

one-stop weddings

The Sedona Wedding Studio caters to brides' every need with a membership of 75 vendors, including its event-florist founders.

BY KELSEY E. SMITH



Brides who visit The Sedona Wedding Studio are met with a host of visuals to assist them in their vendor and style selections. The 1,200-square-foot location includes table vignettes, wedding photographs on the walls and a hutch with space for each of the group's 75 members to place business cards and brochures.

What started as a dream to collaborate on wedding work has turned into Northern Arizona's largest and most comprehensive wedding organization—and the one-stop destination for couples planning weddings in picturesque Sedona and nearby locales. **THE SEDONA WEDDING STUDIO** is a group of 75 wedding and event professionals, including florists, photographers, cake artists, caterers, makeup artists, musicians and more. It was founded in July 2009 by florists **KEN HEFLIN** and **JIM BULLOCK**, owners of **EVENTS BY SHOW STOPPERS** (see profile on Page 53), and husband-and-wife photographer team **ANDREW MEJIA** and **KATRINA WALLACE**, owners of **SEDONA BRIDE PHOTOGRAPHERS**.

"We worked on our business model for a year, and it's worked brilliantly," Mr. Bullock relates. "When we started, we thought we'd have 10 or 12 companies, but after we launched our website, peo-

ple wanted to join. We're really proud of not only our business model but the way we've evolved."



destination for inspiration

The Sedona Wedding Studio is located in a 1,200-square-foot space between Events by Show Stoppers and **SEDONA CAKE COUTURE**, whose owner, **ANDREA CARUSETTA**, is a two-time *Food Network Challenge* medalist and TLC's *Ultimate Cake Off* champion. There is no need for a receptionist, Mr. Bullock explains, because brides enter the studio through one of the two surrounding businesses. This, of course, also

ensures that each business has top exposure in brides' minds.

"When people come in, they see cakes going out, and they see flowers going out," Mr. Bullock says. "It's an active, vital scene."

The studio is filled with displays, including "inspiration tables" from member wedding coordinators. A large Spanish hutch with

shelves showcases a spot for each vendor to place brochures and business cards, and photographs from real weddings hang on the walls, displaying the work of not only Sedona Bride Photographers but also other members including Events by Show Stoppers. Additional examples of wedding work can be found via slide shows on big-screen TVs inside the studio's meeting room, which is available to all members for bridal consultations. If the room is booked, an alternative meeting space is available, either at one of the many display tables throughout the space or at Events by Show Stoppers.

"We were worried about [accommodating all the meetings] in the beginning because it took off so fast, but we quickly discovered that when you have several meetings going on at the same time, and when brides who are excited about their weddings see other brides, and everybody's going through linens and everything, it makes it a vibrant atmosphere, and it helps sell the weddings," Mr. Bullock explains. "It gives the image that the studio is the place to be and where everything is happening, and, indeed, it is."

Though much of The Sedona Wedding Studio's traffic comes from brides who have consultation appointments with its members, walk-ins also are common because the studio and its adjoining businesses, which are located on the main street in Sedona, are highly visible to passers-by. In addition to having access to vendors' marketing materials, each bride who visits the studio receives a membership guide with contact information.

Mr. Bullock explains that no vendor in a particular category is ever recommended over another. "We're very careful about that," he relates. "When somebody asks for a coordinator, we take them to an area that has portraits of all the coordinators on the wall along with their brochures and the tables they've designed. The brides have the membership booklet we've given them, and they can make the choice on their own. When they ask us which one we'd recommend, our standard answer is, 'We have four of the top coordinators in the city, and they're all qualified, and we feel that it's more about the chemistry you have with the coordinator.' The quality of service is a given; it's more about their comfort zone with the people they're meeting and working with."

a beneficial alliance

The benefits of being a member of The Sedona Wedding Studio are many. In addition to being recognized as the top wedding professionals in the area, the vendors are represented on the group's custom website, www.sedonaweddingstudio.com, with business bios and photos. The site also shows weddings done by members, giving credit to each vendor whose work is represented.

"It's an incentive for all of our members to refer each other," Mr. Bullock explains. "If they do, and we're able to put it on The Sedona Wedding Studio website as a 'studio wedding,' it's better for everyone."



A team of photographers and florists founded The Sedona Wedding Studio in July 2009. From left are Andrew Mejia and Katrina Wallace, of Sedona Bride Photographers, and Jim Bullock and Ken Heflin, of Events by Show Stoppers.

sound structure

Although The Sedona Wedding Studio is considered an organization, it is not one in which members vote on issues and procedures. "Katrina and I make all the decisions, and everybody loves that," Mr. Bullock shares. "At our meetings, we don't sit down with agendas and voting—that's all so cumbersome. Our meetings are more like wonderful parties, where our caterers bring food and wineries bring wine, and we get a lot done in a relaxed atmosphere."

Membership is by invitation only, and likely candidates have a few notable qualities, according to Mr. Bullock. "We invite vendors based on their propensity to advertise because that tells us they realize the power of marketing and will be good for the

group as a whole," he explains. "And we like them to be recognized within their industry, such as through national awards. Quality is a must; we don't want anybody who doesn't do exceptional work."

Though the group declines to share the specifics of its pricing structure, membership dues are set according to the type of business—officiants, musicians and venues pay annual dues, for example—and whether the members are the only ones representing their category. Those with exclusivity in their fields, including the founders, pay twice as much each month as those in categories with multiple vendors.

at a glance

the sedona wedding studio

FOUNDERS: Ken Heflin and Jim Bullock, owners of Events by Show Stoppers, and Katrina Wallace and Andrew Mejia, owners of Sedona Bride Photography

LOCATION: Sedona, Ariz.

ESTABLISHED: 2009

NUMBER OF MEMBERS: 75, with six pending at press time

STUDIO SIZE: approximately 1,200 square feet

WEBSITE:

www.sedonaweddingstudio.com

media magic

One category of wedding professionals does not pay for membership—at least, not monetarily. All five wedding publications in Arizona are members of The Sedona Wedding Studio, each receiving free membership in exchange for ads for the studio.

The magazines are in plentiful supply for brides to pick up during their visits to the studio. Inside, they often will find profiles of weddings done by members as well as staged photo shoots. At press time, The Sedona Wedding Studio had spreads in the current issues of three of the publications—*Phoenix*

Showcased against an array of charger plates and glassware for all bridal styles, this setting is one example of an "inspiration table" inside The Sedona Wedding Studio.



Bride & Groom, Arizona Weddings and Arizona's Finest Wedding Sites and Services magazines.

"We love doing photo shoots," Mr. Bullock relates. "They give The Sedona Wedding Studio great presence and, combined with the real weddings, we're peppered through all of the magazines."

boot camp brings brides

Last February, The Sedona Wedding Studio had its first Bridal Boot Camp and Wedding Soirée. Several members helped clear out a large portion of the displays at Events by Show Stoppers and set up chairs in classroom style, and many members spoke about their expertise. Lunch was catered by members as well, with beautiful displays offering a variety of food.

"All of this was free," Mr. Bullock says. "Brides had lunch, watched videos and mixed with all the vendors who were there. It was a huge success. We had it for two days, and we were at capacity, with reservations for 30 people on each day."

The event's success prompted the group to expand it for 2012. Announced

on the studio's website as well as its Facebook and Twitter pages last July, the 2012 edition will celebrate "The H'Art of Having a Stylish Sedona Wedding." A full week of festivities will begin with the Sedona Wedding Studio Open House Soirée on Feb. 11 and culminate with the 2012 Sedona Bridal Boot Camp on Feb. 18. A tent from studio member Classic Party Rentals will be set up for the week, and the speakers will be exclusive members.

At press time, a website dedicated to the event was in the works, offering profiles of the speakers as well as the ability for brides to register and sign up for prizes online.

"We're all about trying new things in marketing for our members," Mr. Bullock explains. "Show Stoppers is busy all the time, but some of our other members, like musicians, struggle a bit more. So we want to do these things to help our entire membership." ■

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Photos courtesy of Sedona Bride Photographers