



# SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

In her latest blog, editor Demelza Rayner discusses why standing still is never an option if you want to not only survive, but thrive in business

Watching the recent news coverage of Thomas Cook's collapse, it was clear that – among other monumental errors – the package holiday firm had failed to not only recognise, but also react to market changes. Tim Jeans, a former managing director of Monarch who left long before its collapse told BBC 5 live Thomas Cook had “an analogue business model in a digital world”. While travel and bridal are two decidedly different animals, Jeans' succinct summary of the situation holds a mirror up to the very real challenges faced by so many industries across the world.

Indeed, whether you're a manufacturer, retailer or a publisher, there's no doubt that trading conditions are unrecognisable from a decade ago and the legwork that goes into securing each valuable sale is greater than ever.

Competition no longer takes the shape of the bridal shop down the road; it's a multi-faceted entity that incorporates the high street, online sellers and bridal chains. And while Gen-Z may have fully embraced this fast-paced, ever-changing digital era where their needs are met instantly, only savvy retailers with their finger on the pulse will successfully capitalise on this new breed of brides. Online appointment booking and clear information about price range and opening hours all help to satisfy short attention spans, while insta-worthy window displays, social media competitions and celebrity 'get the look'

posts effortlessly secure an engaged and enthusiastic customer base. The key is to be open, transparent and to tell brides exactly what to expect when they make an appointment.

Helena Cotter, our regular columnist and retail consultant frequently highlights the importance of investing in staff training, something that really resonated with me when witnessing the admirable way Thomas Cook's employees continued to rally round and do the best they could in very difficult circumstances.

Having engaging, informed and enthusiastic staff, who believe in their product and who make the most of every single opportunity, are absolutely invaluable, whether in store or at an exhibition. On the flipside, disinterested employees without proper training are costing you much more than the paycheque at the end of the month.

Yes, brides today are more demanding than ever, but one desire surpasses all others – that for a beautiful wedding dress. It's a need that independent retailers are perfectly placed to meet – with exceptional service to boot! If you suspect you may have an 'analogue business model in a digital age', now's the time to act. Good luck!

*If you have a topic you'd like editor Demelza Rayner to discuss, send her an email at [editor@attirebridal.com](mailto:editor@attirebridal.com)*