

## #WHERE THE BRIDES ARE

> Inspired by some of the trends from the feature stories in this month's issue? Ready to pump up your wedding and event business by creating more connections and drumming up more interest on social media? Good for you! Your first step is obvious, according to Alicia Schwede of Bella Fiori Designs in Seattle, Washington, and the Flirty Fleurs blog.

"Right now, it's all about Instagram," said Schwede, a presenter in January during the Florabundance Inspirational Design Days event in Santa Barbara. (Read more about that event on p. 30.)

### Be Informative and Inspiring

Schwede said brides and grooms today look for several things when shopping for a florist on Instagram — first among them, real weddings and photo shoots that are pretty but not perfectly styled. Brides also are likely to check out what other vendors you work with: Who is tagged in your feed and who tags you? This clues them in to the quality of your work and whether you are a team player.



**WOO THEM ONLINE** Alicia Schwede shows off her wedding work, and some strategic Instagram use, with posts promoting her Bella Fiori Designs in Seattle, Washington.



That's why it's a good idea to think of Instagram as an extension of your portfolio, Schwede advises. Take care with your photos, and take the time to write complete and correct captions. Remember, too, that one great post a day is way better than more posts that are not as beautiful.

Curate your Instagram profile. Make sure it includes your name, business name, location, an email address or phone, and your specialties, along with a bio. When posts are viewed on a desktop computer versus on a phone, there is no quick link for a potential customer to call or message you, Schwede pointed out — so you may want to write your email address into captions.

Using hashtags can boost response to your post — but use them wisely. Avoid copying and pasting the same hashtags into every post, a practice that algorithms will catch and punish. Use up to five hashtags in your caption, different every time. You can add up to 25 more in comments (the limit for the total is 30).

Don't forget to talk with couples about the hashtags they'll be using, too. And they're likely using them. Sixty-four percent of couples create a custom hashtag, according to The Knot 2017 Real Weddings Study.



### Leverage Stories — and Time-Saving Apps

Schwede also talked about using Instagram Stories, which can be a good way to invite your followers behind the scenes. Unlike standard posts, Stories disappear after 24 hours, unless you add them to your Highlights — curated clips that you can group together and label with icons that appear front and center on your Instagram profile.

Schwede also shared her favorite Instagram apps, designed to make the process easier and more efficient. At the top of her list is **Later.com**, which allows you to create and schedule a month of posts in advance. You can review all of the posts at once, checking for the rhythm established over the month and that they're not too repetitive. Then Later gives you a daily push notification so you can review each image and caption once more before posting it.

If you type in an idea for a hashtag, the Later app will offer suggestions for related hashtags, ranked in popularity. Pick the ones that are in the middle, Schwede suggested. They will be seen by fewer people, but they won't drop as quickly from the feed. The app has an option that will allow you to review which posts were the most popular. 📌

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