

Prenup Marketing

Couples join less in holy matrimony and more in heavenly ignorance

By **David Frenkel**



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(January 30, 2019, 11:44 AM EST) -- The 2019 Metro Convention Centre Canada's Bridal Show had an unexpected visitor; namely, the family law firm of Gelman and Associates. They registered a booth, sat down in pairs and watched happy couples walk by and stare at them in bewilderment.

Many people giggled and many more quickly diverted their gaze and pretended not to see the display for prenups and wills and a big poster of Jeff Bezos with a caption underneath saying, "I wish I had a prenup."

After three days of standing out in the crowd like an uninvited guest, the divorce lawyers took the time to reflect on their experiences and tried to understand why something so important to some people was treated with an aura of taboo and rejection. They came up with a few reasons based on their personal experiences as lawyers who not only draft prenups but who also deal with the breakdown of relationships.

Their first realization was that the people at the bridal show likely discounted the well-known statistic that divorce and separation affect approximately 50 per cent of all relationships. More importantly, among the 50 per cent of breakups, the details of many of those are simply heartbreaking. Those heartbreaks often result from entitled individuals making unreasonable claims. There are many examples in family law court decisions.

What the Gelman lawyers hoped to achieve at the bridal show was to provide information to the marrying couples that a prenup can serve as a great protector of hard-earned assets that one brings into the marriage.

Additionally, that a domestic contract can also promote respect to one's future spouse on various levels. For example, a husband can enter into a marriage contract as a way to minimize a woman's worry that he will not go after her for spousal support should the relationship not work out. This worry is even more real when the woman is the breadwinner of the family and has been long before she met him.

However, most people at the bridal show did not appear interested to learn. Many were shy, embarrassed or both. On one occasion, a lady picked up one of the prenup brochures only to be "redirected" by her groom-to-be to put it down and walk away.

It was possible that maybe they thought that a visit to the booth would become a premonition for an unfavourable result in their relationship. If they would have just fought through that uneasiness, what they may have learned was that a prenup allows a couple to remove some of the uncertainties and fears many people have going into a marriage. Those fears are real and often include losing money and assets that one spouse spent years of collecting prior to the wedding.

A further realization from the bridal booth experiment was that brides and grooms seemed to be deep in their honeymoon stages and did not comprehend that a big part of messy divorces can be avoided and mitigated by having a prenup. Additionally, the bridal show did not appear to be the best venue to let people know that a prenup can be used to clearly articulate what assets will or will not be divided if a couple separates.

Rather, a prenup is actually a mature and proactive way to not only minimize future legal fees but also a way to give a spouse peace of mind. A peace of mind that just in case the husband turns out to be a narcissistic or a manipulator that she will not have to fight him for years on end in divorce court. Having such a document may also minimize the chances that the litigation will not only bankrupt a person's finances but one's spirit as well.

Finally, the Gelman divorce lawyers came to the ironic conclusion that Canada's Bridal Show was not the best venue to promote a more cognizant approach to the seriousness of a couple's commitment to one another. Although relevant to the future relationship, the information that they came to share was less of a buzz that they expected and more of a buzz kill for the brides and grooms excited to get married.

However, if these proactive lawyers were able to speak to more people at the show, what they would have told them was that if a couple starts to think about a potential breakup before the wedding, they may be able to reduce the probability of taking their relationship for granted after the wedding. What a proactive approach may achieve is for the couple to notice the warning signs early on in their relationship and have the opportunity to protect themselves financially just in case the negative spirals occur in the future. Because once the romance starts to fade and reality sets in, the time to enter into a marriage contract may just be too late.

Although an investment in knowledge may pay the best interest, what the bridal show experiment taught was that individuals join less in holy matrimony and more with heavenly ignorance. As a result, it may be long overdue that the ignorance of couples should be avoided and replaced with education early on in their relationship and prior to the actual wedding, if not sooner. The only caveat is that information is better provided at a school or at a counsellor's office but not next to photographers, flower shops and bridal dress boutiques.

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