

# Bachelorettes Pop Question—for Free Swag

Businesses are mixed about being a party to brides-to-be seeking gratis stuff

By MEGAN GRAHAM

Brides-to-be are flooding brands with requests for free swag for bachelorette parties, leaving some small businesses struggling to keep up.

The future brides are sharing lists of contacts at companies and scripts to follow when emailing them. They post “haul” videos if they succeed, sometimes accompanied by the phrasing that worked, and bemoan the lack of engagement if nobody answers.

A woman snaps shut her laptop in one TikTok from July, accompanied by a Taylor Swift song and the on-screen text, “Me when I’ve [spent] hours emailing over 200+ companies for my bachelorette and not one has responded.”

In the caption below the video, she adds: “LMK what brands I should be contacting!!”

But the TikToks are flying in both directions, with frustrated small businesses posting videos to complain about the volume of requests.

Asking brands for bachelorette “PR” packages has become common in recent years

as influencer culture mingled with wedding conversations in social media.

And many brands are happy to oblige. Bare Bones, which makes bone broth and collagen-infused drink mixes, started noticing an influx in requests late last year.

“It’s starting to snowball,” co-founder and Chief Executive Katherine Harvey recalled a company staffer warning. “Do we have a budget for this? Is there a cap on how many of these I can say yes to? What are the criteria for saying yes?”

The company implemented a more formal process in time to handle more than 300 requests this year so far. It approved them all, distributing \$2,600 of products before shipping.

Harvey calls it a “win-win.” “You’re helping the bride make the event more affordable, and you’re getting really authentic brand recognition and awareness,” Harvey said.

“And for us, the best form of marketing is trial, getting our product into people’s mouths so they can experience it.”

But some small brands can’t consider every ask they receive, much less say yes to them all.

“I don’t think a lot of people realize that for a lot of brands that they’re sending these emails to are small

teams, and every email takes up time,” said Sarah Moret, founder and CEO of deodorant and body-care product company Curie. “Also, we can’t afford to send tens of thousands of mini deodorants to everybody, especially when a lot of them aren’t even paying customers.”

Some bachelorette planners are using ChatGPT to automate outreach or failing to research their targets.

Bulk Butter, which sells nut butters in flavors like Oreo Delight and Twixie Sticks, has gotten donation requests for both dairy and body butter.

“They’re like, ‘I love your product. I use it every single day. It’s so hydrating and nourishing for my skin,’ said founder and CEO Emily Koltermann. “These comments give me a good laugh, knowing they really haven’t tried Bulk Butter.”

Koltermann temporarily made her business email less accessible from the company’s website after she started receiving hundreds of bridal PR inquiries weekly this spring.

“The tone of requests can definitely feel a little bit entitled, because the ask is positioned as they’re doing the brand a favor,” she said. “But what’s really the return on investment?”

Koltermann replies to each request with congratulations



Bare Bones sees bachelorette parties as a great way to get people to sample the product.

for the bride and a discount code.

Weber’s Resupply, an outdoors-focused clothing company, received so many form emails still addressed to “[insert business here]” that it made a filter to screen them

out, according to founder Meredith Weber.

Weber has given feedback on social media. One woman asked for 15 free Aspen-themed sweaters for her bachelorette party, she said on TikTok this March.

“Ma’am, if you can afford an Aspen bachelorette trip, you can afford a ski sweater from my shop,” Weber said in the video.

Some brides-to-be trying to participate in the trend are more careful with their asks.

“I had seen, obviously, the trend on TikTok, of everyone reaching out to these companies, and they were making Excel spreadsheets and just asking anyone and everyone,” said Carissa Mira, a Michigan-based accounting administrator with about 1,500 TikTok followers.

Mira said she made sure to carefully tailor her requests. At her bachelorette party this month, she was able to give her bridesmaids hydration packets from Waterboy, Sweet Chaos popcorn, Bare Bones fruit-punch mix and a slew of other free products.

“I definitely did go through some of the lists that I did come across, but a lot of them were either huge, huge companies that I just didn’t honestly expect a response from, or companies that were really small that I just felt wrong to

be like, ‘Send me free stuff,’” she said.

But the requests may have gone too far for many.

Dave Maffei, founder of cookie company Halfsies, generated headlines last year after putting an influencer on blast for seeking free bachelorette-party treats despite having a small following.

“We were super, super slow, and I was like, I don’t know if we’re gonna last another year,” Maffei said. “And we started getting these bachelorette requests.”

The messages always claimed they loved the product, but never came from existing customers as far as he could tell.

And even influencers with big followings don’t drive as much business for Halfsies as they used to. The company has provided cookies for large influencers’ baby showers and other events, but they don’t stand out any more when they are surrounded by products from a dozen other brands.

“We get nothing from that,” Maffei said.

So a sales lift from 15 posts by a bride-to-be with 300 followers, he added, is “not gonna happen.”

Megan Graham writes for CMO Today at The Wall Street Journal.

# LeoLabs Pivots to Defense Tech to Help More Countries Assess Threats in Space

By MARC VARTABEDIAN

Radar developer LeoLabs didn’t set out to become a defense-tech startup.

Founded in 2016 and backed by venture firms including Insight Partners and Airbus Ventures, LeoLabs offered detailed

tracking of objects in low Earth orbit, including satellites and space debris.

But about a year ago, the Menlo Park, Calif.-based company awoke to the suddenly hot defense-tech market and pivoted toward more military functions, such as tracking

spy satellites launched by Western adversaries like China and Russia. Revenue quickly surged as the U.S. and its allies sought greater visibility into Earth’s low orbit in the face of mounting threats. LeoLabs offers countries both physical radar systems and ac-

cess to analytics to assess those threats.

Venture investors have responded, said Chief Executive Tony Frazier. He is fielding interest from investors drawn to LeoLabs’ ability to offer international customers greater control of their own radar systems—which the company might parlay into a fresh financing, Frazier said.

The Wall Street Journal spoke with Frazier about the evolving defense-tech sector and investor enthusiasm for the niche. The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

**WSJ: Can you describe how geopolitics are affecting the market you operate in?**

**FRAZIER:** There’s increased adversarial activity in space. Between Russia, China, North Korea and Iran, there’s more launches and payloads that introduce more risk in space to the U.S. and its allies around the world.

We own and operate our radar network with systems on the ground that are looking up in space that can detect, track and characterize those objects in order to equip decision-makers with the information they need to respond. We built an analytics platform and our customers today subscribe to access



CEO Tony Frazier says venture investors have responded.

our data as a service.

**WSJ: How has countries’ focus on building out sovereign ecosystems affected demand?**

**FRAZIER:** What we’re seeing now is that a number of countries that we work with want to build sovereign capabilities where they have more control over that specific sensor. And they’re still able to participate in the broader analytics network. They’re interested in fielding a radar that they can control more directly.

That’s really exciting and we’ve been introducing new products. We work closely with the U.S. government, but the majority of our revenue is international. We booked over \$50 million of new awards for the company, and grew the revenue 140% year over year. This year we’re targeting sus-

tained growth north of the 40% or 50% range.

**WSJ: How are venture investors responding?**

**FRAZIER:** We’re seeing a ton of interest as we’ve evolved our focus from being just a space-tech company to more of a defense-tech company. There has been strong support for raising capital from investors based in countries that are U.S. allies. We’re going to be more active this fall in getting in front of key investor stakeholders in this ecosystem. Based on the inbound interest in the company, we might contemplate a potential Series C fundraise in the future. We’ve raised about \$140 million through Series B.

Marc Vartabedian writes for WSJ Pro’s Venture Capital team.

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A space-radar system built by LeoLabs in the province of Guanacaste, Costa Rica.

## Filtronic Gets New SpaceX Contract

By ELENA VARDON

**Filtronic** signed a \$62.5 million contract with Elon Musk’s SpaceX, its single largest order to date.

The U.K. defense and aerospace telecom-equipment maker on Tuesday said that the order is for the supply of

its proprietary gallium nitride E-band product, which enhances low-Earth-orbit satellite connectivity as it delivers more than double the output power of its existing gallium arsenide product line.

The order is set to boost Filtronic’s revenue in fiscal

2027—when the first production units of the contract will be shipped—and in the fiscal year ending May 31, 2028, the London-listed group said.

The deal has been placed under the recently expanded framework of the strategic partnership between the two companies, Filtronic added.