

Why hire a wedding planner?

When couples announce their engagement, naturally there is an abundance of joy and excitement not only from the new bridal couple, but also from their families and friends. People jump in with offers of help to find the right venue, the right photographer, the right florist. And then there is the internet to fill in the gaps, with recommendations and reviews, quick quotes and instant ideas. It's normal, at this stage, for the happy couple to feel that planning the perfect wedding will be a breeze in the park!

Reality steps in

A wedding is a momentous event and to cover every aspect takes an extensive amount of your time and effort. It can be costly too, with all the research requiring phone calls, driving to venues to check suitability or visiting vendors to peruse portfolios. This overload of options can lead to confusion that may make you question your choices. Are the services reliable? How well will they work together as a team? Can they really deliver my dream wedding? There are countless decisions to be made and this is all the more daunting for those who are inexperienced at putting together such a big event. Sometimes one of the best decisions a couple can make is to hire a professional wedding planner. Wedding planners are no longer just for those with unlimited budgets; they have become indispensable today for many couples who find their services well worth the expense, particularly for those with demanding jobs and little time to spare. A professional wedding planner will guide you towards the right choices. How? It takes years of experience to know who is good and who should be avoided and it takes know-how to recognise which suppliers will suit your style and personality.

What you can expect from a wedding planner?

A talented wedding planner will help you conceptualise your wedding. She/he will be able to refine your ideas whether you are having a formal evening affair or a garden luncheon. Your colour scheme and theme will inform many of the discussions as you and your consultant brainstorm ideas. You will remain in control but you'll be steered through the planning maze, leaving you to make the final decisions.

An experienced wedding planner will have an extensive list of service providers to draw from and have cultivated relationships with them all. From the hundreds available, they will be able to find the right combination of professionals that will work together seamlessly and make best use of your budget. Your planner should be able to propose a small number of fantastic options and explain candidly, why this is right for you.

A good wedding planner will instill confidence in you and keep everything running smoothly and to plan with the minimum of fuss, taking away the stress but not the excitement. They will advise you on proper etiquette and help deal with important details such as floor plans and seating arrangements so that every piece falls into place just like a perfect jigsaw puzzle.

How to choose

- Your planner should be upfront about whether your budget is in line with your vision. Only an experienced wedding planner will know this.
- Always find out how long the wedding planner has been in the industry for and what type of weddings they have planned and managed.
- Ask questions about why they work in the industry. This should help you gauge their level of enthusiasm. Obviously, they need to think about the bottom line but are they also thinking about you?
- A wedding planner is there to help you realise your dream so choose someone you feel will listen carefully to your ideas and concerns. Instinct will tell you if they are genuine or simply paying lip service to secure the booking.
- Ask for references and follow through on them, in particular ask for references from couples that had a wedding style that is similar to yours.
- Find out if all supplier quotations will be seen by you, or will only be included in the wedding planner's statement of account. If you prefer transparency, ask for it. We at Serene Bride Weddings feel this is important as wedding costs can rise and every couple should be treated with honesty and clarity.
- Remember, the key to great wedding planning is good rapport and a high level of trust.

Your wedding day

Perhaps the most important role a wedding planner can play is in orchestrating the day itself. Besides co-coordinating the transformation of the venue to a place of class and beauty, your planner will be busy calming nerves, placing cards on seats, gifts on tables, finding lost guests and getting them to the right place. They will check that the flowers and food are as ordered and manage all the formalities from the grand entrance to the cutting of the cake.

Some couples hire wedding planners to help only on the day as their 'Wedding Day Director'. If you prefer not to hire a wedding planner for the entire process, you may want to consider asking a consultant to step in for the last few weeks leading up to your big day. The additional time beforehand allows for a smoother handover, ensuring that the Wedding Day Director fully understands your vision and gets to meet your chosen suppliers, if not previously known to them. This creates a better work environment for your team, which in turn should mean that you feel more relaxed and comfortable.

With the logistics taken care of, the wedding couple, their family and friends are free to focus solely on celebrating and enjoying the happy occasion.

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