



NEXT MARKETING
AGENCY

**AMI MARKETING
AWARDS SUBMISSION**

CATEGORY 13 - BUSINESS TO CONSUMER

2012

**Fenix
goes to
the bridal
expo.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fenix is a well-known hospitality business located in inner-city Melbourne operating as a restaurant, corporate events and weddings venue.

In June 2011, Next Marketing recommended to Fenix that refocusing their marketing efforts on wedding sales would bring in a steady stream of income, which would cover the restaurant 'quiet times' and provide cash flow certainty for the business.

Next Marketing identified that the Australian Bridal Service (ABS), was going to hold an expo in August 2011. Exhibiting at the expo was a great sales and marketing opportunity; however, to execute this campaign effectively meant completely redesigning the Fenix stand, producing fresh marketing materials and arranging an eye-catching display to draw visitors in: a large task indeed.

The Next Marketing approach as noted above, combined with leveraging the high profile identity of Gary Mehigan led to a:

- **266% increase in sales, and a**
- **1759% return on marketing investment.**

The bridal expo was the most successful in the company's ten-year history and its success keeps building with increasing opportunities for industry partnerships and an enhanced industry reputation.





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1. THE ISSUE

Fenix is a hospitality business located in Richmond in inner-city Melbourne. Blessed with an amazing location along the Yarra River, Fenix is a popular venue for both inner-city 'DINKS' and corporate clients. Its owner Gary Mehigan has enjoyed a very high TV profile over the past three years through his participation in Channel TEN's MasterChef.

Fenix approached Next Marketing in April 2011 for help with their marketing. Specific issues we identified included the lack of a well-defined target market, an inconsistent brand identity and ineffective leveraging of Gary Mehigan. Fenix had been in business for ten years and undergone three major overhauls during that time, the most recent being in 2010 with the relaunch of the restaurant.

Although the wedding business had been providing a consistent income for Fenix for ten years, Next Marketing identified that there was still an opportunity to substantially grow the wedding business through better marketing. Weddings are the most profitable part of the Fenix business and are sold 12-24 months in advance. This brings in a steady stream of revenue, which can cover the more seasonal restaurant side of the business and provide valuable cash flow for various marketing projects.

Next Marketing recommended that Fenix target the August 2011 ABS expo in Melbourne as a way to grow wedding sales (quickly) and reposition Fenix as a leading wedding venue. There were a few additional challenges as Fenix's current wedding expo materials were in serious need of revamping and the timing was tight; we only had six weeks to research, prepare and execute.

“Next Marketing identified that there was an opportunity to substantially grow weddings through better marketing.”

2. CORE AUDIENCE INSIGHTS

Through research we uncovered two core insights specific to the target audience:

Brides don't like to be sold to. The hard sell approach does not work; therefore an alternative philosophy was required.

- Choosing a venue, from a bride's perspective, is a key decision. It really sets the theme and style for the entire wedding. The marketing and sales approach needed to make the bride feel that they were in good hands, and dealing with a person or venue that could become a 'quasi friend' or a trusted confidant. This was a fine line and a key selling insight.
- Our audience are confident and well educated brides, therefore need to be acknowledged in this way but were also (subtly) looking for the feel good approach. We determined the best way to communicate this was in marketing materials.
- We also knew the 'Gary Mehigan' brand would work well in Fenix's favour (due to the success of MasterChef in a female demographic).

Furthermore, we identified **that brides needed multiple touch points** with Fenix **before they would commit to a booking.**

- To combat this, in addition to the stand at the ABS bridal expo, we recommended that Fenix host an exclusive open day the following Saturday and invite brides who had given their details at the expo for a 'canapés and sparkling wine' private tour of the venue.

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3. OUR MARKETING SOLUTION

Using these core audience insights as the foundation of our strategy, we devised a very specific sales and marketing approach:

1. See Fenix at the ABS expo – give contact details
2. Receive marketing email from Fenix inviting them to the open day
3. Receive a follow up telephone call from a Fenix sales representative to schedule an appointment for the open day
4. Visit the open day with other decision makers – parents/fiancé (for example)
5. Take away paperwork from the open day and start ‘closing’ dialogue with Fenix staff
6. Visit Fenix again to confirm (decision to book is right) and pay deposit to secure booking.

Our research concluded that the target audience for this campaign was:

- Local to Melbourne
- Living in the inner-city area
- Had a venue available for the service, church for example (Fenix doesn’t have a dedicated space for ceremonies, and whilst they do them, it’s not a strength.)
- Aged 25- 35
- First time brides
- Looking for a modern venue
- Appreciative of the ‘Gary Mehigan’ show-off factor.

Research from the ABS indicated that this target audience profile attended the expo. This provided additional motivation for Fenix to invest resources and develop an eye-catching stand, which would promote their USP – the stunning natural location right in the middle of inner city Melbourne.



As part of the research process, we also looked at stand sizes. Previously Fenix had only a small display but it was clear that we needed more space to create something that was impressive enough to be noticed in a crowded expo environment.

As a result of our research we were able to develop a list of priorities:

1. New photography to articulate and make the most of the location
2. New stand size (doubled) and a design to create that wow factor to make bride's stop, and slow down at the expo long enough for Fenix's bridal consultant to get their details
3. Real life table setting so brides could see the Fenix experience
4. Flyer to invite people to the open day and provide something tangible for the sales people to hand out on the day.



Another factor which research suggested was, when it comes to selling weddings, reputation and word of mouth marketing is crucial. Therefore, it was vitally important for this campaign to build up Fenix's general standing in the industry.

Our approach to the ABS expo was two-fold; revamp outdated marketing materials to make the Fenix display stand the highest quality at the expo and to leverage Gary Mehigan's presence for a few hours each day as an additional incentive to encourage people to pause at the Fenix stand. Our plan was implemented as follows.

GARY MEHIGAN

We were fortunate to be able to secure Gary's availability for the expo although we made a conscious decision not to announce his attendance at the expo until two or three days prior to the event. Our primary concern was that if organisers widely promoted that Gary Mehigan would be at the expo, fans of MasterChef would pay to attend the Bridal expo to get an opportunity to meet Gary in person. The expo was held in August 2011, which is peak ratings time for MasterChef, so we wanted to leverage this, just with the right punters (brides). We didn't want to make it difficult to identify real wedding prospects.

PHOTOGRAPHY

In order to develop great marketing materials and to build a new stand, new photography was needed. The objective of the photo shoot was to get a picture of the beautiful view at Fenix as well as various high quality images of the venue.



STYLING AND EXPO STAND

We brought in a stylist who had exhibition experience to develop a blueprint for a Fenix stand, which could then be used for different configurations and stand sizes, as no expo is the same. We wanted the stand to be visually stunning and to showcase what the event space would look like. The backdrop of the stand was the view and a table was set up and styled, as it would be at a wedding. We also hired a white floor, which is the colour of the actual floor at Fenix. Soft white curtains and flowers added finishing touches.



MARKETING MATERIALS

Given that we had Gary in attendance and a great stand, we decided to keep the marketing materials to two simple items being a freshly designed double-sided postcard and a food package giveaway. Both complemented each other and Gary was able to sign the postcard, which gave it a personal touch.

3. THE RESULT (MARKETING OUTCOMES)

To say that the bridal expo campaign was an outstanding success would be a complete understatement. The results were benchmarked against previous bridal expos and any way we looked at it, the entire campaign exceeded expectations.

INCREASED LEADS

Leads increased by 627%

The new expo stand and Gary Mehigan had a significant impact on the number of names that were collected. In an expo-selling environment, exhibitors need to provide an excuse for visitors to stop and have a conversation about what is on offer. For Fenix, both of these elements provided this. People were willing to stop, have a conversation with the sales team at Fenix and give their contact details whilst waiting for a photo opportunity with Gary. The effect of this direct communication between Fenix and the expo visitors was a 627% increase in the number of names and contact details taken, based on our benchmark set from previous expo attendances.

INCREASED BRAND AWARENESS AND WORD OF MOUTH MARKETING

The association of a high profile celebrity such as Gary Mehigan and his excellent reputation in the hospitality industry helped Fenix stand out in customers' minds and increased the chance of word of mouth discussions after the expo. This was the first wedding expo that Gary has attended which has led to other marketing opportunities. For example, Gary has recently been interviewed by a leading bridal magazine, which as well as providing the benefit of free editorial for Fenix, demonstrates the venue's new improved brand association with the wedding market. The value of editorial was \$10,000.

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EASIER SALES THROUGH VISUALLY EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION MATERIAL

The stand itself and accompanying materials earned positive feedback from brides and other exhibitors. Having a physical representation of the venue made it much easier for the exhibiting staff to convey what the space looked like which helped vastly with sales. The visual impact of both the mock-up of the venue and the photography were extremely powerful and communicated the style and sense of luxury of the venue very effectively.

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4. THE KEY OUTCOMES THAT CONTRIBUTED VALUE TO THE ORGANISATION

INCREASED SALES

As a direct result of the bridal expo, Fenix saw a 266% increase in the number of sales for their wedding functions.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Overall the return on marketing investment for the bridal expo campaign was a staggering 1759%.

BOOST TO STAFF MORALE

The success of the expo generated a newfound energy and momentum among the Fenix sales team. The bridal expo was the most successful one ever and this gave the sales team the motivation and confidence to tackle future campaigns with a positive attitude.

INCREASED FUTURE MARKETING EFFORTS

The bridal expo set the stage for increased future marketing activity across all four of Fenix's business units. Equipped with the revamped expo stand and stunning presentation materials, as well as having learned a few lessons from the experience, the Fenix team has a new found confidence when it came to marketing.

IMPROVED REPUTATION

Reputation in hospitality and in particular the wedding industry is crucial; therefore to have people talking about Fenix in a really positive way was great. The bridal expo helped put Fenix back on the list of premium wedding venue locations in Melbourne.



In addition to the improved standing of Fenix in the wedding industry as a whole, the ABS expo was featured as a three-page case study in *Marketing* magazine, which helped to build brand awareness and provided extra PR for the overall business.

INCREASED OPPORTUNITIES FOR CROSS PROMOTION AND INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS

The bridal expo campaign also resulted in many more wedding industry companies wanting to partner with Fenix. Fenix holds open days and invites 'partners' to attend and exhibit on these days, which adds value to the brides who come along and positions Fenix as a helpful wedding supplier.

Weddings generate profitable sales and can provide up to 200 people with a Fenix experience, which over many weeks and months generates word of mouth conversations about the brand.

Marketing to brides can be tricky, however marketing in the expo environment works really well if executed correctly. It is a captive target audience who are there for ideas and to buy goods and services. It is just up to the companies exhibiting to deliver something different and innovative – and in this case, Fenix delivered.

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marketing
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business
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