

Social Media SMARTS

Instant sharing can be wonderful — but the trick is to know how and when to post your wedding details online

By **Connie Jeske Crane** Illustration by **Mandy Lau**

“It was really neat.” Vancouver bride-to-be Keira-Anne Mellis is recounting how she found her dress online: “You could put in the styles of dress that you might like, for your body type . . . Then it just pulls up a whole bunch of suggestions and ideas for you.” And she’ll do more planning online as well: “We’ve already purchased our domain to start our wedding website.”

Mellis’s Internet wedding shopping and socializing are rapidly becoming the norm. A recent poll by David’s Bridal says 68 per cent of Canadian brides have no qualms about Facebook engagement announcements; 58 per cent will peek at social media on their wedding day; and 79 per cent want to share wedding photos with their Facebook friends.

The trend shouldn’t come as a surprise. “Most people are living their lives on social media right now,” says Danielle Andrews Sunkel, co-founder of the Wedding Planners Institute of Canada (WPIC). “So it only makes sense for the couple to share everything about their wedding” across social media.

But Vancouver bride Jennifer Shergold, for one, is bucking the trend: “I don’t really do Facebook or Twitter.” Still, even she and partner Bobby Varghese went high-tech with some aspects. For their June beach wedding, the couple sent e-vites (only a few elderly guests received paper invitations). They’re using a planning app to track to-do’s, and while the bride’s mom is making her dress, it was inspired by photos from Etsy.

“I just love all that stuff,” enthuses Vancouver’s Erin Bishop of Filosophi Event Planning. Probably the biggest advantage with social media, says the tech-savvy wedding planner, is information sharing and personal recommendations. “We see a lot of brides who will say on their Facebook page, ‘Who’s a good florist?’” As for schlepping around, sites like Wed Over Heels (wedoverheels.com) really cut that down, says Bishop. She likens the Vancouver-based site to “Facebook, but totally for weddings. All the vendors are on it, and brides can go on it.”

Apps can’t solve everything — they can’t drive away rainclouds, for example — but they do offer some innovative solutions. “Right now I would



say Pinterest is the No. 1 wedding planning tool” and quickly replacing heavy binders, says Sunkel. She also likes SocialTables, an app that manages seating arrangements, with a very sociable twist: “You can plug in everybody’s information. So you can put in their Facebook and their Twitter . . . [and get guests] talking and chatting and getting along before the wedding even happens. It’s such a nice feeling at the wedding.”

Bishop likes the video-sharing app Vine, and the app and website Appy Couple, which gives guests access to wedding details like personal stories, the day’s itinerary and photos.

Clearly, social media is here to stay. But that doesn’t mean it’s all happily ever after. In Bishop’s line of work, she’s seen some bumps. That includes a bridesmaid who took “pictures of the bride before the ceremony and put them on Instagram or Facebook — and the groom hadn’t even seen her yet.”

And what about those couples you hear of, updating their Facebook status at the altar? “I really think it’s tacky,” says Sunkel adding, “It takes away from the seriousness of what they’re doing.” If you want to include social media at your wedding, and do it with style, here are a few tips from our experts:

INVITATIONS

- Use paper. “I think paper invitations will always last because there just is a timeless appeal,” says Bishop. Don’t send invitations via social media, adds Sunkel, unless you are planning a casual or eco-friendly wedding.
- Accommodate everyone. If sending e-vites, also use some paper invitations for guests without email. On the other hand, says Bishop, with paper RSVPs it’s nice to offer tech-lovers the option of emailing their responses.


GIFT REGISTRY

- Choose gift registries that offer shopping both online and in-store.
- Don’t post gift registry information online. “It still does not look good on the couple,” says Sunkel.

SOCIAL MEDIA

- Use apps and social media to organize yourself, gather and share ideas, update your friends and family and solicit honest feedback regarding vendors.
- Create a hashtag to capture your guests’ posts on Twitter or Instagram.
- Specify a photo-sharing platform.
- Don’t over-share. Bishop says griping about wedding costs on Facebook or endless talk about your wedding plans “could make your guests feel awkward” and/or leave others wondering why they’re not invited.
- At the ceremony, ask everyone to turn off their phones; update your Facebook status another time.

PRIVACY CONCERNS

- Don’t feel pressured to include social media at your wedding. At the ceremony, communicate your social-media wishes to your guests in the bulletin and via an announcement, then relax and enjoy your day. 

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