

A FREE GUIDE FOR SMALL WEDDING VENUE OWNERS

Fill Every *Saturday*

The 7 leaks that quietly cost small wedding venues their bookings,
and the three systems that keep a calendar full: search, CRM
automation and precise Facebook and Instagram ads.

By James Howard

Owner, Chelsea Sun Inn · Founder, Truly Wed

Your team should be taking care of couples, *not running ads at midnight.*



James Howard runs Chelsea Sun Inn, a 200-acre wedding estate in the Poconos, and founded Truly Wed.

I own a wedding venue. For years, my team did two jobs: taking care of couples on the best day of their lives, and trying to be marketers in between.

The marketing always lost. Inquiries came in at 10 p.m. and got answered the next afternoon. Couples asked for pricing and went quiet. Weekday dates sat empty. We paid directories for leads that five other venues were also getting.

So I built a system: ads that reach engaged couples near the venue, a text back to every inquiry within minutes, follow-up that doesn't depend on someone remembering, and tours booked straight onto the calendar. When I took over Chelsea Sun Inn, the business was losing money. This system turned it profitable, and it has helped the estate book millions of dollars in weddings.

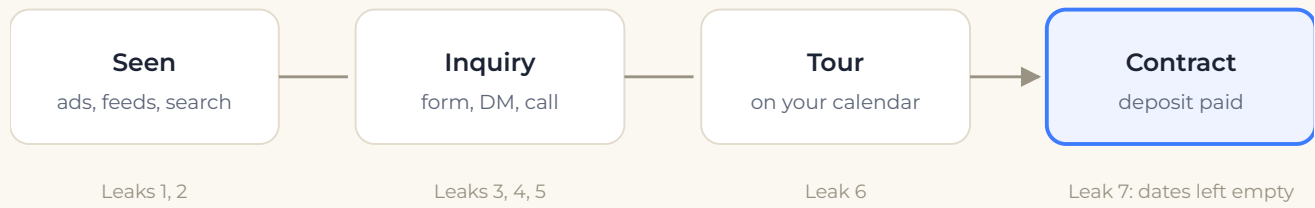
This guide walks through the seven places small venues lose bookings. For each one you'll see what it costs, why it happens, and one fix you can make this week. Then it covers the three systems behind a full calendar: getting found on Google, a CRM that follows up automatically, and precise Facebook and Instagram ads. The complete playbook, with the exact scripts, timing and ad setups, is what we run for venues inside Truly Wed. You'll see where that line is as you read.

James

START HERE

Every booking travels *the same path.*

A couple sees you, asks about you, tours you, then signs. Every lost booking leaks out at one of those four steps. Find your biggest leak before you spend another dollar on getting seen.



SEEN

Couples need to see your venue many times before they inquire: in their feeds, on Google Maps and in search. Two engines do this work: **search (SEO)** and **paid social ads**.

INQUIRY

Once a couple reaches out, speed and clarity win. A fast, personal reply and an honest price keep the conversation going. This is where a **CRM with automation** earns its keep.

TOUR

The tour is where couples picture their day. Venues that walk the day in order and talk about price openly turn more tours into decisions.

CONTRACT

Couples sign when the next step is clear and easy: a held date, a written quote and a deposit link, sent the same day.

Two numbers tell you where you leak. The first is how many inquiries become tours. The second is how many tours become contracts. If plenty of inquiries arrive but few become tours, the leak is follow-up. If tours happen but few sign, it's the tour. If inquiries are thin, it's visibility. Most small venues leak at all three, and fixing follow-up first is usually the cheapest win, because those couples already raised their hand.

Showing up after *couples have decided.*

Couples shortlist venues they've already been seeing. If you appear for the first time when they search, you're competing on price.

19% of all proposals happen in December, and nearly **40%** happen between November and February.

Source: The Knot, "The Most Popular Day to Get Engaged" (internal engagement study).

Why it happens. Most small venues market when they feel empty, which is usually spring and summer. By then, the couples who got engaged over the holidays are already touring. The venues that win booking season build familiarity in October and November, so when the ring goes on, the couple already knows their name.

QUICK WIN THIS WEEK

Post three times a week through December, and make at least one of those a short video of a real moment at your venue, not a styled photo. Familiarity is built by repetition, not polish.

INSIDE TRULY WED

- The engagement-season ad calendar we run, by week, from October to March
- Which audiences to reach before they're engaged, and which right after
- The creative formats that get couples to stop scrolling, built for your venue

Renting your leads *from directories.*

When a couple inquires through a listing site, they're often inquiring with several venues at once. You pay for the listing, then race everyone else for the same couple.

Why it happens. Directories are easy. You pay, you appear, inquiries arrive. But the couple found the directory, not you. The lead isn't exclusive, the price comparison is built in, and when you stop paying, you disappear. You never build anything you own.

Your own ads work the other way round. The couple sees *your* venue, asks *you* and only you, and every lead, every video view and every website visit builds an audience you keep.

DIRECTORY LEAD VS. YOUR OWN LEAD

	DIRECTORY	YOUR OWN ADS
Who else gets the couple	Often other venues on the list	No one
Who owns the audience	The directory	You
What happens when you stop paying	You disappear	Your audiences and data stay

QUICK WIN THIS WEEK

Ask every new inquiry "How did you hear about us?" and log the answer. In 30 days you'll know exactly what each source costs per booked tour, which is the only number that matters.

INSIDE TRULY WED

- Facebook and Instagram campaigns built and managed for your venue, tested every week
- The audience setup we use to reach engaged couples in your area
- You own the ad account, the leads and the data, always

Answering *tomorrow.*

Couples inquire at night, on weekends and in the middle of your other weddings. The first venue to start a real conversation usually gets the tour.

7×

Businesses that contacted an online lead within an hour were nearly seven times as likely to qualify it as those that waited even an hour longer, and over 60 times as likely as those that waited a day.

Source: Harvard Business Review research, "The Short Life of Online Sales Leads" (study of 1.25 million leads).

Why it happens. Your best people are busy running weddings, which is exactly what they should be doing. Replies wait until someone sits down at the computer. By then the couple has heard from two other venues.

QUICK WIN THIS WEEK

Set up an instant auto-reply on every inquiry channel (website form, Instagram, Facebook). Use the couple's name, congratulate them, and ask one easy question about their date. Something fast and warm beats something perfect and late.

INSIDE TRULY WED

- A text to every inquiry within minutes, day or night, sent from your venue
- The exact first-message wording we use, written in your venue's voice
- Automatic pre-qualification, so your team only talks to couples who fit

Hiding your price.

When couples can't find a price, many don't ask. They assume you're out of reach and move on to a venue that told them what to expect.

Why it happens. The old idea was to keep pricing off the website so couples have to call, and then win them over on the phone. Today's couples research on their phones first. Hidden pricing doesn't create mystery, it creates silence. And the couples who do ask often go quiet after the quote, because they still don't know what their whole wedding will cost.

WEDDING COST CALCULATOR
What will your wedding at Chelsea Sun Inn cost?
200 private acres, one wedding at a time — priced start to finish

WEDDING YEAR: 2027
YOUR DATE: Peak Saturday

PACKAGE: The Wedding
GUESTS: 100

1 - YOU PAY CHELSEA SUN INN: **\$13,737**
Venue package and bar, tax & gratuity included

2 - YOU PAY YOUR OWN VENDORS: **\$13,125**
Caterer, photo, DJ, video and florals - paid direct

YOUR ESTIMATED TOTAL: \$26,862
Your venue price is fixed up to 150 guests — after that it's \$40 a guest

1 - YOU PAY CHELSEA SUN INN

Venue package Private estate 12 PM - 10 PM - tax & gratuity included	\$12,342
Bridal Suite, yours for the full 24 hours	
INCLUDED	
Bar package 100 • \$13.95 • BYOB, staffed	\$1,395
Paid to the estate	\$13,737
Deposit to hold your date <small>25% of what you owe us - the balance is due before the wedding</small>	\$3,434

Call | Book a Tour | Pricing Guide

What we run at Chelsea Sun Inn: a live wedding cost calculator. Couples pick a date, package and guest count and see their full estimate, venue and vendors, before they ever tour.

Price shoppers sort themselves out. The couples who book a tour already know the number.

Live calculator at chelseasun.com

QUICK WIN THIS WEEK

Add one line to your website: "Weddings from \$____" with what's included. A starting price with the value next to it beats no price every time.

INSIDE TRULY WED

- A wedding cost calculator built for your packages and prices, in your \$0 Launch Kit
- A designed pricing guide couples can download
- How to present price so value lands before the number does

Following up *once.*

Plenty of couples who don't reply are still interested. They got busy, forgot, or were waiting to talk with their partner. One message and done leaves them for the next venue.

Why it happens. Follow-up depends on someone remembering, and nobody on a wedding-day crew has time to remember. There's also the worry of being pushy. But a short, friendly check-in with something useful isn't pushy; it's service.

THE SHAPE OF A GOOD FOLLOW-UP (EXAMPLE)

Same day	A quick, warm first reply with one easy question
Next day	One useful detail, such as a photo from a recent wedding
A few days later	Two or three specific tour times to choose from
About a week later	A friendly last note that leaves the door open

Stop the moment they reply or ask you to, and always honor opt-outs.

QUICK WIN THIS WEEK

Go back through every inquiry from the last 60 days that never booked a tour. Send each one a two-line note with two tour times. Some of your easiest bookings this month are already in your inbox.

INSIDE TRULY WED

- The full automated sequence we run: every message, word for word, with exact timing
- Tour booking and reminders that land straight on your calendar
- A dashboard that shows where every couple is, so nobody falls through

Showing rooms *instead of their day.*

Many venues lose bookings on the tour without realizing it. The couple enjoyed it, said "we'll talk it over," and never came back. Usually nothing went wrong; the tour just never gave them a reason to decide.

Why it happens. Most tours walk room to room listing features and square footage. Couples don't buy square footage. They buy the picture of their own day, and the confidence that it will go right.

- **Start with them.** Ask how they met and what they picture before you show a single room.
- **Walk the day in order.** Getting ready, ceremony, cocktail hour, first dance: each moment in its real place.
- **Talk about price yourself.** A clear written quote feels honest; "it depends" feels like a trap.

QUICK WIN THIS WEEK

Before your next tour, decide the exact order you'll walk, from where they'd get ready to where they'd leave at the end of the night. Then never show a room out of order again.

INSIDE TRULY WED

- The tour script and closing questions we use at Chelsea Sun Inn
- What to say when a couple says "we need to think about it"
- A 1:1 with James every two weeks to review your tours, pricing and close rate

Leaving weekdays *and winter empty.*

A Saturday in June sells itself. A Thursday in February doesn't. Every date that passes empty is revenue you can never get back.

Why it happens. Most venues market one product, the peak Saturday, to everyone. Couples who would happily book a weekday or a winter date for a lower price never hear that the option exists, so they look elsewhere. Then those dates get discounted in a panic a few weeks out.

Weekday and off-season dates need their own offer, their own price and their own audience: smaller weddings, elopements, second marriages, budget-minded couples, and anyone who cares more about the place than the day of the week.

WHO BOOKS WEEKDAYS AND WINTER

- Micro weddings and elopements with 50 guests or fewer
- Couples marrying for the second time who want something relaxed
- Budget-minded couples who'd rather spend on the place than the day of the week
- Couples who love a season: snow, fireplaces, fall color

QUICK WIN THIS WEEK

Create one named weekday package (for example, a micro wedding for up to 50 guests) with a clear price and what's included. Put it on your website and pricing guide. A named offer sells; "ask about weekday rates" doesn't.

INSIDE TRULY WED

- Separate weekday and off-season campaigns, aimed at the couples most likely to book them
- Package and pricing consulting to fill dates without training couples to wait for discounts

SEO

Getting found on Google.

Couples search "wedding venues near me" and "barn wedding venue" plus a town name long before they fill out a form. If your venue isn't in the map results, it isn't on their list.

How Google decides. Google says local results are ranked on three things: **relevance** (how well your profile matches the search), **distance** (how far you are from the person searching) and **prominence** (how well known you are, including your reviews and links from other websites). You can't pay for a better local ranking. You earn it.

YOUR GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE

- Verify it, and pick the primary category that matches what you are
- Fill every field: hours, address or service area, description, attributes
- Add new photos and video every month, from real weddings
- Ask every couple for a review, and reply to every review

YOUR WEBSITE

- One page for each thing couples search: ceremony, reception, micro weddings, lodging, pricing
- Your town and region in page titles and headings, written naturally
- A real-wedding post for every wedding, naming the vendors, who often link back
- Fast on phones, with descriptive image names and alt text

Source: Google Business Profile Help, "How to improve your local ranking on Google."

QUICK WIN THIS WEEK

Open your Google Business Profile. Check your primary category, add ten recent photos, and reply to every review you haven't answered. Then text your last five couples a direct link to leave a review.

INSIDE TRULY WED

- Website SEO optimization add-on (\$499/month): your Google profile, search pages and monthly reporting, done for you
- How we turn every real wedding into content for search, social and ads
- Review requests built into your automated follow-up

CRM

A CRM that *never forgets.*

Inquiries arrive by form, Instagram, Facebook, phone and email. When they live in five places, couples fall through the cracks and nobody knows which marketing books weddings.

A CRM (customer relationship management system) is one place where every couple lives, from first message to signed contract. **Automation** is what makes it work for a small team: the system sends first replies, reminders, follow-ups and review requests on time, and your people handle tours, pricing and anything that needs a person.

THE STAGES EVERY VENUE PIPELINE NEEDS

STAGE	WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN AUTOMATICALLY
New inquiry	An instant personal reply; tag date, guests, budget and source
Contacted	Follow-ups that run until they reply, then stop
Tour booked	Confirmation, directions and reminders
Toured	A same-day thank-you with their written quote
Proposal sent	Friendly check-ins and a date-hold deadline
Booked or lost	A welcome sequence, or the reason logged

Texting: ask for permission to text on your inquiry form, name your venue in every message, and stop immediately when someone replies STOP.

QUICK WIN THIS WEEK

List every place an inquiry can arrive. Pick one place they will all land from now on, even a shared spreadsheet, and log the source, wedding date and guest count for every couple.

INSIDE TRULY WED

- The automated sequences we run: every message and its timing, written in your venue's voice
- Pre-qualification, tour booking and reminders straight onto your calendar
- A real-time dashboard showing every couple's stage and the source that brought them

Precise Facebook and Instagram ads.

ADS

Boosting a pretty photo to "people interested in weddings" reaches millions of guests, vendors and wedding fans. Precision is the difference between a booked tour and a cheap like.

Meta's targeting has changed a lot. Many detailed targeting options have been retired, and since 2025 you can no longer exclude people by interest or life event. What still works is a smaller set of signals used together, with your own audiences doing most of the work.

THE LAYERS OF A PRECISE VENUE AUDIENCE

1 • Where	Target where your couples <i>live</i> , not only where your venue is. Many couples travel to marry, so test the cities your past couples came from.
2 • Who	The "Newly engaged" life event is still available as targeting. Combine it with location and an age range that fits your couples.
3 • Your own audiences	Website visitors, people who watched your videos, and people who engaged with your Instagram or Facebook. These are the warmest people you can reach.
4 • Lookalikes	Once you have enough inquiries or booked couples, Meta can find more people like them.
Exclude	Booked couples and past clients, using your own customer lists. List exclusions still work.

Teach Meta what a good result is. Install the Meta Pixel on your website and send an event when a couple inquires. Then optimize for inquiries, not clicks. Meta finds more of whoever you reward it for.

INSIDE TRULY WED

- The exact audience stacks, radius tests and budget split we run for venues
- Pixel and conversion setup done for you, so Meta learns from real inquiries
- You own the ad account, the audiences and the data

Creative that stops *the right couples.*

Targeting decides who *could* see your ad. Creative decides who stops. Today, the ad itself does more targeting than any setting.

WHAT WORKS FOR VENUES

- **Vertical video of real moments**, shot on a phone: the ceremony spot, sparklers, golden hour.
- **A hook in the first two seconds** that names your place and the couple's plans: "Planning a fall wedding in the Poconos?"
- **Price or value early**. "All-inclusive from..." filters out browsers.
- **One clear next step**: book a tour, see pricing, or use your cost calculator.
- **Fresh creative, often**. Ads wear out when the same people see them too many times.

MEASURE WHAT BOOKS WEDDINGS

NUMBER	WHAT IT TELLS YOU
Click-through rate	Whether your hook and creative are working
Cost per inquiry	Whether your targeting and offer are working
Inquiry → tour rate	Whether your follow-up is working
Cost per booked tour	The number that matters most
Frequency	When your creative is wearing out

QUICK WIN THIS WEEK

At your next wedding, film three 10-second vertical clips (with the couple's permission): the ceremony spot, the reception at its fullest, and the last dance. That's your next month of ads.

INSIDE TRULY WED

- Custom ad creative for your venue, with new versions tested every week
- The hooks and offers we've seen book tours, adapted to your market
- Cost per booked tour, tracked live in your dashboard

DONE FOR YOU

Truly Wed runs *the whole system*.

The booking system for small wedding venues. We run the marketing so your team can take care of couples.

01 • BRAND

How your venue looks and sounds, shaped so the right couples recognize it as their place.

02 • ADVERTISE

Facebook and Instagram ads that put your venue in front of engaged couples in your area.

03 • FOLLOW UP

Every inquiry gets a text within minutes, and qualified couples book a tour on your calendar.

04 • CLOSE

Coaching on tours and pricing that turns more visits into signed contracts.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ✓ Custom branding and ad creative
- ✓ Campaign management, tested every week
- ✓ Text follow-up, pre-qualification and tour booking
- ✓ Tour reminders and a real-time dashboard
- ✓ Bi-weekly 1:1 with James on tours and pricing
- ✓ Access to our marketing team
- ✓ A monthly review of your inquiries, tours and bookings
- ✓ You own your ad account, leads and data

\$999/month

Month to month. Cancel anytime. Your ad budget is paid directly to Meta.

Launch Kit, \$0 upfront: lookbook, pricing guide, wedding cost calculator and launch content. A \$999 value, billed only if you cancel in your first 6 months.



YOUR NEXT STEP

Ready to fill *your calendar?*

Apply in a few minutes. We'll look at your venue, your market and your goals on a strategy call, and show you exactly where your bookings are leaking.

[Apply at trulywed.com](https://trulywed.com)

info@trulywed.com · 610-333-5635

Engagement season starts at Thanksgiving. The venues couples already know are the ones they tour first.