

House of White Bridal Boutique:  
Building Clientele by Introducing Luxury Bridal to the Tri-State

A PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN

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## House of White Bridal Boutique:

Building Type to enter text Clientele by Introducing Luxury Bridal to the Tri-State

### I. Overview

House of White Bridal Boutique is new to the Newburgh/Evansville, Ind. area. The small business was looking to expand and maintain their market, with brides who are serious about buying bridal products. With the main goal of increasing target awareness, and the lack of desire to advertise in the mainstream media, the House of White needed a creative source and vehicle to promote their new business to brides in Evansville, Newburgh, and surrounding Kentucky cities.

The House of White was determined to maintain to build strong relationships with other wedding vendors to promote all businesses in the wedding industry. In addition, efforts were made to promote the boutique's owner and her artistic skills to the mainstream media on local television.

The House of White aims to be more than a luxury bridal shop. The boutique not only wanted to promote their products, but their services as well. Thus, an event was created to communicate this message to current and potential customers.

The three month duration of this campaign required that the main event occur in April, the beginning of wedding season. Most summer brides have already purchased their bridal gowns by April, thus causing a decline in wedding gown sales over the early spring months.

To get potential buyers into the House of White, a promotion of accessory products and personal styling was developed to increase sales, clientele, and business

awareness to the public. This event allowed brides and mother of the brides to view the boutique's services and other products House of White offers, in an exclusive, one-on-one setting to increase sales of the most overlooked bridal items.

Printed and online promotion materials were developed to engage the House of White's target audience. However, the campaign's main event tactic, itself, was used primarily as an advertisement for the business. Since the event was "advertised" in a variety of ways, the House of White name was delivered to the public through an informational manner.

Throughout the campaign, posters, invitations, postcards, email blasts, blog posts, Facebook posts/photos, on-television mentions, and *Evansville Living Magazine* online calendar entries were made to promote House of White and the event.

## II. Formative Research

The House of White Bridal Boutique is a new business having only been open for seven months. Therefore, consumer awareness is consistently moving from low to average in the Tri-State area. Complete knowledge of the House of White has not yet been reached in areas around Newburgh. Out of town traffic is low, specifically focusing on a radius of two to four hours outside of Newburgh. In addition, the store largely depends on selling bridal gowns, but wants to market their products and services to everyone, not exclusively brides. The store offers gowns for bridesmaids, mothers, and individuals seeking an elegant gown for a specific event. The House of White also provides accessories to complete every look as well and personal styling to help achieve a

specific look. In addition, the House of White is beginning to rent out their salon for special occasions, such as bridal showers.

The House of White Bridal Boutique recently opened in September 2012, one year after the idea had been proposed to the Southwest Indiana Small Business Development Center. The store is a high-end, luxury bridal boutique located in downtown historic Newburgh, Indiana. Their style caters primarily to the demographics of those who subscribe to *Evansville Living Magazine*, primarily women aged 25 to 44, which are 40 percent of those who subscribe to the magazine. Thus, targeting those individuals with median household incomes of \$98,000. It is important to note, that the only print advertising the House of White occasionally performs is in *Evansville Living Magazine*.

House of White uses a stronger presence of word-of-mouth advertising than print or media commercials, to maintain the mission of House of White and to preserve its boutique experience. Too much advertising can lessen the House of White's brand appeal, style and originality, resulting in little distinction between the House of White and its competitors. The House of White does not value a monthly email blast to reach all brides, contrary to the majority of other bridal salons. Therefore, increasing awareness of the House of White may be challenging due to limited amounts of media advertising.

Spring marks the busiest seasons for weddings, and most brides have already purchased their bridal gowns. The House of White is focused on complete styling for brides, bridesmaids and mothers. The boutique is concentrating on adding accessories to finish each look during the months when wedding gown sales are low. Informing clients of House of White's products is key to produce revenue during the slower sale months.

The owners of the boutique are a wife and husband team, Andrea Whitehead and Christopher Lunn. Whitehead and Lunn run their business primarily by themselves. They have one other employee, Allie Hershman, who works one to two days a week, and does anything from marketing to attending to customers who step foot in the door.

Whitehead has over five years experience in high-end fashion including the bridal industry. Whitehead graduated from Indiana University and the International Academy of Design in Toronto, with experience working for couture and eco-friendly bridal designers in Canada. Thus, Whitehead is a reputable business owner, who has mastered the bridal industry.

Whitehead is a knowledgeable interior decorator and a skilled entertainer, as well as a fashion designer. She offers advice on all things stylish through her blog linked to her business website. She designs beautiful spaces, stunning fashions, and styles women to perfection.

The House of White merchandise is strictly bridal and special occasion. Unlike most bridal salons/dress shops, the House of White does not carry prom fashions, nor men's tux rentals. The House of White includes wedding gowns, bridesmaid gowns, mothers fashions, flower girl dresses, special occasion attire and accessories. Gowns found in the boutique are priced between \$600 and \$5,000 and are upscale, couture gowns that are not found in most bridal salons in the Tri-State area. House of White carries bridal gowns by Alyne by Rivini, Alvina Valenta, Tara Keely, Watters, WToo, and Encore. The boutique sells bridesmaid gowns by Alvina Valenta, Watters, and WToo. Customers can also purchase special occasion dresses by Collection 20 and Alvina

Valenta. Flower girl dresses available are those by Seahorse. In addition, the House of White offers alteration services.

House of White provides unparalleled fashion and wedding expertise for the style-savvy bride. From the boutique's opening, the business has sold between 100 to 125 gowns to brides.

### SWOT Analysis

#### Strengths:

- The House of White is able to give great customer service, as the boutique is a small and independently run by a husband and wife. The boutique gives a one-on-one service to the customer.
- The House of White offers the customer an “experience” when they walk through the doors. The space is elegantly decorated, attractive and offers one-of-a-kind ambiance and quality, unique to the Evansville and Tri-State area. The boutique is unlike any other bridal salon in the area.
- The owner is experienced in bridal fashions. She has studied fashion design, worked with three major couture bridal designers, and devoted herself to learning how to style a bride.
- The House of White is the only upscale bridal boutique in the Tri-State area. The boutique brings something new to Evansville/Newburgh. This strength could also be an opportunity and a weakness. Providing something new to the community and/or being too upscale for the residents in the area.

- The House of White experiences less competition, being the only high-end bridal boutique in Evansville/Newburgh.
- Andrea Whitehead, owner, is young, and up-to-date on the latest bridal trends, and alters her boutique to accurately fit the desires of brides wanting the newest fashions.

#### Weaknesses:

- The House of White's retail is high priced.
- The House of White's target audience is smaller, aimed at upscale consumers.
- The House of White may be too expensive for the Evansville/Newburgh area.
- The boutique carries only six designers, which supplies less options to choose from.
- The House of White chooses to do less advertisements simply because the owner wants to keep the feel of the boutique exclusive and luxurious. This weakness could also be an opportunity, differentiating it from other salons who consume clients with advertisements.

#### Opportunities:

- The House of White's market is focused on gaining out-of-town customers, in a radius at least two hours or more outside of Newburgh, receiving more clients from Kentucky than northern Indiana.
- The House of White is focused on maintaining customer loyalty. If a customer has purchased their bridal gown from the boutique, then there is a possibility they will purchase accessories for their gown (jewelry, veils, belts), bridesmaid dresses, mother of the bride/groom dresses, rehearsal dresses, and/or flower girl dresses.

- Andrea is extremely skillful and expresses expertise in her design skills. Sharing her mastery in interior decorating, fashion designing, and fashion styling with the community could open opportunities to further her design market beyond the bridal boutique.
- The House of White regularly has trunk shows featuring certain designers offering discounts on each specific bridal line. This draws traffic and possible customers to the House of White.
- Andrea links her blog to the House of White's website. She uses the blog to discuss everything and anything dealing with fashion, design, and bridal. This is a great way to advertise and spread her name on the internet.
- Lace is extremely popular for brides right now. Majority of the House of White's bridal stock is designed with lace. Brides searching for lace will be more inclined to find what they are looking for at the House of White. This opportunity could also be a weakness if some brides do not like lace. The bride may be limited with the House of White's stock.
- Sleeves and straps are starting a trend and have become desired by brides more than ever in the recent year. The House of White offers several dress options for brides wanting a dress with sleeves or straps.

Threats:

- The larger populated surrounding cities offer the same boutique style bridal businesses. Therefore, it may be harder to get out-of-town customers to travel to

Newburgh to visit, possibly, one store, since the area only houses an upscale boutique.

- Ella Park Bridal in Newburgh may be the House of White's closest competition. They offer a similar experience, but are more commercialized. Ella Park Bridal is more moderately priced, and has an array of several styles for selection.
- Potential clients in the Tri-State may not be informed of House of White's boutique because of the owner's aim to moderately participate in advertisements. Therefore, never stepping foot into the boutique and purchasing their gown elsewhere.

Supporters of the House of White are small business owners in downtown historic Newburgh located on Main Street and around Market Street. Since House of White is located in downtown Newburgh, on Market Street, the store may bring more customers to the area, increasing sales for not only House of White, but those businesses located in the proximity to the House of White. House of White, being new and exciting to the area, may get out-of-town customers to visit the area, in turn, staying in the area to continue a days-worth of shopping.

One major competitor of the House of White is Ella Park Bridal Salon. Ella Park is also located in Newburgh, Ind. and has been in business since 2004. However, the business relocated to Newburgh in 2009 to the location they currently reside. Ella Park provides brides with a similar experience as House of White, but is less than the quaint, exclusive, one-on-one feel House of White extends to their brides. Ella Park is more affordable, offers a larger selection of bridal gowns, bridesmaid and mother dresses, as

well as rents tuxes and sells prom fashions. Ella Park employees more consultants, in order to service more clients at a time than House of White.

The House of White's originality is also its own obstacle. The boutique runs strictly by appointment-only. However, House of White would never turn away any walk-in clients, their hours just do not accommodate the like. Therefore, this may or may not become a hinderance to potential customers, not being as available than other bridal salons. Thus, House of White's business is structured as such, in order to maintain the boutique's high-class, premier atmosphere, to display to the client that they really are the only people that matter at that moment.

In addition, the House of White offers products created by higher-priced designers. Being the only boutique in the area carrying these designers, this is once again a positive and negative. Some clients may enjoy purchasing such a rarity, yet others may find the prices too costly to afford. Having such prices may push clients toward Ella Park Bridal, David's Bridal, Memories in the Making, Bridal Warehouse, all of which are in Evansville or Newburgh and offer lower prices with just as much or more selection.

The major publics of House of White includes brides, residing in an area within a two-hour radius of the House of White. Other major publics affected by the House of White are mothers, bridesmaids, young girls, and those individuals needing a gown for a black tie affair or the like. One key public is the boutique's returning customers, or individuals who purchase multiple products from the boutique. Another key public of the House of White are the potential, out-of-town customers, particularly those residing in Kentucky.

Opinion leaders of House of White include those who are in the wedding business and located in the Tri-State area. Vendors such as wedding rental companies, DJs, limousine companies, photographers, bakeries, hair and makeup artists, and florists must all be considered significant to the House of White's target publics. These vendors often times provide references or referrals to other vendor companies, obviously one being bridal salons. The more positive feedback from these vendors about House of White, the more brides who may visit the boutique in search of a gown.

The House of White's benefit statement focuses on one-on-one client service. Thus, the House of White aims to positively impact women aged 22 to 55 in the community, pampering them with head to toe styling in a comfortable, luxury environment. At House of White there is laughter, some tears, and moments of revelation.

### III. Strategy

Goal: Generate awareness of House of White's products and services to Newburgh, Evansville, and the surrounding areas.

#### Objectives:

1. To increase awareness of House of White's accessories, special occasion dresses and services by 10 percent by the end of April
2. To increase returning customer purchases by 10 percent by the end of April.
3. To increase wedding vendor relationships amongst retailers in the wedding market by 10 percent by the end of April.

4. Implement online client interaction with the boutique by 10 percent by the end of April.

Output Objectives:

1. To pitch three newsworthy stories about House of White to two media outlets.
2. To be available for responses to media inquiries.
3. To create online presence that encourages participation in a discussion forum.
4. To produce three “guest” blog posts about both the event and wedding planning in general.
5. To generate customer excitement with “sneak peak” photos of the setting up for the event to post on social media sites.
6. To create three forms of print materials promoting the event.

Action Strategy:

1. Take the approach by advertising for the boutique by advertising for the event. Thus, the House of White would be promoted through the publicity of the event.
2. Order accessories from House of White’s wedding vendors for the show. These vendors include Thomas Knoell and Malis-Henderson.
3. Rent tables, chairs, champagne flutes from Bauer’s Tents for the event.
4. Find three models and a mother to model at the event.
5. Order macarons and cookies for the event. Buy enough lemonade and blueberries for the event.
6. Invite Kana Brown, make-up artist, to set up a station to perform tutorials at the event.

7. Promote event on House of White's website, blog, email, direct mail, and events around town.
8. Promote giveaways to those customers if attending the event.
9. Promotion of photo opportunities to attendants of the event to receive an additional \$5 off on their purchase on the day of the event. Attendants will take a photo in front of a House of White large backdrop and upload it to Facebook to receive the additional discount. This allows an influx of House of White's name to the internet to generate buzz.
10. Maintaining a constant presence and interaction on Facebook with current and potential customers. This includes replying to customer comments and inviting brides who purchased their wedding gown at House of White to post a photo of them in their dress on their wedding day.
11. Open the House of White to the public to rent out and host small events at the boutique.

Response Strategy:

1. Aiming to get at least 150 bodies at the event.
2. Aiming to get 40 percent of the 150 bodies to buy products at the event.
3. Aiming to get 20 percent of local wedding vendors to agree to forming a continuing relationship.
4. Aiming to acquire a morning television segment every two weeks for Whitehead.
5. Aiming to host at least one event as an experiment to determine if organizing events at the boutique are effective.

The House of White's spokespersons will be both owners, Andrea Whitehead and her husband, Christopher Lunn. No other bridal salons in the area completely pamper their clients as the House of White, devoting the salon to at most, two clients at a time. Each gown at House of White has been individually selected with tedious forethought by Whitehead to ensure that brides will find one-of-a-kind dresses. In addition, Whitehead has studied bridal fashions and worked under top designers before perfecting her own business, thus, exuding knowledge in her every action when deals with the House of White. In addition, Whitehead has the bride's best interest at heart when working with her to find the perfect product. This is demonstrated as Whitehead is the business' primary personnel, heading up her operation as she directly works with the bride, rather than passing off a client to an assortment of employees.

#### IV. Tactics

House of White can cater to anyone, anywhere from brides to those having a night out on the town. The boutique offers a great selection of "black-tie" gowns, cocktail dresses, and jewelry to match every look, while offering personal styling tips to create the client's individual fashion tastes.

The House of White will create a relationship with local wedding vendors. These vendors will include the likes of photographers, DJs, florists, hair and make-up artists, videographers, and several others wanting to be involved in promoting everyone's business and working together.

Whitehead will obtain her own, morning television segment on Local 7 Lifestyles to promote her talents in the bridal industry, fashion, styling, and interior design. Whitehead will offer advice on show, which will air every two weeks.

The House of White is to host an exclusive, invite-only accessory event on Sunday, April 7 where those who attend can receive 15 percent off on all accessories and special occasion dresses for rehearsal or reception. Attendants of the event will also watch a fashion presentation highlighting a variety of bridal looks for everyone's style. Whitehead will explain each look, and change it up to show the various options brides have to create their specific look. In addition, to organize a weekly morning segment on Local 7 Lifestyles for Whitehead to discuss design and style.

Blog posts will be written from the first person narrative about real bridal preparations and the organization of the accessory event. A poster will be created to promote the accessory event to be used at functions/events in the meantime before the event on April 7. The accessory event will be added to *Evansville Living Magazine's* online calendar. Emails will be sent to a list of brides, inviting them to the accessory event. Facebook statuses will be provided about the accessory event as well as uploaded photos showcasing the preparation of the event the night before as a "sneak peak." Postcard invites and specialized invites of the accessory event will be designed to mail out to brides. An event slide and event page will be designed for the House of White website.

Whitehead will demonstrate the campaign's source credibility through one-on-one personal communication with her clients. Whitehead will personally invite clients to the

event when in her salon, through phone conversation, or email along with the other materials promoting the event. In addition, established Evansville wedding planner, Saundra Hadley, agreed to mention the accessory event on her morning show segment on Local 7 Lifestyles. Avon Color Ambassador for the Central Region, Kana Brown, will be performing makeup tutorials on those who attend the accessory event, thus publicizing the message of the House of White to her clients.

The message provided to House of White's key publics is that the boutique offers clients more than just bridal gowns, but provides them with an array of earrings, bracelets, necklaces, hair pieces, veils, special occasion dresses, personal styling, and boutique rental services for various events.

All promotion materials, print and online, will use large, bold photos of models displaying accessories made by the accessory event's featured designers, Thomas Knoll and Malis-Henderson. All materials will be simple, and allow the photos speak the message.

Effective verbal communication will be demonstrated through the use of social media. Enticing Facebook posts will periodically be created to peak audience interest. Thus, House of White Facebook friends may comment on the posts and answer the questions the posts pose. This leads into the two-way communication theory. Thus, this allows House of White and its key public to interact often, and causing an increase in curiosity in the public to influence them to come to the event. In addition, two-way communication is reached when the public RSVPs to the event. This allows the House of White to determine whether the promotional tactics for the event are effective and what

needs to be changed or altered to generate a greater impact. The final two-way communication is confirmed when the attendants of the event purchase at least one item. This gives House of White feedback whether the message was successfully reached by the target audience.

Opinion leaders are important to this campaign. As stated previously, wedding vendors in the Evansville/Newburgh and surrounding areas are key to the House of White's business. In addition, former and continuing House of White customers are significant opinion leaders. These clients offer their opinion about House of White as a business, whether positive or negative, and can affect the boutique greatly, as the House of White relies primarily on word-of-mouth advertising.

House of White's message is targeted predominately to the boutique's current customers. These individuals are the ones that will most likely return to purchase House of White's products if they have previously had a good experience working with the business. In addition, the campaign's message is also available to those brides who have attended the recent, various bridal shows in the Tri-State and have signed up to be added to the boutique's email list while there. House of White has been at the majority of events held in the early spring. At one event, House of White presented a fashion show, highlighting their gowns and accessories, which educated potential customers on House of White's products. The campaign's message is also made available to those potential clients who live in Kentucky and Southern Indiana. These individuals' names are obtained through The Knot, a wedding website helpful for both brides and wedding businesses, who are able to market their company on the website.

Audience participation is acquired through welcomed comments on the House of White's Facebook page and Whitehead's blog, which is linked to the boutique's website. In addition, audience participate is obtained through the client's reaction to the accessory event, through RSVPs and House of White product purchases.

#### Implementation of Special Events:

The House of White will gather with local wedding vendors who wish to participate in working together. Occasional meetings will take place to get to know one another, help with one another's business and strategy, and offer advice on various topics. This will allow the wedding vendors to work in conjunction to further business for each company when the vendors offer referrals to clients.

Pitching the idea of Whitehead acquiring her own, morning television segment will be presented to Local 7 Lifestyles. The morning show producer will be contacted and presented with the concept of Whitehead's show consisting of offering advice in bridal knowledge, fashion, styling, and interior designs. The segment would be created similar to that of her blog.

Whitehead previously has been on Local 7 Lifestyles, promoting House of White, as a guest of wedding planner, Sandra Hadley. Whitehead's own show would be a reoccurring segment every two weeks.

The main, special event is the accessory event. It will take place on April 7, 2013. Postcard invitations will go out to 400 brides in the Tri-State area who have never purchased a product from House of White. Exclusive invitations will go out to 100 brides who have purchased their gown or another product at House of White. These invitations

will be placed in the mail approximately three weeks before the accessory event. An email blast will be sent out to the 500 remaining brides in close proximity to Newburgh/Evansville obtained through The Knot. The email will be sent out a week before the event.

The event will begin at noon, with a fashion presentation at 1 p.m. All bridal, bridesmaids, and mother's dresses will be cleared from the boutique to clear the space for the accessories. Each room in the boutique will be designated to specific accessories. For example, all jewelry and belts in one room, while hair pieces and veils in another, and special occasion/rehearsal dresses in another. Rented chairs will be set up in another room to provide seating for attendants for the fashion presentation. A specific area will be designated for Kana Brown to perform her make-up tutorials. A drink station for lemonade, macaroons, and cookies will be set up.

A list of RSVPed attendants will be provided to check-off at the door. Attendants are able to browse and try-on any, and all accessories they wish, while eating and drinking the refreshments. The fashion presentation will highlight three models and a mother. Whitehead will change up bridal looks on the models during the fashion show to show the various options House of White has to offer. This includes switching out jewelry, belts, and veils to obtain a specific look. Whitehead will also take time to giveaway a piece of jewelry to the audience during the fashion presentation.

Brides are then welcome to browse the boutique again after the fashion presentation. The models will walk around the boutique so clients may try the jewelry on the models to obtain the full effect.

The accessory event allows attendants to receive 15 percent off House of White's accessories and special occasion dresses. A 10 percent off accessories special will be in effect for the entire public the Sunday before to generate buzz about the event. In addition, customers are able to receive an additional \$5 off their purchase if they take a photo in front of the House of White backdrop and post it to their Facebook.

Whitehead will be available to each bride to offer personal styling. The event's goal is based around the sales goal. A goal of 40 percent of the brides who attend the event will purchase an accessory to go with their gown.

#### V. Evaluative Research

House of White's awareness of accessories, special occasion dresses and services will be evaluated by how many promotional materials were distributed compared to the number attendants at the accessory event. This will also be measured by the form of media vehicle in which the attendants learned of the accessory event. Returning customer purchase retention will be determined by sale revenue of these reoccurring clients. House of White's wedding vendor relationship will be evaluated through self-reports, observations, attendance at vendor meetings, as well as feedback from clients who offered how they learned of House of White. The implementation of client interaction with House of White and its services will be evaluated through a constant utilization of Facebook. This will be evaluated by values changed in the amount of brides who post comments or mention House of White through various social media outlets.

The output objectives will be measured by the number of stories distributed to media outlets, the number of social media posts, and the number of promotional materials created.