



Smart Inspiration

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Being Brave Through Collaboration

Story by Ashley Gerrity, Tonia Adleta Lowe
and Petronella Lugemwa

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At ISSE Palm Beach, we were inspired to “Be Brave”... this is our story, the story of three entrepreneurs (aka The Three Musketeers) whose bond was strengthened with a shared ambition to style a bridal session shoot in under 24 hours. We sourced and repurposed everything from a stunning Romona Keveza gown to a four-tier cake to create an epic photo shoot. Not only did we unite over our passion for weddings, but we developed strong friendships that have extended beyond the shoot. This is our story of being brave through collaboration.

IN THE
Details

Everything began with the mutual commitment to travel to ISSE Palm Beach, and each of us were excited for our grown-up sleepover with an entrepreneurial twist. The idea for the shoot came about over our second dinner together. It was an almost-missed comment, "Seriously, this is such a perfect setting - we should be shooting," that launched a stylized inspiration shoot in record time. Wanting to capture the romance of the crashing waves alongside the Eau Palm Beach resort, the idea lingered in the air afterwards. None of us could shake it, "Wouldn't it

be fun..." turned into, "Here's what we need." And like any good slumber party, we stayed up well past our bedtimes, talking, dreaming - and making things happen.

One of the notable aspects of our collaboration was how we operated as Co-Creative Directors - with two of us being photographers: Ashley is a Philadelphia photographer with a detail-oriented, editorial style and Petronella is a New York photographer specializing in vivid, authentic multicultural love and life stories. Together with Tonia, a Delaware-based wedding planner and floral designer who creates and celebrates the details of a love story, we brainstormed together, pushing each other's creativity and expectations to execute our plan. What Tonia and Petronella didn't realize was how hard a decision it was for Ashley to come. Simply being open enough to meeting (new!) industry friends and stretching her budget to jump on a plane for her first solo trip was Ashley's big "Be Brave" moment!

Another "Be Brave" challenge was finding a wedding dress while staying at the Eau Palm Beach resort without a car. We first spotted the ice blue gown at the Masquerade-themed dinner; the silk dupioni gown stole the spotlight of the runway. Petronella didn't waste a moment in taking her "Be Brave" challenge: asking if the dress from Bacio Bacio bridal salon could be used and inviting Team Beauti as our makeup artist.

While this was all taking place, ideas were still coming together for remaining elements. We sought out and got inspiration for the shoot from other participants, including menus from Natural Impressions Designs, chargers from A Chair Affair, custom cocktail sfrom Pulp Pours, and repurposing flowers from earlier events in the week. Petronella and Tonia met our bride model, Ana, at a previous ISSE. Being from the same market and after getting to know him and his philosophy a bit better in Palm Beach, Tonia knew that she wanted to develop a business relationship with Dana of Desserts by Dana. Her "Be Brave" moment came in asking him to trust us enough to place his beautiful fondant creation





directly in the path of the crashing waves. These “Be Brave” moments allowed us to create this lovely beach bridal styled shoot together with this wonderful team, and we hope to inspire others by sharing these 5 lessons we learned from our experience:

Lesson #1: Be brave. Step out of your comfort zone. Make a choice to say “yes” to the next challenge. We each made the decision to abandon sleep, take risks, and jump the hurdles to create an exceptional shoot. We continue to commit to the lifestyle of being a brave entrepreneur!

Lesson #2: Never be afraid to ask for the help you need. People will surprise you with their generosity! When someone says “no,” sometimes the message that we need to hear is “not now” or “there is something better ahead.”

Lesson #3: Don’t just “network” -- build a network with professionals who share your passion, commitment, and love to have fun. By sharing your time with others who share your values and business ethic, you will be challenged to achieve your goals and inspired to fight through your struggles.

28 Lesson #4: It’s okay to make business a “personal thing.” Although you should always run your business with your head, don’t hold yourself back from pouring your heart into your business relationships. Investing yourself personally into your networking creates trust, which can evolve into enduring friendships that are invaluable through the challenges of entrepreneurship.

Lesson #5: Your best ally may be your “competition.” No one will understand your business or your experience like someone who is on a similar path in life.

credits

Photography: Petronella Photography – www.bypetronella.com
 Photography: Ashley Gerrity Photography – www.ashleygerrityphotography.com
 Planning & Floral Design: Aribella Events – www.aribellaevents.com
 Venue: Eau Palm Beach Resort – www.eaupalmbeach.com
 Model: Ana Trujillo
 Bridal Salon: Bacio Bacio – www.baciobacio.com
 Wedding Dress: Romona Keveza – www.romonakeveza.com
 Wedding Veil: Boutique deVoile – www.boutiquedevoile.com
 Makeup: Team Beauti – www.teambeauti.com
 Cake: Desserts by Dana – www.dessertsbydana.com
 Event Rentals: A Chair Affair – www.chairaffairrentals.com
 Stationery: Natural Impression Design – www.naturalimpressiondesign.com
 Jewelry: J Crew – www.jcrew.com
 Cocktail Drink: Pulp Catering – www.pulpcatering.com



So what happened after the shoot? Did we vow never to work together again? Actually, quite the opposite; after spending 3 days laughing, crying, sharing heartfelt stories into the wee hours of the morning, and waking up to shoot the final details in our pajamas before catching return flights, ultimately each of us walked away stronger - in our friendships with each other, our businesses, and our lives. Ashley and Petronella worked together on editing; each bringing a distinct personality and style, and as a result, we were able to create a richer, more diverse series of images, playing off of each other’s strengths. Petronella expertly directed the submission process, resulting in the shoot being picked up by Burnett’s Boards, one of the top ten wedding blogs. Beyond the shoot, we’ve been able to support and share business insights with each other. We still get together and hold each other accountable with regular Skype chats and even text messages. Tonia and Ashley recently worked on a shoot together that garnered the cover for “Wedding Planner Magazine” and Petronella and Tonia are working on the plans for another shoot. Even working together to write this article proved to be, yet again, another wonderful collaboration.

All in all, this stylized bridal shoot proved to be an invaluable lesson in Being Brave, collaborating to make things happen and inspiring others along the way.

