

Why Use A Wedding Planner?

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Introduction

The words Wedding Planner, Wedding Designer, Wedding Coordinator or Wedding Consultant will conjure up all sorts of images in a bride's head. In this short paper I aim to dispel one or two preconceived popular myths about the task of planning weddings.

What is a Wedding Planner?

Essentially, a Wedding Planner is a professional whose expertise and contacts can turn your wedding into a day of absolute perfection. He or she is the lynch pin for your event; the one who will locate the services and suppliers you require; who will negotiate contracts; mediate and manage the various companies involved in your day and ensure that everything runs like clock work.

Planning weddings is indeed great fun. However, as with any other job in this world it is not all plain sailing. Planning a wedding with the expectation that it will be a day to eclipse all others can take an unbelievable amount of time and effort, to say nothing of the stress and worry! There are ups and downs, periods of great joy and times of immense stress and pressure. Weddings are events that are dreamt about – some brides have imagined walking down the aisle in a pure white dress and a tiara for 30 years or more! It is certainly a challenge unlike any others you may have come across before. And when you add both work and a hectic, pre-wedding social life to the equation, often the feat seems monumental. It is an honour not to be taken lightly.

Why use a Wedding Planner?

Nowadays, with so much to do and such relatively little time to do it, employing a professional wedding consultancy is increasingly seen as a sensible way of ensuring a stress-free engagement and potentially flawless wedding. In the USA it is the norm: the majority of couples getting married use a Wedding Planner. It is a huge industry providing couples with an invaluable service during a period in their lives when stress and worry should be banished and time is of the essence.

Slowly but surely couples in the UK are waking up to the realisation that a Wedding Planner is not a luxury reserved for the rich and famous. Nowadays a good Planner is just as familiar with organising a small and intimate family gathering of 12 as an extravagant party of 500 or more. Using their expert knowledge of the industry together with extensive databases and links to leading suppliers a Planner will have the foundations on which to build a perfect wedding. They will give you unfettered access to every supplier in the country that fulfilling your requirements. Unless otherwise instructed, their priorities lie solely with the couple, their wedding objectives and the all important budget. And when you find a Planner whom you trust and feel comfortable with, you may be sure that these elements will be managed wisely.

Wedding Planner Skills

Wedding Planners are expected to be versatile, knowledgeable and resourceful. It is their job to assist both the bride and groom in the run up to the Big Day. On the day itself, it is the Bride who is queen – the Planner is there to personally assist.

Wedding Planners will bear the brunt of the daily chores, plan and manage the event from behind the scenes, thereby giving couples valuable time to relax and enjoy their engagement and look forward to their dream wedding. One should be able to rely on them for support as advisors, coordinators, supervisors, mediators, managers and financial advisors.

The Planning Process

As with most wedding consultancies, at Absolute Perfection we will usually start off by sitting down with the couple in order to learn exactly how the clients envisage their wedding day developing, from the moment they wake in the morning to the time they depart the party amid an explosion of fireworks at the end of the night. Although we often see the groom shying away from the initial planning process, we always try to encourage his input. It is vital to try to get him 'on board' as early as possible, for you can be sure that 2-3 months down the line – when many of the major decisions have been taken - he will begin to show an interest and realise that maybe this wedding lark isn't as dull as he had at first expected! Regret is a terrible thing and something that we only learn about with hindsight!

Once the all important Wedding Plan or Brief has been devised, it is the Consultant's job to get the ball rolling and start locating the suitable suppliers and services. This can be a daunting task but they should have great industry connections and will be able to provide you with the assistance you require. At this time it is imperative that constant liaison be maintained between the Planner and the couple. Although the Planner will locate the relevant suppliers and offer knowledgeable guidance and advice, the choice as to which companies to use will usually be decided by the couple. There should not be any pressure exerted by a Consultant at this time. If you do feel pressured, one may assume that the Planner may be on commission from the said supplier, so be insistent and remind your Planner that their role is to assist, not to decide!

Once all the suppliers have been selected, the budgets are met and timelines have been finalised, it is usual for the Planner to assist with the rehearsal and then oversee the wedding day to make sure the needs of the bride, groom and wedding party are met.

"Can I Justify the Added Luxury of a Wedding Planner?"

Believe it or not a Planner can often save you money. Sometimes they can negotiate special discounts with certain suppliers which will then be passed on to you. Alternatively, if a discount is not attainable, they can source you a leading supplier that offers a high quality service at a competitive price. Uniquely, Absolute Perfection will attempt to establish 3 budgets with you.

- The first will be the absolute maximum you are prepared to pay for the whole wedding.
- The second is the absolute maximum you are prepared to invest in a specific service or supplier - £1,000 for a cake for instance.
- The third relates to a lesser figure that you would be happy to pay for a specific service or supplier – say you have set a £1,000 cake budget, but will be content to spend £750 if at all possible for a cake of similar quality. This essentially provides the Planner with a valuable target to aim for.

Wedding Planner Fees

Price structures are set according to the couple's needs and since every wedding is unique, it is often the case that so too are the Wedding Planner's fees.

- As a 'rule of thumb,' full coordination of the entire event is usually charged a portion of the wedding budget. Percentages vary from consultancy to consultancy but are usually somewhere between 7-15%. Minimum fees are usually applicable.
- A bride that requires her Consultant to assist on the day itself is usually charged a set rate or hourly fee. Again fees vary from company to company and sometimes from season to season. As an approximation, one would expect to pay anything from £300 upwards for a reasonable Coordinator on the day of the wedding.
- Alternatively, you will find that there are various packages for couples that have specific sourcing and/or contract negotiation needs. For this service you may be charged either a fixed rate or a percentage of the specific budget allocated to the said service - for example, if you have set aside £2,000 for a videographer, the Planner's fee could be 10% or £200. Again, fees fluctuate from Planner to Planner but ultimately the amount you pay will reflect the amount of time and effort spent dealing with your personal requirements. It will also depend upon how long the Consultant has been in business – often those new to the industry need to lower prices in order to attract business. Uniquely at Absolute Perfection, our fees depend on the level of experience of the particular Consultant assigned to your wedding.
- Other services you may find on offer include assistance in the 4 week run-up to the Big Day, thereby managing any last minute stresses and minor problems that so often arise. Alternatively they can deal with invitations and RSVPs or even source the honeymoon. You will find that just about anything and everything is possible. You are only limited by your imagination and of course the budget! The first of which is flexible and can be broadened with some tips and advice from your Planner, if you so wish. The latter should in

most cases be firmly adhered to. However, at Absolute Perfection we will advise you to allow yourself a backup allowance of up to 10% of the budget, to cover any unforeseen circumstances and situations along the way. The final finishing touches and last minute attention to detail can make the difference between a great wedding and an average wedding and these areas are often inadequately accounted for when budgets are initially established.

Conclusion

To summarise, Wedding Planners exist to assist you in your endeavour to organise your wedding. Whatever it is that you require - no matter how small and insignificant or extravagant and shocking it may be – it is their job to help to make your wedding day happen exactly the way you want it.

Anything and everything is indeed possible. It's your day after all.

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