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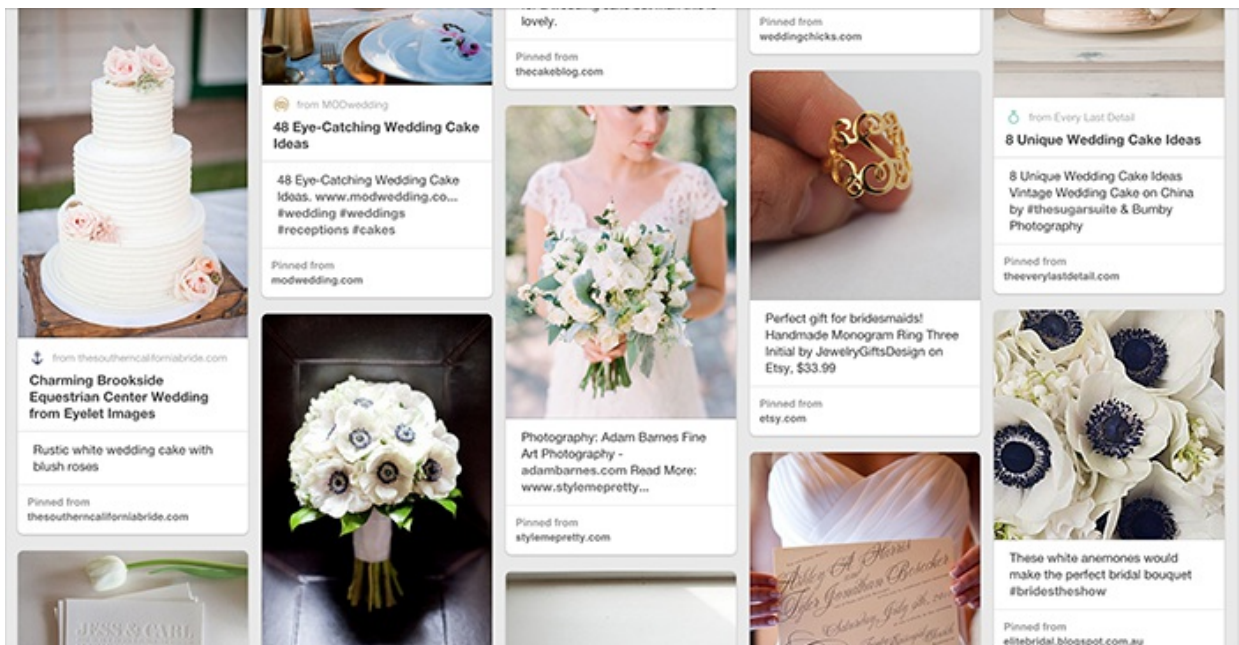
Client UX: How Wedding Planning Taught Me The Secret To Winning Clients

In just over two months I'm tying the knot. I've always considered myself a perfectionist and highly organized, which is why I opted to do all the planning myself and not hire a coordinator. Food, music, venue, photography, décor, invitations, that's all me.



By [Claire Carlson](#)

In just over two months I'm tying the knot. I've always considered myself a perfectionist and highly organized, which is why I opted to do all the planning myself and not hire a coordinator. Food, music, venue, photography, décor, invitations, that's all me. While not unusual, it is a whale of a lot of work. The most time consuming part? Finding vendors! During my time at Blink I've been on the other end of the relationship: striving to offer my clients the very best user experience (both for their customers and for them as *my* customer). Being on the client side has confirmed where I feel companies outshine and fall short on client UX.



At Blink I have learned to approach client and peer interactions in the same way I approach designing for users: I first aim to understand the audience’s point of view and always express empathy for their challenges. I aim for authentic relationships. As a result, I have become a bit of a diva about subpar customer service.

Let me start out by saying that a “can-do” attitude can make a world of difference in setting you apart from the competition. In my search for venues I came across a surprising amount of people with “can’t-do” attitudes. I asked if I could use chairs instead of benches for an outdoor ceremony. The vendor responded by saying benches are easier for their staff because they don’t have to clean grass and dirt off each chair leg. I thought, “I would never tell a client I can’t do what they wanted because it’s easier for me to do something else.”

As a customer, I would expect the vendor to do everything they possibly can to meet my needs. Encounters like these make coming across a “can-do” attitude all the more refreshing — so refreshing, in fact, that I’m willing to pay more knowing that I’m working with someone who will take care of me. Much has been written about the fact that the number one reason why clients stop working with a consultancy is because they don’t feel the consultancy cares about them and their success. [The Guardian](#) wrote an article on the topic of vendor love in 2014.

*There is a competitive advantage to be found in caring about people.
That competitive advantage can be had without a financial investment.
It’s completely free to those who are willing to build a positive culture. -
Anthony Iannarino*

At Blink we truly believe that being kind is the best way to earn someone’s business. Kindness is the number one attribute that sets the vendors I hired for my wedding apart from the competition. Like [Anthony Iannarino](#), a respected thought leader on this topic, we invest in our relationships with clients by listening, being compassionate, being grateful, and finding common interests with them. So when a client asks, “Can we push out the schedule two weeks so our key executives can observe usability testing?” instead of feeling stressed and defensive, we say “Yes, let’s find a way make that happen for you.” Let me tell you, it’s way more fun to say yes all the time than it is to say no all the time. That is how I want wedding vendors, general contractors, and peers to interact with me and I’m willing to bet that’s how they want me to interact with them too.

Another big learning moment was experiencing the power of word of mouth. Years ago my sister

and I went to the Georgetown Artwalk here in Seattle. We stopped in to check out a letterpress shop called Farewell Paperie. I took a business card that was cool enough to keep for a few years. Then when it came time to print my wedding invites I already had someone in mind: Farewell Paperie. Around the same time I also recommended them to a colleague at Blink who worked on the Blink holiday card. I also recommended them to a friend interested in printing letterpress business cards.

So there you go, Farewell Paperie earned three clients all because of one cool business card I grabbed years earlier. This was a good reminder for me that by doing my best work for my clients now, it will have a cascading effect weeks, months, and years down the road when that client tells their friend about the great work we've done. It's all connected!

As challenging as it can be to find the right wedding vendors, it made me excited about how much opportunity there still is to set yourself or your business apart by offering world class client UX. My advice to agencies, contractors, and vendors: always lead with kindness. Think in terms of what's possible and remember that the reward will come back in spades. It may be tomorrow or it may be in five years, but the impact you have on your client relationships now will always serve you well down the road.

Claire is part of the interaction design team at Blink. She loves being one of the first people in the office each morning except Friday, when you will find her at Mighty O Donuts.