents to split booth costs and provide materials and prizes for local bridal shows.

Exhibiting at the Bridal Show

If possible, plan to have at least two honeymoon specialists or selling agents to staff your booth at the show. Independent agents or agents who are not part of a multi-employee agency can provide adequate coverage alone, if necessary.

Try to arrive at least two hours before the start of the show, allowing enough time to unload your materials and set up your display. Remember to bring a dolly or cart for moving heavy boxes of materials.

Both planning and practice are needed to have enough—but not too many—brochures and sales materials at your booth. Try to have brochures that will appeal to the different types of honeymooners you will meet at the show and their various budgets—from moderate to exclusive.

You should also include any brochures that feature specialties you offer. In addition, prepare some flyers with show specials, or call-to-action offers that are intended to spur bookings and give you a reason to close sales in the weeks after the show, for example, “Register to win a free SuperClubs Breezes honeymoon. Call for details!”

Create a promotional piece about yourself and your agency. Make sure that all your materials, including flyers, and any other handouts, have your name, address, and contact information, including your Web site address.

To prepare for times during the show when there is a rush of people, prepackage basic brochures and other items you want attendees to have in bags that you can quickly set out or hand to passersby. It is difficult to make contact with everyone who stops by your booth, particularly during peak show hours.
TIPS AND TOOLS

Table space for your bridal show exhibit is usually very limited. Create a practice display by setting out brochures and any other pieces you would like to have available on a table of similar size in your office or home. When you are satisfied with the display, take a picture and bring it with you for easy reconstruction when you get to the show site.

If possible, give away some prizes to increase booth traffic and collect information on the brides and grooms. (Check your contractual agreement to determine whether the show allows individual giveaways.) Many brides come prepared with preprinted labels to register for giveaways, but they rarely provide enough information for efficient follow-up.

Even though the show will probably provide you with a complete list of attendees, you will want to collect information on where the attendees plan to honeymoon, their destination of choice, and their approximate budget. At the very least, have them fill in their honeymoon destination choices and check a box if they are planning a destination wedding. This is important information you will need to close sales after the show.

Two or three $25 to $50 gift certificates from practical places such as Target, Best Buy, Home Depot, or a local restaurant should suffice for giveaways. In some cases, it is possible to have a restaurant donate gift certificates for the exposure. Use your own imagination and contacts. And, remember, you may also create gift certificates from your own agency that couples may use when they book with you.

It is critical that you have a giveaway and collect information about all the attendees. As you talk to the couples who visit your booth and fill out prize entry forms, write notes on the forms regarding sending out brochures, calling for a follow up appointment, or any special requests. Those forms should also ask attendees to provide their name, email address, and other details such as mailing address, phone number, and any current wedding or honeymoon destination plans they have made already.
One other thing to check is the possibility of giving away a honeymoon and becoming one of the main show sponsors. At many bridal shows, the show producers will give a travel agent prime sponsorship and a free booth for providing a honeymoon. Check with your show producer to see if this is possible. You can then work with a preferred supplier that might be willing to provide the honeymoon free or on a co-op basis.

**Selling at the Bridal Show**

Draw honeymooners in by asking simple questions, such as:

- “Have you planned your honeymoon yet?”
- “Would you like to register for our prize giveaways?”

If you have honeymoon specialists staffing your booth, choose people who are outgoing and engaging. Train them on how to draw people to your booth, and have a meeting with them prior to the show to discuss what is expected of them during the show.

Here are some general guidelines.

- Take breaks only during the fashion shows; the rest of the time is prime selling time.
- Have plenty of business cards, and hand them out liberally.
- Dress and act professionally; first impressions count.
- Do not eat in the booth.
- Wear comfortable yet appropriate shoes
- If you dress casually, dress with a theme that reflects your specialty, such as island or Hawaiian attire. (Check with the show producers who may have guidelines for dress.)

Bridal shows can be very hectic, and it is important that you are prepared to make every effort to get potential honeymooners to stop by. Their patronage of your booth is the best way for you to make as many contacts as possible and ensure a return on your investment of time and money.

**Selling after the Bridal Show**

The really important work begins after the show ends. You will have a list of names from your prize registrations, generally representing about 20 to 30 percent of everyone who attended the show.
Here are some helpful tips for following up and selling after the show.

- Send an e-mail or letter to all of the prize registrants within a week of the show thanking them for stopping by your booth and letting them know about your honeymoon specials.

- Prioritize everyone on your list by wedding date and estimated budget. Obviously, the first ones you will want to contact are those who are getting married in the next two to four months, as well as those with higher honeymoon budgets.

- Call everyone on your list and persist until you make contact.

- Repeat these steps once you have received the complete attendee list from the show producer, generally one to two weeks after the show. Make sure you receive a file with all of the information on the couples. You may not want to spend time or money contacting those with wedding dates more than 12 to 18 months away. Again, concentrate on the best prospects.

- Set a sales goal that is in line with your experience and the size of your business. For example, an experienced agent might target $5,000 in commissions in the first month after the show, and $10,000 in commissions for the three months after the show. Choose a challenging goal, yet one that is realistic and achievable.

- Consider offering your own evening function or reception after the show to which you can invite everyone who stopped by your booth. This “wedding night”/”honeymoon night” event allows you to follow up in person with the most qualified prospects who visited you during the bridal show.

- Keep these bridal show contacts on your email newsletter list, so that they will continue to hear from you even if they don’t turn into immediate sales. By doing so, you will keep your agency name in front of them when they plan romantic trips in the future.

The most important aspects of the bridal show are collecting good information from the prospective brides and grooms and following up early and often.

If you follow the guidelines outlined in this lesson, participating in local bridal shows can be a sound marketing strategy that reaps long-term rewards.
KEY POINTS

- Bridal shows, or events geared toward prospective brides and grooms that showcase a wide variety of wedding-related products and services, are one of the most effective ways to market your honeymoon travel services within your local market.

- Some factors to consider when choosing the bridal shows in which to participate include size, location, demographics, season, duration, competition, and data collection.

- When you choose a show, make your deposit early, select an advantageous booth location, and plan an eye-catching booth design.

- You should have an appropriate amount of sales materials on hand, including any brochures that feature specialties you offer as well as some flyers with “show specials.” All of your materials should have your agency name, address, and contact information, including your Web site address.

- If the show policy allows, give away some prizes to increase booth traffic and collect information on the brides and grooms.

- Ask engaging questions to draw honeymooners into your booth, and prepare yourself and any others staffing the booth to take advantage of selling opportunities during the show.

- The really important work begins after the show ends. Use consistent methods to follow up with every person, or at least the best prospects, from your prize registration list and the show attendee list.
LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this lesson, you will be able to:

✓ Purchase advertising to help achieve goals in your honeymoon market business plan.

✓ Use press releases to get publicity for your honeymoon business and create awareness of your services.

✓ Attract potential honeymooners through a targeted Web site.

✓ Understand the power of social media and how to find couples who are planning honeymoons

✓ Implement effective direct-mail and e-mail campaigns.

✓ Use social media to promote your business.

✓ Use a honeymoon registry to expand your base of clients.

BRAINSTORMING

Please answer these brainstorming questions before you read the lesson. At the end of the lesson, review your answers and make changes as needed based on what you learned.

1. Where and when might it make sense for you to advertise your honeymoon specialty? Why?

2. How can you use public relations to generate awareness of your business with a minimal investment?

3. What elements of a Web site are most important to attract potential honeymoon business? How would you rate the effectiveness of your current Web site?

4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using direct mail to reach the honeymoon market? Direct e-mail?

5. What is a honeymoon registry? How can it help you market your honeymoon business?

6. What forms of social media are most effective in finding honeymoon couples? How can you implement a social media strategy?
In an age when prospective honeymooners are bombarded with marketing messages, information, and travel-booking options, you need to find effective ways to communicate your competitive advantages: specialized knowledge and the ability to deliver personal service.

We have already discussed bridal shows as one important strategy for marketing your expertise and services to potential honeymooners. This lesson addresses several other marketing channels that can be used creatively to survive and thrive in this competitive electronic era.

**Advertising**

Advertising can play an important role in marketing your services to honeymooners. You don’t need a huge budget to get results, but you do need a budget. The old saying, “You have to spend money to make money,” is true, but you’re actually investing rather than simply spending. Money invested in effective advertising should pay dividends in the future.

Advertising can be an effective tool to help achieve the one thing that drives a honeymoon market business plan: the acquisition of prospect names. Prior to making an investment in advertising, you need to find out if the advertising media will yield the names of couples getting married in the future so you can mine that list and expand it on a consistent basis.

In the case of social media marketing, it’s crucial that you target those who have identified themselves as potential candidates and you create a compelling call to action such as “liking” your page or completing an inquiry email.

Most bridal media provide reader service cards that allow brides (and grooms) to request information from advertisers. This allows advertisers to compile a database of prospects with basic information such as name, address, phone number, and wedding date.

Some media will give the bride an incentive to fill out the forms with some type of giveaway. National media provide names from across the country; regional and local media provide lists of a more localized nature.
Facebook, for example, allows you to create a targeted advertising campaign and market to those who have self-identified as engaged, and further allows you to target those who have been engaged fewer than six months, when they are most likely choosing their vendors. This is a powerful tool since some print lists could be outdated, whereas social media is regularly updated.

Where should you advertise? Along with social media, there are more bridal magazines than you can possibly imagine, from nationally recognized magazines such as *Bridal Guide* and *Brides* to national or regional publications such as *Perfect Wedding Guide*, and *Wedding Bells*. There are also a host of other publications named after the city or state in which they do business, such as *Weddings in Houston* or *Minnesota Bride*.

Unless you have multiple locations around the country and a competitive advantage for a certain type of travel, you will probably not be a candidate for national print advertising since your return on investment would not justify the expense. It’s generally a better idea to focus on your own local bridal media market, particularly because some couples want to work with an agent they can meet in person.

Social media, on the other hand, allows couples to work with you virtually and especially if you specialize in a certain niche market. If you do plan to use print advertising, try to choose a magazine that provides a list of leads monthly, even if it adds a little to the cost.

In general, print advertising is expensive. If you decide to advertise, make sure you have the right approach and a professional ad design. It is more important that your ad is of high quality than a certain size.

Brides are very focused consumers; a bride who picks up the magazine in which you have advertised will probably see your ad. Consequently, a well-designed ad yields a better return on investment than a poorly designed one. Furthermore, once an ad is designed, you can usually use it over and over again.

**Public Relations**

Public relations (PR) is a form of marketing that involves communicating with various sectors of the public to influence their attitudes and opinions in the interest of promoting your product. PR is an important marketing discipline, but it can be very broad and thus confusing to someone who is
not a marketing professional. For our purposes, we will focus on PR tactics that make sense to honeymoon specialists trying to generate awareness of their services; we will only elaborate on tactics that make financial sense and do not require large cash outlays.

The scope of public relations is limited only by your own creativity. There are many ways large companies create favorable PR, such as through charities and sponsorships. It is a misconception to think that public relations is free; the truth is that it can be as costly as a large advertising campaign. The benefit of PR is that it is perceived at a higher level than advertising because it doesn’t have the overt commercial tone of advertising. Therefore, PR tends to have a higher credibility factor with the consumer because it is coming from an “unbiased source.”

At the core of most public relations efforts is publicity, or messages issued in behalf of your business. Publicity is generated primarily through a press release, a printed announcement by a company about its activities written in the form of a news article and given to the media. Travel professionals can use press releases to create awareness of a new service they offer, new credentials (such as a Honeymoon Specialist certification), or anything else that may be deemed newsworthy. See the sample press release in Figure 4.1.

The bottom line is this: All newspapers need and want content. If you give it to them in the right package, at the right time, with the right message, you stand a good chance of being on the receiving end of some good PR. This doesn’t necessarily mean that you will get the New York Times or Washington Post to do an article about you, but you should be able to get some publicity from a local or regional newspaper.

**The Internet**

Because the Internet is comprised of content, or text- and image-based information contained on a Web site, you need to know where the content is that attracts the honeymoon market. There are numerous Web sites that address the wedding and honeymoon market, and potential honeymooners are only a click away from finding Web sites of travel providers who may earn their business.
FIGURE 4.1
Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: [Agency owner, agency contact info]

Local Travel Agency Offers Honeymoon Registry
Honeymoon gift registry offers contemporary option to gift giving.

[Your City, Your State, Month, Year]—Sales of gravy boats and monogrammed bath towels may be on the decline as newlyweds-to-be shift their registries from households to honeymoons. As a travel agency that specializes in honeymoon planning, [Your Agency Here] is betting that this national trend will be reflected in [Your City/ Town Here].

[Your Agency Here] is now able to offer this service to its honeymoon clientele through a partnership with the online honeymoon registry company, TheHoneymoon.com. Through this affiliation, couples are able to create a custom honeymoon registry out of the honeymoon package they purchase through [Your Agency Here], as well as a personal wedding Web page to serve as a central source of information for their wedding.

As a specialist in honeymoon travel, [Your Agency Here] has seen the gradual increase in the age of honeymooners, nationally now 29 for men and 27 for women. Many of these young couples have already spent money on establishing households and usually don’t need another toaster. With more couples paying for some or all of their own wedding expenses, many couples find themselves settling for something less than their dream honeymoon.

“We feel the honeymoon registry is a trend that is here to stay,” says [Agency Owner Name], owner of [Your Agency Here], “and we’re very happy to give honeymooners high-tech tools with our local ‘high-touch’ service. Young couples love the Internet for research, but the honeymoon is just too important an event to risk booking it entirely online.”

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Source: Adapted from www.thehoneymoon.com/agent.
Publicity is the most trusted, most effective, and least expensive form of advertising. A good story in the press can create a buzz about your agency that is often not possible with paid advertising. Media are quite responsive to local stories, provided the news is timely and significant. To ensure that press materials are submitted properly, follow these general guidelines.

- Determine the specific media you want to reach (e.g., local newspapers, magazines, Web sites, radio, television), and then create a list of contacts. Typically, the people who receive news releases are in editorial roles, so most often, press releases will be sent to people with titles such as editor, managing editor, news editor, and travel editor.

- Once you have determined the proper contact within a media organization, try to notify him or her that you are sending a local news story. Mentioning that it’s a travel/honeymoon-related story might be helpful in determining if you are sending it to the right person.

- Send the release either by fax or e-mail or, in some cases, by standard mail.

- Follow up within a few days to see what the editor thinks of the story and to answer any questions. Be persistent but not pushy. The media receive thousands of news stories every day.

If you want to be successful attracting potential honeymooners via the Internet, you must follow two important precepts of Internet marketing.

1. You must have a targeted Web site.

2. You must partner with search engines and directories.

Your Web Site

Most honeymooners are under the age of 40, and many of them have grown up with computers and online services. A Web site is an essential tool for you to reach computer-savvy honeymooners and to take advantage of this important marketing channel.

A Web site is the least expensive storefront that money can buy, and it is a tremendous marketing tool. The content of your Web site is accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and, unlike print material, it can be updated without waste at a nominal cost. Travel agents have many alternative ways to set up their Web sites, from consortium Web-site-building tools to third-party providers of travel Web sites.
The benefit of using a third-party provider of travel Web sites is that you get travel content and an online presence without much of an investment in time and money. The drawback is that most of these templates create Web sites that are very similar, which makes it difficult to differentiate yourself from your competitors.

No matter what route you take to create your Internet presence, you must differentiate yourself from local and regional competitors—as well as national competitors, if you choose to compete on that level. Make sure you have your own logo and identity that establish you as a specialist in the honeymoon market.

In fact, a honeymoon specialization alone may be too general; you should pinpoint your specific strength in the honeymoon market. For example, a Caribbean and Mexico honeymoon specialist will still be able to get general honeymoon travel sales but will be more effective at competing for honeymoon travel to either the Caribbean or Mexico.

Your home page should give an overview of the types of travel in which you specialize. Here are some suggestions for what you might include on your home page.

- Sample honeymoon packages with lead-in pricing to get shoppers’ attention and to generate inquiries.

- Testimonials from satisfied customers to give shoppers confidence that you will be able to help them create the honeymoon of their dreams.

- Links to other wedding-related Web sites, which in turn feature your Web site on their home pages; such mutual links can help you add value to your site and increase “hits” from potential clients.

- Links to separate sections, or Web pages, dedicated to each of your areas of strength and knowledge.

Each of your Web pages should have supporting content that explains why this destination (or other aspect of honeymoon travel) is one of your strengths and how it can result in a great honeymoon. In addition, you should have at least one testimonial from a couple that used your services for this destination (or other area of specialty).

In addition to the home page and specialty pages, you should have a page with your credentials and photo. A picture instantly connects you with someone in a way that no words possibly can. When all is said and done, consumers tend to buy from people with whom they have a relationship and with whom they feel comfortable. It may seem unlikely, but clients do
establish relationships with people and businesses through Web sites. It happens every day. The key is to do a better job at building virtual relationships than your competitor.

Because honeymoons are so important to couples, you have a great opportunity to establish long-term customer relationships in the honeymoon market. Honeymooning couples are almost three times more likely to use travel agents for these trips (37 percent) as for non-honeymoon travel (13 percent), according to the 2012 American Wedding Study: Travel Edition (Brides magazine).

If the nature of the travel is important enough, prospective travelers will trust travel experts more than a computerized booking engine for their travel arrangements.

Although honeymooners will book with you primarily because you offer qualified, personal expertise and service, you should consider whether to have an online booking capability on your Web site. At some point, you may want to add this capability, not so much for new customers but as a convenience for repeat customers with whom you have established relationships.

Once your Web site is up and running, you should make sure that your Web address is on every item of print material that leaves your office. You should also make sure that your prospective customers can find your site on the Internet, and this is accomplished primarily through search engines and directories.

In today’s socially networked world, it is also critical that you add links to your Facebook page, your Pinterest page, your Twitter account, and other social media sites so that couples who are savvy social media users can connect with you through those channels.

**Search Engines and Directories**

The vast majority of Internet users find their way around the Internet by using search engines, or programs that index documents and then attempt to match documents relevant to the user’s search requests, and directories, or organized, categorized listings of Web sites.
Search traffic is of paramount importance for most Web sites, and there are four types of search results in which your Web site can appear, depending on the search tool:

1. Directory results
2. Natural search results
3. Paid results
4. Paid inclusion

Directory results occur when users search for your Web site using a directory, such as Yahoo! or the Open Directory Project (ODP). Yahoo! charges an annual fee to be listed in its directory, while the ODP is free; do your own research to decide which directory is right for you. In any event, if you want prospective honeymooners to find you on the Internet, it’s a good idea to register your Web site with the directories.

Search results are listings that show up when users enter a keyword (a word or phrase used in an Internet search) in a search engine, such as Google. Although a search engine takes into account many factors when returning a list of Web sites after a keyword search, one of the easiest ways for you to ensure that your Web site appears near the top of the search results is to modify your Web page content.

If you are an expert in honeymoon travel to Mexico and the Caribbean, you should have content on your home page that discusses this expertise, as well as on the Web pages specifically devoted to each destination. Each page should have keywords that are relevant to honeymooning in Mexico and the Caribbean, and you should use each keyword multiple times on each page. On your home page and Mexico page, for example, you might repeat targeted phrases such as “all-inclusive Mexico honeymoons” or “Mexico honeymoon packages.”

If you don’t get satisfactory search results with your preferred keywords, then you may want to look into paid results. This would require you to use pay-per-click (PPC) search engine advertising, an online advertising payment model in which advertisers bid on keywords that are entered by people performing searches on the Web. PPC advertising appears alongside, above, or below natural search results in search engines. On Yahoo!, for example, you will see PPC results that are clearly labeled as “Sponsor Results” above the natural results labeled “Web Results.”
As an advertiser, you pay an ad server company a fee (from 1 cent to 10 cents) each time a Web surfer clicks on the link to your Web site. Your account is charged for the amount you bid on the keyword that was used by the Web surfer.

Paid inclusion is a hybrid of both natural search listings and pay-per-click. In paid inclusion, you pay to guarantee that pages of your Web site are included in the directory’s or search engine’s database, but like natural search results, the ranking is not guaranteed. Your site must qualify for high ranking based on its perceived relevancy to the search keywords, and it must compete for position with other Web sites for its ranking. Yahoo charges on a per-click basis in order to keep Web masters from angling for a high ranking with keywords that are not relevant to their Web site. There is a chance that Yahoo! will find your site naturally without paid inclusion and list it for free, but it may take awhile and there is no guarantee.

There is a lot more we could say about Internet marketing and search results, but that is not the purpose of this course. The important thing is that you realize how crucial it is to have a targeted Internet presence and to make it easy for prospective honeymooners to find you on the Web.

Social Media

Many agents rely heavily on their involvement in social networks such as Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, and others to recruit new clients and (more importantly) stay in touch with their couples between the booking and departure dates for their weddings and honeymoons.

The most popular social media tool by far for wedding and honeymoon agents is Facebook. More than one billion people now have accounts on Facebook, making it the world’s largest social network. You should consider setting up a Facebook business page for your agency, and keep it completely separated from your own personal Facebook page.

Because couples respond most to images on Facebook, you should always include photos and video clips on your Facebook business page. Also, you should engage your clients and page visitors by using questions and polls in your Facebook posts, and you should explore other techniques such as approved contests and Facebook ad campaigns to draw potential clients to your page.
Facebook advertising allows you to target couples in a way no other social media medium can because it utilizes the demographics that the couple uses, making it instantaneously current. For example, as soon as a potential bride changes her status to “engaged” it will be included in your Facebook ad.

There are many options for targeting by location, the length of engagement, the age and gender of the prospect and their interests. For those reasons, and many others, Facebook should remain very high on the list of possible inclusions in your marketing plan.

After Facebook, the next most popular social network among brides and couples is Pinterest – an image-based medium where you can post colorful, attractive photos of wedding and honeymoon destinations, your clients’ own photos shared with you, and images you collect from destinations and suppliers. Be sure that you have a strategy that includes bringing “clicks” on the image to your own website or Facebook page. Just posting images is not enough to see a return on the time investment.

Be careful about emphasizing specials and discounts in social media, as many of your clients and prospects will quickly tire of seeing them. Instead, focus on sharing destination wedding and honeymoon ideas and tips that your prospects and clients will find valuable – in turn, that practice builds their trust in you and will lead to future bookings.

**Direct Mail and E-Mail**

Direct mail and e-mail are both effective communication tools for generating awareness of your business because they are, as the name implies, “direct to the consumer.” If you want these tools to work well, you must have a good mailing list of prospective honeymooners and you must ask them to take some kind of action, such as a visit to your Web site, connection to social media or a call to your office.

The objective of both direct e-mail and direct mail is the same: to get prospective honeymooners to pick up the phone and call so you can start to build a rapport. If this happens, you stand a good chance of building a trust-based relationship, which will ultimately lead to a sale. Each type of direct-mail marketing, however, has its own advantages and disadvantages.
One of the main advantages of direct e-mail is that it is by far the least expensive form of direct marketing. Unfortunately, the nominal cost of sending e-mail has resulted in a distinct disadvantage: the preponderance of junk e-mail/spam. Because there is so much spam, people do not even look at e-mails from unknown sources, even if the messages manage to get through a prospect’s spam filter.

Permission-based e-mail marketing, in which you get the prospect’s permission to receive your e-mail messages, is most effective, but it is difficult with honeymoon prospects because the window between engagement and marriage is relatively short.

Ironically, increasing amounts of spam have made consumers more receptive to traditional direct-mail offerings, a fairly recent advantage of direct mail. Brides-to-be are already hyper-receptive to anything regarding their wedding because it is such a big event in their lives. If you use well-designed, compelling direct-mail pieces, you stand a very good chance of breaking through the information clutter.

You will probably incur costs to create either form of direct marketing. A compelling direct-mail piece usually requires the services of two types of professionals: a copywriter and a graphic designer. For a professionally designed direct e-mail, you will most likely have to pay someone who knows the programming language of the Internet.

**TIPS AND TOOLS**

There are companies that can help you manage your direct-e-mail campaigns, such as Constant Contact (www.constantcontact.com) and MailChimp (www.mailchimp.com). These companies can house your database of honeymoon prospects and allow you to create professional-looking e-mails easily and quickly. They will also automatically handle unsubscribe requests, which allows you to maintain a clean mailing list so you can supplement your e-mail marketing with direct mail.

There can also be costs in materials acquisition, such as copyrighted photos. Travel suppliers, particularly preferred suppliers, are usually happy to supply agents with materials for direct mailings because they want you to sell their products. Keep in mind, however, that you still have to sell yourself as a honeymoon specialist.
To help offset the postage costs of direct-mail campaigns, make an effort to personalize your direct-mail pieces. Personalization provides the best chance of having a successful direct-mail campaign, and because you will not be sending out thousands of pieces at a time, you can follow some simple guidelines to give your direct mail a truly personal feel.

First, address each piece by hand rather than using a computer-generated mailing label. If you have 1,000 names on your mailing list, send out 50 to 100 hand-addressed pieces per day. If you send out the entire 1,000 pieces all at once, you could get overwhelmed with responses and squander some opportunities. It’s better to be consistent and do a little bit every day rather than try to cram your entire campaign into a two-day period.

After you address your mail pieces by hand, be sure to use a first-class stamp. Do not use a mailing machine label. Remember, it’s the perception of automation that dulls people’s receptivity to direct mail. So the more you can do to avoid that perception, the better the chance that your piece will be read.

Finally, follow up. Shortly after the expected arrival of the mail piece, call each recipient (but first familiarize yourself with the rules of “do not call” lists). Brides are especially receptive to phone calls regarding their honeymoon. Even if they have already booked it, they just love to talk about details of the trip. If you do reach a bride who has already made arrangements for a honeymoon, ask if she knows anyone else who is getting married that you may be able to help.

As you start to receive responses from your direct-mail and direct-e-mail campaigns, qualify prospects as quickly as possible to determine if they are clients whose business you want.

Not every person who hasn’t already booked a honeymoon qualifies as a good prospect. Find out if the prospects are worth your valuable time. One quick way to do this is simply to ask when they are getting married. If it’s more than a year away, introduce yourself and give the bride and groom a quick synopsis of your strengths, and then put them in a follow-up file.

Couples getting married in 12 months or less are hot prospects if they haven’t yet booked their honeymoon and do not have an agent yet.
For every good prospect you identify, schedule an in-person, phone or Skype appointment so you can advance to the next step in the sales process. Make sure that you send a follow-up letter thanking them for their time and recapping your conversation to reaffirm their honeymoon needs. This will demonstrate that you understand what they want and further position yourself as a valuable addition to their wedding planning process.

**Honeymoon Registry**

Honeymoon registries work like a traditional bridal registry in that brides and grooms register for the honeymoon they want, broken down into gifts reflecting a variety of price points. Wedding guests, in turn, purchase portions of the honeymoon as gifts for the couple—creating a whole new audience of travel purchasers for you.

While honeymoon registries provide a fresh channel for marketing honeymoon travel, the concept is actually not new to the travel industry. For years, travel agents have offered honeymoon registries as a value-added service to generate incremental, high-margin honeymoon travel bookings. However, it was a service that was only nominally successful because it required travel agents to manually collect money from participating gift givers, who often felt as though they were making a charitable donation rather than giving a wedding gift.

Fortunately, the power of the Internet has allowed the concept to flourish, and the manual collection of honeymoon funds is now obsolete. Online honeymoon registries provide a wealth of automated features, such as 24/7 online access and purchasing; downloadable guest notification tools, automated recording of gift purchasers, dates of purchase, and gift amounts; as well as value-added features like personal wedding Web pages. These registries are also an excellent option for guests who cannot attend the wedding ceremony and bring a gift (as well as guests who may be traveling long distances for the wedding but do not wish to carry bulky gifts with them).

In most cases, you can work with honeymoon registry providers to customize a registry site for each couple that displays their honeymoon details and any “extras” that may be purchased. You may also provide the
couples the registry web site address to include in their wedding invitations, as well as registry cards with this information that may be inserted in invitations for the wedding or bridal showers or passed out to guests before the wedding.

You may decide to offer honeymoon registries at no charge to your clients (while retaining the commissions from the honeymoon booking itself), or you may charge a service fee for creating registries. One leading honeymoon registry service is honeymoonwishes.com.

A honeymoon registry can be used for the entire honeymoon or for only those activities and services that are in addition to the base honeymoon cost. While many couples get their entire honeymoon cost fulfilled through their honeymoon registry, most usually receive a sum that pays for a healthy chunk of the honeymoon expense. And, just like traditional wedding registries, most gifts come in to the registry in the weeks just before the wedding.

Because payment for most packaged travel is required 30 to 60 days in advance of departure, couples that successfully use the honeymoon registry pay for their travel themselves and then pay themselves back with the gifts they receive. This serves to illustrate an important point: Couples that appear to need the honeymoon registry the least tend to have the most successful registries and provide you with the most profitable bookings.

In other words, couples that need a honeymoon registry just to take a honeymoon will tend to take a lot of your time, and in the end, many will produce nothing for you. If you choose to use an online honeymoon registry as a marketing vehicle, protect your valuable time by being selective about the clients who register with you.

Regardless of which marketing channels you use to promote your business, it’s important that you set aside time each day to attract new honeymoon prospects. There will always be phone calls to make and take, and other things will come up every day to distract you from your marketing plans.

Plus, it’s more fun planning honeymoons than doing the little things necessary to find new prospects.
But don’t be so busy phoning suppliers, getting pricing, and researching destinations that you forget about marketing yourself and your business. If you set aside an hour or two each day for this activity, you will find yourself among the top 20 percent of honeymoon specialists in the travel business.

**KEY POINTS**

- Before making an investment in advertising, you need to find out if the advertising media will yield the names of couples getting married in the future so you can mine that list and expand it on a consistent basis.

- At the core of most public relations efforts is publicity, which is generated primarily through a press release. Travel professionals can use press releases to create awareness of their honeymoon specialty.

- A Web site is an essential tool for you to reach computer-savvy honeymooners and to take advantage of the important Internet marketing channel.

- If you partner with search engines and directories, potential honeymooners will be able to find your Web site using a keyword search. If you don’t get satisfactory search results with your preferred keywords, then you may want to look into paid results using pay-per-click (PPC) advertising.

- While direct mail and e-mail have their own advantages and disadvantages, both are effective communication tools for generating awareness of your business. If you want these tools to work well, you must have a good mailing list of prospective honeymooners and you must ask them to take some kind of action.

- The most popular social media tool by far for wedding and honeymoon agents is Facebook.

- One growing trend in the wedding industry is an online honeymoon registry. Couples that appear to need the honeymoon registry the least tend to have the most successful registries and provide you with the most profitable bookings.
LESSON 5  Selling to Honeymooners

LEARNING OUTCOMES
After completing this lesson, you will be able to:

✓ Specify the terms of your relationship with your honeymoon clients.
✓ Ask the right questions to determine a couple’s needs for their honeymoon experience, as well as the needs of their guests, if applicable.
✓ Recommend honeymoon destinations and accommodations that are in line with the couple’s needs, preferences, and tendencies.
✓ Remove objections and conditions that temporarily block the sale.
✓ Secure a couple’s purchase commitment and satisfaction through effective closing and follow-up techniques.

BRAINSTORMING
Please answer these brainstorming questions before you read the lesson. At the end of the lesson, review your answers and make changes as needed based on what you learned.

1. What kinds of questions might you ask a prospective honeymoon couple to help them decide on a destination or resort?
2. What is an effective way to answer an objection about the cost of a honeymoon?
3. What kinds of questions can you ask to get the couple to commit to a honeymoon purchase?

Honeymooners tend to be well informed, and you will be expected to know at least as much as they do to earn their business and close the sale. To be successful selling to honeymooners, you must be able to establish your credibility by asking the right questions and gathering the information you need to know.

Research popular wedding dates in your area as each area is different in terms of popular months to get married. The difference is important as you plan your marketing and sales efforts.
This lesson explores some general strategies for selling honeymoons, as well as some more specific sales tips regarding destination weddings and vow renewal ceremonies.

Establishing a Relationship

At the very start of the selling process, it’s a good idea to specify the terms of your relationship with your honeymoon clients. In other words, you need to determine how you are going to work with engaged couples as a honeymoon specialist. (Though you may actually consult with only the groom or the bride, for purposes of this course we refer to the client as a couple.)

It is not wise for any honeymoon specialist to provide expertise and time without an agreement about payment and services. Begin by explaining your value to your clients, specifying how your experience and assistance will help them fulfill their honeymoon dream.

Then discuss with your clients what your requirements are to handle their wedding and honeymoon plans. For example, many agents who plan destination weddings require a planning deposit of $200 to $1,000, with all or a portion of this applied to the couple’s travel arrangements.

As you have already learned, charging fees is particularly important for destination weddings. Each reservation you make for the couple and their guests is an individual reservation and requires individualized attention. Besides the work involved in making and servicing the various reservations, you will probably incur additional costs shipping documents. Essentially, you become the conduit through whom all paperwork and requests pertaining to the wedding are channeled, and your schedule of fees should reflect that.

Whether you are selling a simple honeymoon or a complicated destination wedding, you should clearly explain what your fee or planning deposit includes, such as:

- At least two options for a honeymoon itinerary or package along with pricing.
- Pricing for various levels of accommodation, such as run-of-house, oceanfront, and junior suite.
- Recommended hotels, air carriers, wholesalers, and other travel providers based on the needs of the couple (and their guests, in the case of destination weddings).

- Negotiated group prices (if applicable), with appropriate discounts and complimentary upgrades for the wedding couple.

These extra touches will differentiate you, and your travel company, when you are selling your services to honeymooners and destination wedding couples.

Though many agents who specialize in destination weddings and honeymoons choose to charge service fees or advance deposits, they handle those funds in a wide variety of ways. Some agents assess clients a separate wedding planning fee over and above any advance deposits for travel services, while others simply charge the advance travel deposits but keep a portion of those funds as a service fee if the couple decides ultimately not to take the trip. Other agents opt to rely on the commissions they earn from the bookings without keeping any other funds from clients as a service.

As an independent business owner, you may decide how you wish to set up the deposits and fees required for the trips you book with wedding and honeymoon couples. However, it always pays to have a written, signed agreement with clients spelling out the terms and conditions that apply to the deposits and fees you collect from them.

**Qualifying the Honeymoon Couple**

Because honeymooners have very particular needs and desires, it is vital that you do a very thorough job of qualifying them.

Qualifying is the process of asking questions to ascertain a couple’s wants, needs, and desires for their honeymoon experience. Effective qualifying is the best way to convey to a honeymoon couple that you are truly interested in making their honeymoon everything they expect it to be. Honeymooners don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care about them and their honeymoon experience.

Some qualifying questions will be very basic, the same that you would ask of any client, such as:
What is the desired length of your trip?

Where would you like to go?

When do you wish to depart?

TIPS AND TOOLS

If you have clients who are planning a destination wedding, you can help get your relationship off to a good start by providing them with a checklist of things they need to do. Here is an example of a destination wedding checklist.

- Think ahead and plan early.
- Find a travel agent who specializes in honeymoons and destination weddings.
- Decide on a wedding date as well as a time (for example, sunset weddings are very popular) and how many guests, including children, you would like to invite.
- Purchase “save the date” magnets or cards (see www.topweddingsites.com), and send them to everyone on your guest list.
- Establish a budget for your honeymoon, which your travel planner will need to know in order to help you choose the ideal destination.
- Ask your wedding guests about their preferences regarding destination, budget, and accommodations.
- Work with your travel planner to make a final decision on the location of your wedding/honeymoon and your honeymoon package.
- If there is an on-site wedding coordinator at your selected hotel, contact that person to plan the details of your wedding.

These basic questions can be particularly important for honeymooners, who often have a specific amount of vacation time and specific days of the week when they can travel. Flight time availability can have a major impact on honeymoon decisions. For example, if travel time to their desired destination comprises a significant part of the time allotted for the honeymoon, the couple may choose a different destination or spend more days than they originally had planned.

Conversely, later arrival at a destination and earlier departure may allow a couple to shorten their stay and upgrade their accommodations. Whether there are charter flights to popular honeymoon destinations, such as the Caribbean, can also affect the overall cost of the honeymoon.
Besides practical questions about travel times and preferences, other questions should probe more deeply into the couple’s expectations of their ideal honeymoon. Examples of such questions might include:

- Where have you traveled with your friends or families before your relationship began?
- Where have you traveled together previously?
- What types of accommodations have you enjoyed in the past?
- How much of your wedding budget have you allotted for your honeymoon?
- Do you have any special preferences in terms of meals, hotel amenities, services, and so on?
- Are you planning a destination wedding?
- Will anyone else be accompanying you? (If children, how old are they?)
- What aspect of your honeymoon is most important to you?
- What do you need from me to fulfill your expectations of your ideal honeymoon experience?

The objective of qualifying is to determine how you can help the couple achieve their ultimate honeymoon. Every honeymoon couple, no matter the budget, wants the vacation experience of a lifetime. Qualifying is the primary way for you to uncover the clues you need to deliver that experience.

**TIPS AND TOOLS**

We all have two eyes, two ears, and one mouth—four inputs and one output. A general rule of thumb is to use them in the same proportion; that is, spend four times as much time listening as you do talking. That skill alone will set you apart from the vast majority of competitors. Also, remember that Web sites cannot ask questions and listen to solve a couple’s honeymoon problem. That is your competitive advantage, and you must build on it.
TIPS AND TOOLS

Formal and traditional weddings are still on the decline as couples want romantic, fun and simple weddings with a touch of elegance. Rustic, garden and vintage themes are also on the rise.

As you get the couple talking, try to spend most of your time listening. Of course, the qualifying process should be very interactive, and you must be prepared to answer any questions the couple may have. But listen carefully to the couple’s responses to your open-ended questions, because their answers often reveal the information you need to make just the right recommendation and earn the couple’s business.

For example, the answer to the following question can tell you a lot about what a couple needs to make their honeymoon the trip of a lifetime: “If you could envision the perfect day on your honeymoon, how would it begin, what would you do during the day, and how would it end?”

For honeymoon clients who are planning destination weddings or vow renewal ceremonies, it is important that you identify not only the couple’s needs but also their expected guests’ needs. Get a copy of the invitation list so you can send information to all invited guests about accommodation options, as well as how to get in touch with you to coordinate arrivals and departures.

Try to get commitments and deposits from people as early as possible, especially if it is a large wedding. Even though the wedding is the reason for the trip, you should expect that every individual traveling is going to treat this as a vacation. They will have the same questions and concerns about the destination, accommodations, and activities as the couple, and you should prepare the same information for guests as you do for the wedding couple.

You might try using a questionnaire to help you qualify the honeymoon couple and their invited guests (See Figure 5.1). Effective qualifying will help you uncover details that are relevant to the couple’s honeymoon experience and will enable you to make appropriate suggestions for destinations and accommodations.

Choosing a Destination

In the process of qualifying your clients, one of the first decisions you need to help the couple make is where they will spend their honeymoon. This is particularly important for couples who are planning a destination
### FIGURE 5.1
Sample Destination Wedding Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bride’s name:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day phone</td>
<td>Evening phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groom’s name:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day phone</td>
<td>Evening phone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Wedding date:** ________________  
- **Legal wedding:** [ ]  
- **Vow renewal:** [ ]

**Preferred destinations:**

**Interests of the couple (activities, accommodations, etc.):**

**Approximate budget (wedding and honeymoon):**

**Anticipated number of invited immediate family members:**

**Anticipated number of invited guests (nonfamily):**

- **Adults only:** [ ]  
- **Families:** [ ]

**Approximate budget of guests (per-person air and land cost for 3 or 4 nights):**

**Will couple provide complete list of guests for mailing or tracking of travel arrangements?** Yes [ ] No [ ]

**Will couple have agent produce a wedding/travel announcement?** Yes [ ] No [ ]

**Will couple require a date announcement?** Yes [ ] No [ ]

**Special requests and general information:**

**Agent name:**

**How did couple find agency:**
wedding, because legal requirements for marriage vary by destination, as you learned in Lesson 2. Furthermore, the couple’s budgetary restrictions, or those of their invited guests, may eliminate certain destinations because of the costs involved in getting and staying there.

Ideally, you should narrow the decision to a maximum of two preferred destinations. If couples are planning a destination wedding, make sure the destinations have marriage laws that accommodate the couple’s wedding plans.

You should also make sure the destinations you recommend are in line with the “type” of honeymooners your clients are—Luxury Lovers, Adventure Seekers, Culture Vultures, and so forth. Keep in mind, however, that if ever there is a time when certain types of travelers might deviate from their usual travel preferences, it just might be their honeymoon.

Even so, you will greatly increase your chances of earning the sale and gaining the loyalty of satisfied clients if you suggest a destination that appeals to your clients’ fundamental tendencies. Culture Vultures, for example, may say they just want to hang out on a beach and relax on their honeymoon, but a destination that offers both quality beaches and cultural attractions might be the ideal solution.

Make sure you understand your honeymoon clients’ core values before making destination recommendations. This is your opportunity to establish credibility and a reputation for creating experiences that couples will cherish for a lifetime.

Although qualifying is critical to making appropriate recommendations, all the selling skills in the world won’t make up for a lack of product knowledge. You need to know your destinations—and your properties.

**Recommending Accommodations**

For many honeymooners, their accommodations are the most important part of their honeymoon. While honeymoon clients in general rely on your assistance to make a good choice for accommodations, the less a couple has traveled, the more reliant they will be.

There are two key requirements to recommending appropriate accommodations for honeymooners:
Qualify the couple very well.

Know your product very, very well.

Besides budgets, lifestyle choices have a great impact on accommodation choices. Your questions during the qualifying process should focus on the kind of ambience the couple is looking for in their accommodations and what types of activities are of interest to them. Obviously, you would recommend different accommodations for a couple looking for solitude on the beach and lots of downtime than you would for a couple that wants lots of group activities and wild nightlife.

For destination weddings and vow renewal ceremonies, you also need to consider the budgetary needs of invited wedding guests when recommending a resort. If the couple has invited only a small group of people, you should select a resort that is affordable for all.

If the couple is planning on having a large number of guests, you may want to select a resort with nearby accommodations in different price categories. This is a particularly effective strategy when the couple has their heart set on luxurious accommodations and the wedding guests have a variety of budgets. If you do take this approach, try to recommend neighboring accommodations that share common ownership or management with the host hotel or resort, which should help with volume price breaks.

This is where you can really use your knowledge and expertise to secure your position as a valuable resource for the couple. Many times you can offer two sister resorts at different price levels, which gives guests a choice of prices and accommodations. In many cases, guests will be allowed to use the facilities at both resorts.

For example, you might suggest:

- Iberostar Grands and Iberostar family resorts
- Sandals, with nearby Beaches
- Occidental Hotels & Resorts, including Allegro, Grand, and Royal resorts

Once your clients decide on a resort or hotel for their destination wedding, you should establish a clear understanding of who will be communicating with the on-site wedding coordinator, the person at the hotel or wedding venue who is in charge of all wedding-related details. In most cases, it is better for the honeymoon specialist to secure the booking at the resort and then put the couple in touch with the wedding coordinator. It is not...
absolutely necessary for the travel agent to handle all of the wedding planning. The planning may actually be more efficient if the couple handles decisions on the ceremony, flowers, music, photographers, and so forth directly with the on-site wedding coordinator.

**TIPS AND TOOLS**

Keep in mind that many wholesalers with whom you book these trips have their own in-house wedding departments that will work with your clients and you in selecting accommodations – so, if you book primarily with wholesalers, you should start the lodging conversation with the wholesaler’s in-house wedding planners first and then go to the on-site resort coordinators.

Also because many popular resorts book so many weddings throughout the year, the on-site coordinator may not begin the specific planning for your clients’ ceremony until a few weeks before their arrival date. You should work closely with the coordinators and your clients in that final month before the trip dates so that you can remain in the loop and address any last-minute questions or problems that arise. Whether or not the honeymoon includes a destination wedding, use third-party testimonials for your selections to add credibility whenever possible. Remember, this one couple is potentially the conduit to more honeymoon couples and might be worth 10 times the commission you will earn on just this one booking. If you treat each booking that way, you will build a referral network that will pay dividends for years to come.

Of course, you will need to intervene if there are questions regarding the property or if the couple needs assistance. If the couple wants you to handle everything, you must charge for this extra work, regardless of the amount of commission that is earned on the couple’s travel arrangements.

No matter how wedding details are arranged, you must investigate all of the costs associated with a destination wedding and inform your clients accordingly. Some potentially “hidden” costs may include:

- Resort fees
- Individual charges for guests attending the wedding but not staying on the property
- Charges for additional time beyond the standard time allowed for the ceremony and reception
- Gratuities or special charges
Fees to translate documents issued in another language that must be filed in the United States in English

Take appropriate caution when working with a resort on a group basis, particularly when you must sign contracts to hold space for the wedding group or confirm a banquet order. If you aren’t sure exactly what you are agreeing to, consider checking with a reliable travel attorney before signing contracts and assuming any liability.

**TIPS AND TOOLS**

Whether or not the honeymoon includes a destination wedding, use third-party testimonials for your selections to add credibility whenever possible. Remember, this one couple is potentially the conduit to more honeymoon couples and might be worth 10 times the commission you will earn on just this one booking. If you treat each booking that way, you will build a referral network that will pay dividends for years to come.

Determining where the couple wants to go and where they will stay is an important element of planning a honeymoon, but obviously there are other components to be arranged, such as air, ground transportation, tours, and activities. You can also arrange special touches that make a honeymoon special, such as a car and driver at the airport, a bed strewn with rose petals, or a private dinner in a scenic area. This is all part of the service you agreed to provide for your clients at the very start of your relationship.

**Handling Objections and Conditions**

If the sales process stalls after you have thoroughly qualified the honeymooners, agreed upon a destination, and made appropriate recommendations, you are most likely encountering an obstacle in the form of an objection or a condition.

An objection is basically a statement that a prospect wants to know more or needs clarification. Objections don’t usually come out sounding like polite requests for more information, but, in fact, they are usually resolved simply by providing more information, presenting other options, or clearing up a misunderstanding. A condition, on the other hand, is a valid reason for not going ahead, such as not having the necessary travel budget. A condition is not an objection to overcome; it’s a fact that you must accept as a qualification of the sale.

There are two ways to look at objections or conditions expressed by your honeymoon clients: (1) as impediments to the closing process or (2) as
opportunities to earn the sale. In fact, objections and conditions are temporary roadblocks on the way to closing the sale, and they present opportunities for you to earn your clients’ trust and bring them closer to a purchase commitment.

Clients' objections require skillful handling. First, they should be welcomed because they demonstrate that you are dealing with prospects. The couple wants to buy from you, but they are looking for more proof that what you are recommending is the right solution for them. Every objection handled successfully brings you closer to the sale.

Here is a five-step process for handling the objections expressed by your honeymoon clients.

1. **Listen and learn.** Don’t interrupt or argue with the couple. You need to fully understand what their objection is in order to deal with it.

2. **Restate the objection.** Simply feeding the objection back to the couple in your own words shows them that you are listening and that you care. Often, it will also lead them into further elaboration, perhaps even to the point where they answer the objection for themselves.

3. **Question the objection.** Ask the couple, with sincerity and patience and without any hint of sarcasm or anger, to elaborate on their objection to ensure that you understand the root cause or concern.

4. **Answer the objection.** Your answer will vary depending on what type of objection is expressed.

   • If the objection is a misconception, simply give the couple the facts that clear up the misunderstanding.

   • If the objection is related to a weakness in your product offering, restate why it is the best product for the couple based on the needs they expressed. All products have weaknesses, and most prospects will see the value in a product that suits most, if not all, of their requirements.

   • If the objection is about price, differentiate the characteristics of the product you are offering so you can demonstrate its value compared to other products.

**The final step in the process is to confirm the answer.** Verify that your answer actually satisfied the objection by asking a simple question, such as, “Does that answer your question?” The objective is to get the couple to say yes as many times as possible to establish a spirit of agreement. Once prospects are in the agreement mode, chances are good that they will stay in that mode right to the point when you ask for the sale.
Here is an example of how a conversation might sound between a prospective honeymooner and a honeymoon specialist who is handling the client’s objection.

**Client**: “I’m not ready to make a deposit. I’d like to shop around a bit.”

**Agent**: “You feel you need to shop around?” (Restate the objection.)

**Client**: “Yes, we’d like to shop around some more.”

**Agent**: “Of course, you need to feel comfortable that you’re making the best decision. Could I ask what you’re looking for that this property might be missing?” (Question the objection.)

**Client**: “Oh, it has everything we’re looking for. We just want to make sure we’re getting the best price.”

**Agent**: “Are you looking for the best price or the best value?”

**Client**: “Aren’t they the same thing?”

**Agent**: “Not really. If price were your only consideration, I would have recommended another resort that doesn’t offer the types of amenities that you said were very important to you. Also, you might be able to find a better price on the Internet, but this is your honeymoon. If you have any problems along the way, I’m just a phone call away to help with any changes or modifications, unlike the Internet.” (Answer the objection.)

“Are extra amenities and personalized service still important to you for your ideal honeymoon, or should we just look at a lower-priced resort and forego the extras?” (Confirm the answer.)

Keep in mind that not every attempt to acknowledge conditions and deal with objections is successful, and not every objection or condition is one that can be overcome with superior salesmanship. Occasionally, there are situations when you simply need to walk away from the prospective honeymoon couple. A good salesperson recognizes these situations and doesn’t invest any more valuable time in an effort that won’t provide a return on the investment.

In other situations, however, you will find that the couple is ready to make a decision—and ready for you to close the sale.

**Closing the Sale and Following Up**

Closing the sale, or getting an affirmative answer after asking for the booking, is a natural part of the sales process if you have done a good job of qualifying, presenting recommendations, and handling objections.
Many salespeople get stuck here because they’re afraid of another objection. But the truth is, a great salesperson welcomes objections precisely because they offer opportunities to close. Successful travel professionals are always questioning, handling objections, and getting several yeses on their way to closing a sale. And when a prospective honeymoon couple is ready to buy, experienced honeymoon specialists don’t risk the sale by continuing to talk and possibly triggering an objection. They simply ask for the sale.

The key to closing a honeymoon sale is getting the couple’s commitment in the form of a deposit or full payment. There are several different ways that you can ask honeymoon clients for such a commitment. For example:

“Should I put a hold on that space for those dates?”

"If the date and time of your wedding are really important, calendars usually fill up quickly at this resort. Would you like to check to see if your chosen date and time are available?"

“A deposit of $300 per person will hold that space on those dates. Would you prefer to use Visa, MasterCard, or American Express?”

In some cases, airfares may need to be paid at the time of booking along with any lodging deposits. These combined payments may cause problems for some wedding guests, so you should prepare your couples ahead of time if this might be an issue.

“Would you like to put down a deposit to hold that space, or would you prefer to pay the full amount?”

Notice that the last two questions give the prospective honeymooners a choice, which may make it easier for them to make a decision as it gives them a sense of control. While they are contemplating their decision, stop talking. Don’t let the silence bother you, and offer more information only if the couple asks for it. Allow the couple to speak first, as the sales advantage tends to lean toward the party with the most patience.

Once the couple decides on a honeymoon package and the travel arrangements have been made, it’s time to embark upon a final phase in the sales process: following up.

One of the keys to being a honeymoon specialist is separating yourself from the crowd, and little touches after the sale make a big difference.

Regular communication by phone or e-mail, complete and accurate documentation, thank-you notes, and any other highly personalized contacts go a long way toward earning the satisfaction and long-term loyalty of your honeymoon clients.
Destination weddings require a few extra, but very important, follow-up steps. For example, you should plan a wedding travel promotional piece for the couple’s guests. This document includes information about air travel and accommodations for wedding guests and entices them to make their travel arrangements with you.

A wedding travel promotional piece can be as simple or elaborate as the situation dictates, depending on the couple’s budget, preferences, and expectations as well as the capabilities of your agency.

A promotional piece should include a land-only price as well as general information on air. Normally, guests will be traveling from a number of different cities and have different budget requirements, and the options you include in your promotional piece should take into consideration the various needs of the wedding guests.

Due to the competitive nature of travel, your promotional piece should also offer the guests a compelling reason to make their reservations with you. Yes, the couple has recommended you, but it is still important to build in some value-added features. The situation and what you are able to secure from the travel providers will determine what you offer. Suggestions for possible value-added features include:

- One category of room upgrade.
- Complimentary transfers.
- Welcome cocktail party for all guests.
- Resort credit.
- Welcome gift.
- Discounted price (don’t discount your commission; instead you should negotiate with the supplier).
- Sunday brunch for the guests the day after the wedding ceremony

Another value-added feature is the protection guests receive by booking (through you as the agent) into the official wedding group. If the hotel is sold out, for example, all of the guests who are part of the wedding group booked through you will be protected by the hotel, whereas individuals who booked online or elsewhere could be “walked” separately to other properties and away from the rest of the guests.

Wedding travel promotional pieces are distributed to invited guests in one of two ways:
1. Included with a formal wedding invitation.

2. Sent to guests upon request. The wedding invitation includes the phone number or e-mail address of the honeymoon specialist who is handling travel arrangements.

When the time comes to send out final documents to the couple (and any guests), make certain that you put together comprehensive packets with useful information. For example, one honeymoon specialist includes the following information in a final packet and sends it by overnight delivery:

- A travel report on the destination
- A hotel or cruise brochure
- A list of tours or excursions with descriptions and prices
- Luggage tags

In the case of destination weddings, pay particular attention to travel documents needed by the wedding guests as well as the couple. For example, minor children traveling out of the country with one parent have special documentation requirements. Be sure to check the documentation requirements of the island or country where the destination wedding is to be held.

**TIPS AND TOOLS**

Some resorts send confirmations and other trip information to the couples directly, rather than to you as the agent, so make sure that you clarify with the resort that you want all trip details sent to you only (or, at least, copied to you when they are sent to the couple).

Before the wedding, contact (by phone or e-mail) the resort to confirm that the guests have arrived. Also, check in with the wedding coordinator to confirm the ceremony arrangements and other trip details.

The destination wedding packet may also include information on the wedding day, time, and location, but most couples prefer to send that information on their own.

You might also send the bride and groom a list indicating what type of package each wedding guest purchased (all-inclusive or European plan), or the cabin numbers of all the guests if the wedding is to take place on a cruise ship.
Be sure to follow up with a thank-you note to the couple, as well as to their guests if the couple had a destination wedding. In addition to earning the lifelong business of the wedding couple, you may also acquire new clients among the guests who travel to the wedding. Referrals from your happy honeymoon clients and their satisfied wedding guests are sure to keep new prospects coming in your door, creating a continuous stream of successful sales for your honeymoon specialty.

**TIPS AND TOOLS**

After the wedding, contact the couple personally to ask about their experiences on the trip – and, ask for testimonials (one or more photos, plus a few comments) that you can share with other couples.

Making a concerted effort to learn and practice selling skills will also help ensure the success of your honeymoon specialty. Most of the sales skills outlined in this lesson are fundamentals, and even the most seasoned agent can stay fresh by reviewing—and practicing—the basics. Experience is the best teacher, as long as you remember what you have learned and then commit to using that knowledge for the benefit of your honeymoon clientele.

**KEY POINTS**

- Honeymooners tend to be well informed, and you will be expected to know at least as much as they do to earn their business and close the sale.

- At the very start of the selling process, it’s a good idea to specify the terms of your relationship with your honeymoon clients. It is not wise for any honeymoon specialist to be providing expertise and time without an agreement about payment and services.

- Effective qualifying is the best way to convey to a honeymoon couple that you are truly interested in making their honeymoon everything they expect it to be. Honeymooners don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care about them and their honeymoon experience.

- For honeymoon clients who are planning destination weddings or vow renewal ceremonies, it is important that you identify not only the couple’s needs but also their expected guests’ needs.
One of the first decisions you need to help the couple make is where they will spend their honeymoon. This is particularly important for couples who are planning a destination wedding, because legal requirements for marriage vary by destination.

While honeymoon clients in general rely on your assistance to make a good choice for accommodations, the less a couple has traveled, the more reliant they will be.

Once your clients decide on a resort or hotel for their destination wedding, you should establish a clear understanding of who will be communicating with the on-site wedding coordinator.

Objections and conditions are temporary roadblocks on the way to closing the sale, and they present opportunities for you to earn your clients’ trust and bring them closer to a purchase commitment. While conditions simply need to be identified and incorporated into your honeymoon recommendations, objections require skillful handling.

The key to closing a honeymoon sale is getting the couple’s commitment in the form of a deposit or full payment.

One of the keys to being a honeymoon specialist is separating yourself from the crowd, and little touches after the sale make a big difference. Destination weddings require a few extra follow-up steps, such as preparing a wedding travel promotional piece for the couple’s guests.
Glossary

- **Adventure Seekers**: Type of honeymooners who define the honeymoon experience as a sensation provided by the adventure and who tend to fall into higher budgets with broad ranges.

- **All-inclusive resort**: A resort that includes accommodations, meals, entertainment, and activities in a single price; the resort may also offer free wedding ceremonies, or ceremonies at reduced rates, for couples that bring a certain number of guests.

- **Bridal show**: An event geared toward prospective brides and grooms that showcases a wide variety of wedding-related products and services.

- **Budget All-Inclusive**: Type of honeymooners who are aware of the all-inclusive concept and will shop around to find the best deal; their budgets are generally in the $2,000 to $3,000 range.

- **Comfort Couples**: Type of honeymooners who choose honeymoons that are characterized less by the type of vacation than by the comfort and quality of the vacation experience; they tend to have budgets of $3,000 to $5,000.

- **Culture Vultures**: Type of honeymooners who place a high priority on the cultural aspects of a honeymoon; budgets can be from $3,500 and up.

- **Destination wedding**: A wedding ceremony that is combined with the honeymoon.

- **Do-It-Yourselfers**: Type of honeymooners who plan and book their honeymoons themselves and tend to have a budget of less than $2,000.

- **Honeymoon registry**: An online tool that is similar to a traditional bridal registry in that brides and grooms register for the honeymoon they want, broken down into gifts reflecting a variety of price points; wedding guests, in turn, purchase portions of the honeymoon as gifts for the couple.

- **Luxury Lovers**: Type of honeymooners who want creature comforts and personal service and who are willing to spare no expense to get what they want; their budgets tend to be $5,000 and up.
- **Objection**: A statement that a prospect wants to know more or needs clarification.

- **On-site wedding coordinator**: The person at the hotel or wedding venue who is in charge of all wedding-related details.

- **Press release**: A formal printed announcement by a company about its activities that is written in the form of a news article and given to the media.

- **Publicity**: Messages issued in behalf of your product or business.

- **Public relations (PR)**: A form of marketing that involves communicating with various sectors of the public to influence their attitudes and opinions in the interest of promoting your product.

- **Qualifying**: The process of asking questions to ascertain a couple’s wants, needs, and desires for their honeymoon experience.

- **Search engines**: Programs that index documents and then attempt to match documents relevant to the user’s search requests.

- **Show specials**: Call-to-action offers that are intended to spur bookings and give you a reason to close sales in the weeks after a bridal show.

- **Vow renewal ceremony**: A ceremony in which a married couple reaffirms the vows they made when first married.

- **Waiting period**: The time required for prospective brides and grooms to be in the destination prior to the wedding.

- **Wedding travel promotional piece**: A document that includes information about air travel and accommodations for destination wedding guests and entices them to make their travel arrangements with you.
Specialty Suppliers
The following is an alphabetical list of companies that can assist you in making travel plans for your honeymoon clients.

- Apple Vacations (www.applevacations.com)
- Classic Vacations (www.classicvacations.com)
- Funjet Vacations (www.funjetvacations.com)
- GOGO Worldwide Vacations (www.gogowwv.com)
- MLT Vacations (www.mltvacations.com)
- Pleasant Holidays (www.pleasantholidays.com)
- Travel Impressions (www.travelimpressions.com)
- Vacation Express (www.vacationexpress.com)

Web site/honeymoon registry services for travel agents:
- Agent Studio (www.agentstudio.com)
- Honeymoonwishes (www.honeymoonwishes.com)
- Online Agency (www.onlineagency.com)
- Spoon Drawer Media (www.spoondrawer.com)
- TheHoneymoon.com (www.thehoneymoon.com)

Web Sites
Following are some helpful wedding/honeymoon-related websites. If you do an Internet search, you will find numerous other sites of interest as well.

- www.DWAagents.com – North America’s largest network of professional travel counselors who specialize in destination weddings, honeymoon, and romantic travel
HONEYMOONS AND DESTINATION WEDDINGS

- www.gettingremarried.com—Information and ideas about renewing wedding vows.

Magazines

- Bridal Guide (bridalguide.com)
- Brides (brides.com)
- Destination Weddings (destinationweddingmag.com)
- Martha Stewart Weddings (marthastewartweddings.com)
- Perfect Wedding Guide (perfectweddingguide.com)
- Town and Country (townandcountrymag.com)
- Wedding Wire (weddingwire.com)
Review Quiz

After you have studied the lessons, take this quiz to: assess your understanding of some key concepts and terms, measure your current knowledge of marketing and selling honeymoons and destination weddings, and prepare for your Niche Specialist test by familiarizing yourself with the basic types of test questions.

Check your answers in the Answer Key at the bottom of the page. Then go back and review the material for any questions that you missed.

**True/False**

1. Couples marrying today are more educated than the general population.  
   - True  - False

2. Hawaii is a popular choice for honeymooners who want to stay at an all-inclusive resort.  
   - True  - False

3. Most destination weddings aboard cruise ships take place on the vessel in the embarkation port.  
   - True  - False

**Multiple Choice**

4. The most popular social media tool by far for wedding and honeymoon agents is
   A. LinkedIn  
   B. Google+  
   C. Twitter  
   D. Facebook

5. What is generally the most popular month for bridal shows?
   A. January  
   B. February  
   C. March  
   D. December

**Answers**

Congratulations! You are now ready to earn your specialist designation from The Travel Institute.

Visit www.thetravelinstitute.com/testing to request your test. Please allow three business days.

To prepare for the test:

- Read the Learning Outcomes at the start of each lesson. Go back and review material for any goals you feel you have not successfully achieved.
- Review the Key Points at the end of each lesson.
- Take the Review Quiz at the end of the course.

The test consists of a combination of 25 multiple-choice and true/false questions similar to those in the Review Quiz at the end of the course.

The questions are designed to test your ability to interpret and apply key concepts from the course rather than simply to memorize facts.

The test is not open book and must be completed in one-hour under the supervision of a test proctor. The proctor should be a responsible CTC or a person of authority who is neither related to you or currently enrolled in the same course. A passing grade is 70 percent.

Visit www.thetravelinstitute.com/testing to request your test.