

THE GREAT WEDDING PLANNER

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1.0 THINGS TO BE TAKEN CARE OF BEFORE YOU BOOK ANYTHING

Before you start making an arrangement, decide whether you have a fixed budget to be followed or not. Since most of the wedding services providers have the primary aim of making money, this can help you decide the one that fits best within your budget. When it comes to deciding the budget, be practical. Though it's the most memorable day of your life you would not wish to go broke making preparations for it. In case you wish to spend more money on a particular area, try and cut down the cost for something else.

1.1 MAKING A GUEST LIST

For deciding your budget you first need to prepare a guest list. This will help you make the initial important decisions easily. So, decide the number of guests you will wish to have on your wedding. This will also be helpful while deciding the venue, as it must be spacious enough. If you have a tight budget, you can prepare a succinct list of guests by inviting only close family members and friends. You can categorize them, such as those who are important in your life, friends and work colleagues that you still meet and stay in touch with or people you have met recently. You can keep this list with you and update it as and when you wish.

1.2 DECIDING THE BUDGET

Most of your budget is spent on food and beverages. You can bring this cost down with the help of sensible venue selection, good planning and negotiation skills. Your decided cost for food and beverages may fluctuate a little. You can avail the assistance of a wedding planner for this, if you have a restricted budget. This will remove your stress and will ensure the best value of your money.

2.0 WHAT IS TO BE DONE NEXT

After you have decided your budget, you can move ahead to start planning your day. First and foremost decide on the venue and secure it. Make sure it is available on the required date and time. Don't leave this task for the last minute as some venues are booked as advanced one or two years ahead! So, start as soon as possible. Finalizing the venue also depends on how flexible you can be with date and type of venue. Also, make sure that you get the important information such as the venue's opening

and closing time, licensing and suitability for your use, from the venue providers. You should have all the finer details with you.

Decide upon the important issues such as do you want to keep your wedding a formal or a casual event. Also, decide if you want it to be strictly for adults or you want to invite children as well. If you want fireworks, photographs in a beautiful setting, etc. plan it before hand. If your wedding is a religious ceremony, remember that different clergy have different ways of doing the things.

3.0 MAKE NEGOTIATIONS

Wedding is an expensive affair. But you can plan a perfect wedding within your budget if you have the skill to negotiate. Most of the wedding services suppliers have the primary motive of making money; hence, they capitalize on the emotional decisions made by the couple. It is usual for them to inflate their fees during the wedding season. Be it venue, transportation, food and beverages, flowers, linen or any other thing, make sure you negotiate and make a smart decision. You can save a lot on food and beverages and venue by making negotiations and by preparing a guest list. A wedding planner can also be of great help when it comes to making negotiations with the wedding service providers.

3.1 DECIDING THE VENUE

While deciding the venue, one must remember that if you are finalizing an exclusive venue you are sure to be charged with a hefty amount. This is so because they insist on their own caterers and most of the time they are also unwilling to negotiate. So, until and unless they are the only options left you should prefer not to give the upper hand to exclusive venues. For other venues, such as hotels, there is more scope for negotiation.

Bear in mind that though the services that are offered in packages sound tempting, most of the time a very little of it is complementary. Also, these packages may contain services you do not want along with the essential services that you have asked for. Some of the venues offer you package prices which include the mark up charge on a minimum number of guests. Such packages can leave a hole in your pocket, as a few guests more or less than the minimum number of guests decided will lead you to pay inflated amount to the venue providers.

So, in order to make a better and wise decision, explore all the services that are being offered by the venue. Instead of getting discounts you might find something that will offer good value for your money. This is one domain where a wedding planner is of great help. Since you may not have much information about hospitality management, hiring a professional can help you save money by making smart deals.

3.2 DECIDING THE CATERING SERVICES

Some of the venues allow you to use an outside catering service. This will enable you to have a huge variety of choice over your menu. This will also provide you with choice of style of service and reasonable cost. You can talk to the caterers for menu tasting in order to ensure food quality and presentation. Having an outside caterer is very beneficial as it can have positive cost implications.

The caterers will also assist you with the style of chairs, linen and equipment, such as glassware, refrigeration, etc. that you want. But since there is no one size that fits all, you will be required to make certain decisions and understand what you are paying for and what all need to be arranged from someone else. You must pay attention to the quotes of both the marquee companies and caterers, as there is generally a cross over between them. These details need to be attended to carefully.

3.2.1 EQUIPMENTS REQUIRED

If you are availing the service from an outside caterer, your equipment costs gets greatly influenced by your menu. Make sure that most of your catering budget does not get used on plate ware alone. If presentation is important for you, make a few exceptions or else keep it as simple as possible. Most of the caterers do not charge corkage, with regard to your own purchased wine. However, they do charge a small fee for providing the glassware and service. In case your caterer does not provide you with refrigeration, you need to hire fridges in order to keep the wine chill.

3.2.2 ARRANGING LINEN

A number of caterers order the linen for your or will provide their own to you on hire. While in some cases you need to arrange it from somewhere else. If your caterer is providing you with linen they will charge a handling fee. This can make it an expensive deal as compared to going directly to the hire companies. If you go to a linen supplier, you will have plenty of

beautiful choices for linen. You can get these lovely linens from them at a cheaper price as compared to white linen provided by your caterer. This can leave a massive impact on the look of your wedding.

3.3 FOOD AND BEVERAGES

Your budget is likely to be affected by the style and quality of food that you choose for your wedding. While making the decision about the menu consider important aspects, such as the duration of time for which the guests will be with you and what meals you should sensibly provide. In beverages, generally wine is offered as a package. There are plenty of ways in which the suppliers try to earn extra money; a professional wedding planner can save you from being duped as they have the strength to get the most added values for their clients. Have menu and wine tasting; also ensure that you don’t get charged for it, if you subsequently book anything.

3.4 BAR ARRANGEMENTS

Most of the licensed premises have their own bar. Also, in such a scenario there is little chance for negotiating on drink and corkage prices. However, an outside bar will be required in a marquee. At a reasonable extra cost, you can ask your caterer to create a make shift bar and offer your own drink. In case you want a more professional service, you can talk to outside bar companies who specialize in providing bar services to non licensed event venues.

3.5 ARRANGEMENT FOR MARQUEE

Marquees are available in a number of shapes and sizes. Thus, they can vary in cost. It is not necessary that the cheapest is the best quote. Before you make the purchase, ask the suppliers to show images of the marquee you are getting. The marquee does not include lining, sashes, lighting flooring, staging and dance floors. These are extras. Also, you must have a generator and portable toilet near the site where you will be pitching the marquee. The cost for tables, chairs and other furniture will also be quoted by the marquee company.

3.6 LIGHTING ARRANGEMENTS

Having plenty of lighting can leave a good impact on your wedding. If you want more lightning in your wedding and not flowers, you can have a slight change in your flower budget.

3.7 TYPES OF WEDDING PLANNERS

After having listed the benefits of hiring a wedding planner in so many domains, you might be considering this option. If so, then I must tell you that there are four types of planners as enlisted below.

3.7.1 LOCAL COTTAGE INDUSTRY PLANNERS

People in local community who plan wedding as a part time business can be approached. They are usually available at a low price but they lack much experience.

3.7.2 WEDDING SUPPLIERS THAT OFFER WEDDING COORDINATION

In a way to increase revenue by selling more to their wedding clients, some wedding suppliers, offer wedding planning as a side line to their main service. Avail these services only if they are worth the extra spend.

3.7.3 COORDINATORS AVAILABLE ON VENUE

Many venues have wedding coordinators. They do not charge you for their assistance as it is already included in the venue cost. They usually coordinate between the different suppliers on the venue and manage the proceedings.

3.7.4 INDEPENDENT WEDDING PLANNERS

Independent wedding planners are very reputable and provide you with best possible service. They will consult with you in depth and make sure that you get the best services within your budget. An independent wedding planner works solely in your best interest. They are skilled in making negotiations, availing discounts and bonuses organizing the things, etc. they provide you with comprehensive service.

4.0 AVAILING INSURANCE

If you have decided the date and venue of the wedding, then the next important thing is insurance. Since wedding is a very expensive affair, it is a wise decision to get it insured. Wedding planners can be of help here too, as they can get negotiated discounts with insurers for their clients.

5.0 PLANNING HONEYMOON

While planning the wedding, book your honeymoon as well. One of the rising trends is that the guests, instead of giving gifts to the couple, contribute towards their honeymoon. This honeymoon gift management service is offered by a number of travel agents. You can avail this service or can plan it on your own.

6.0 SOME OTHER THINGS TO BE CONSIDERED

When you are done with venue booking negotiations, you are left with plenty of time. Utilize this time to read magazines and consult your wedding planner about the colour schemes, themes, flowers, decorations, tableware, favours, stationary, music, dress and rings etc. book your supplies and services well in advance. Also, remember to negotiate the price. However, if the wedding season is at its peak, there is little scope for any negotiations.

6.1 SELECTING A FLORIST

Selecting the flowers for your wedding is the most enjoyable aspect. Since there are a huge variety of flowers and almost all of them are now available throughout the year, this job can turn a little daunting unless you are certain about your choice.

Here are certain tips discussed in order to ensure that you get the best from your florist for your wedding day. Be practical when it comes to your budget for flowers. Ensure that you do not spend more than 10% of it on ceremony, venue and personal flowers. Depending on the time of the year when your wedding is taking place, your florist will be able to advise you on the best possible flowers.

If you have different venues for wedding and reception, it is futile to spend a fortune on flowers. Use of multi-purpose arrangements that can be moved to different areas is a more cost effective option. Also you can ask the florist for samples. The florists must also be open and honest; they must be willing to tell you why they are charge what they charge.

6.2 SELECTING A PHOTOGRAPHER

You must appreciate the complicated science behind taking photographs. Photographs of the wedding ceremony are the souvenirs of the most memorable day of the couple’s life. The wedding venue can greatly affect the tone and balance of your photographs. So, when it comes to selecting the wedding photographer you must be realistic about your expectations. Make sure your photographer gets to visit the venue before the wedding so that he can decide upon certain angles and shots that will look good in your wedding album.

You can ask the photographer about the portfolio or some other samples to view his quality of work. Also, you must be aware what all is included and not included in the package. High price does not always ensure quality. Make sure you hire an experienced photographer who will deliver quality service. The personality of the photographer, his quality of work and the type of photographs you want will play a vital role in finalizing the photographer.

6.3 SELECTING A VIDEOGRAPHER

In the past few years, wedding videography has come a long way. It is now an art in itself and a number of companies are now offering this service. You can ask the videographers to show you some sample of their work when you approach them. Do not go by price, only is the quality of the work is good then ask them further about their services. Since making wedding videos is an expensive business which requires expensive equipments and skilled labor, it is bound to be a little expensive. In order to make a smart deal, ensure that you compare the quotes and quality of a few companies and then select the most suitable one. It

has generally been seen that the full time filmmakers are the bets videographers. Since wedding film is the most priced memento of that day, make sure you get the best service from someone who has knowledge about this genre inside and out.

Since one camera is not sufficient to capture everything, ask the company how many cameras will be used. Two cameras permits better shots and produce varied and creative film. You can enquire them about the format in which the film will be shot and supplied and the type of music that will accompany for film. Make sure that your videographer has the required copyright licenses. This will ensure that he can record any copyright material that gets captured on the film during the ceremony.

6.4 SELECTING A WEDDING DRESS

There are three different types of brides: Princes Bride, Fashion Bride and Practical Bride.

6.4.1 DRESS FOR PRINCESS BRIDE

If dress is of immense importance to you and you want it to be the dress of your dream then you are bound to spend a hefty amount for it. You can go through bridal magazines for ideas and can then go for shopping. You are likely to come across offers that offer best value for you money. If you want the dress especially made for you then ensure that you give your designer a six months notice.

6.4.2 DRESS FOR FASHION BRIDE

If you are a fashion bride then the fabric, flow, color and label of your dress will matter to you. Such a dress can cost you a fortune. Go through wedding dress magazines and visit wedding shows to decide on a particular style. Once you have decided the style make some appointments and try them. After finalizing the dress, book it and give your designer a minimum period of six months to prepare it. Since, the designer can not give you an accurate date to collect your dress; a six month period is enough for the purpose.

6.4.3 DRESS FOR PRACTICAL BRIDE

If you are a bride who does not want to spend much money on the dress since you have to wear it only once, then you are a Practical Bride. You want your dress to be comfortable rather than being an expensive and stylish one. Some of the mediums that enable you to search for a value dress include Bridal Stocklist, Ebay, etc. Stocklist can offer you with wedding dresses on

hire. They also provide you with second-hand wedding dresses. You can select a dress that can be easily adapted for reuse. You can purchase a value bridal dress and can get it altered to look new and amazing.

One of the most special purchases is that of your wedding dress. It has something magical about itself and the feeling it gives you when you wear it and first catch your reflection in the mirror is pure romance. Since there are plenty of options to choose from, it’s hard to keep your feet on ground. However, even though you have a certain style in your mind make sure you buy only the one that suits you. If your wedding dress reflects your personality and compliments your body then you are bound to feel comfortable and confident in it.

Also, keep in mind the time of the year and location of your wedding when deciding the wedding dress. No bride will wish to look clumsy and uncomfortable. Moreover, make sure you decide upon the dress that is appropriate for your age. A designer can make the best dress for you depending on your body shape and proportions. Since there are many versions of white, cream, ivory, oyster and champagne, you have plenty of colors to choose from. The color of your wedding dress must compliment your own coloring. Ensure that the dress fits you well. It should neither be too tight nor too loose.

If you can avail the service from a bridal boutique, then it is even better as they provide you with space, time and honest helpful assistance. Also, do not pressurize your self. Give yourself some time, visit a few shops and then decide on the best choice. Also, you can keep a digital camera with you while shopping. When you try a particular dress, you can take a few shots of yourself from different angles to examine how you will look to others. This will also ensure that you get the close up details which will be helpful while comparing a few options.

7.0 PROPER MANAGEMENT

7.1 BEFORE THE EVENT

The following things need to be taken care of prior to the event:

7.1.1 INVITATIONS AND OTHER PARAPHERNALIA

You must decide upon the guest list at least four months prior to your wedding. This will ensure all the invitation cards get ordered and printed on time. Also, this will make sure that everyone in your guest list receives the invitation card at least three

months before your wedding. You can make it done sooner, if you wish. It is good for the guests get a three month prior notice as it will enable them to save money in order to attend your wedding, take time off work to attend the ceremony and arrange childcare. Also, if your guests are coming from different state or country, it is beneficial for them to book tickets in advance.

You must also be prepared with the list of stationary that you will require. This stationary includes order of service, menus, place cards, thank you cards, etc. It will ensure that they too are printed and delivered to you on time.

7.1.2 FINAL VERIFICATIONS

Since you have made the arrangements well in advance, one month prior to the wedding day make sure that all the suppliers are still trading and confirm your bookings. It is important to make final verifications because businesses do go bankrupt or close without warning. Also, some administrative errors may occur which can lead to double booking or incorrect entry. So, verification will ensure that you have the supplies booked and if there is any error amendments can be made. However, good wedding planners use reputable and regular suppliers. This reduces the possibility of anything going wrong. Since your caterers will require the final numbers up to at least two weeks prior to the wedding, you need to chase outstanding RSVP.

7.1.3 VENUE TOUR

To ensure that you reach the venue on time, draw up or print off the maps to the venue by road and by public transport. If maps are not available then you should write down the instructions clearly. These should be sent along with the invites. This is helpful for guests as well, especially those coming from a different state or country. For the ease of the guests you must also provide them with the details of accommodation available, transport service, etc.

If you wish you can even include the information with regard to your gift list. Many people feel uncomfortable about this. However, if you do not do so, you might leave your guests confused and uncomfortable. Try not to ask for cash. But if you do ask for it ask it in form of a contribution towards something. For example, a few guests can contribute and sponsor your honeymoon.

Also, plan a schedule which will have the day’s events documented in it with times and who is to action what. This will include the venue coordinator, best man, bridesmaid, usher, videographer, photographer, your planner, master of ceremonies, etc.

7.1.4 OTHER ESSENTIAL THINGS TO BE CONSIDERED

The Bride may wish to plan a route to enter the ceremony without being seen by your guests before your own entry. Ensure such entry for her. Have arrangements for anything that might go wrong such as snow, transport strike, traffic jam, etc. You must also arrange a gift table for guests who wish to bring gifts. Also, ensure that there is a portable music system available at the venue.

7.1.5 PREPARING A TABLE PLAN

One of the most litigious and time consuming task is to prepare a table plan. However, it is one of the necessary thing to be done while planning your wedding. It needs to be prepared by you as no one is aware of your guests’ personal situations and politics as you are. While preparing the table plan go to your guest list, make sure that people who are important in your life receive pride or at least a good vantage point. Make sure that couples are on the same table. Also ensure that guests who share uncomfortable relationships are not put together. Also, ensure that families with children are put together or at least in one area.

7.2 ON THE DAY OF THE EVENT

7.2.1 PHOTO SHOOTS

Photo shoot is an integral part of the wedding. Ensure that no one is missed. Decide the photographs you would like to be taken and make a list of it. Give charge to someone who will ensure that people are in the right place at the right time of the day. This will ensure smooth and easy photo shoot. You can get this work done by your wedding planner or someone who knows most of the people in your guest list, as it requires high maintenance. The couple prefers to have a few specific pictures clicked. Make sure your photographer is aware of your demands. This will ensure that you get perfect pictures for your wedding album.

7.2.2 ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ENTRY OF THE GUESTS

To have perfectly planned and organized wedding, make sure that there are enough verbal announcements or signs to inform people where they should go next and how to get there. This can be accomplished with the help of Order of Service.

7.2.3 RECEIVING THE WEDDING DELIVERIES

Make sure you have a specific contact at your venue throughout. Ensure that this contact is in constant touch with the suppliers who will contact him or her for deliveries. You can assign this job to your wedding planner.

7.2.4 EXTRA EXPENDITURE

To manage the extra expenditure for wine, champagne, soft drinks and meals, you must appoint someone beforehand. To cover any extra expenses that may arise, you must keep this tab open with your card. Your wedding planner or your best man can be made responsible to manage this. Also, make sure that someone has been appointed with the task to pay the Registrar or any other service that may need cash on the day.

7.2.5 ARRANGEMENT OF MUSIC

In case you are getting married in a Registry and you have not booked a musician, you will require providing some music for the ceremony. Music is an integral part of any celebration. You make your wedding special you will need music to sir your guests to, music to enter to, music to sign the register to and music to leave to. You can get your wedding planner to organize for the music. Make sure you have a portable music system.

7.2.6 SPEECHES DURING THE CEREMONY

Speeches are also an essential part of the wedding ceremony. Make sure you don't forget to write and practice your speech. Also ensure that all the speech givers and ring holders are fully briefed.

7.3 POST THE EVENT

7.3.1 RETURNING THE HIRED ITEMS

After the wedding you must return all the hired items, such as cake stand, glassware, linen, marquee, attire, etc. This is one important job than can be handed to your wedding planner.

7.3.2 FINALIZING THE EXTRA EXPENSES

After the wedding is over you must finalize all the extra expenses and settle your bill. If you have well managed it on the wedding day, it will not come as a surprise to you.

7.3.3 ARRANGEMENT FOR TRANSPORTATION

Make sure that there is some arrangement for transportation to take your gifts home. Other memorabilia and cake of the day can also be carried away in this transport.

PREPARING CHECKLIST

THINGS TO BE DONE 12 MONTHS PRIOR TO THE DAY

The lists of things that must be prepared at least 12 months prior to your wedding include your budget and guest list along with the potential date of your wedding. Also, you must hire a professional wedding planner well in advance. Book the venue, catering and drink services, tables, chairs and other furniture and linen as well. You can start looking for your wedding dress and can even book your honeymoon in prior. Also, get your wedding insured.

THINGS TO BE DONE 4 TO 12 MONTHS PRIOR TO THE DAY

4-12 months prior to your wedding you must apply for all the essential licenses. You must also arrange the gift list, book your florist, arrange decorations and book extra suppliers and transport. You must order the wedding attire. Booking of the videographer and photographer should also be done in this period. Order the ring and finalize the cake and cake maker. Purchase an accessories you require and sort the dresses for your Best Man and Bridesmaids. Order for menu tasting as well.

THINGS TO BE DONE 1 TO 4 MONTHS PRIOR TO THE DAY

Within the last four months you should send out the invitations and gift lists to the guests. Also, you should book the fittings for your wedding dress and book your hairdresser and make up artist. You can even go for makeup and hair dressing trial run. Make sure you go through the requirements with your photographer and videographer. Also, confirm all your bookings and arrange the date and time for the deliveries. You should organize for any vaccinations and visas required for honeymoon.

THINGS TO BE DONE IN A MONTH BEFORE THE WEDDING

A month before the wedding you must chase the unanswered RSVPs. Also, finalize the guest list and make a table plan. If required, order foreign currency. Make arrangements for music, collect the rings, try your wedding shoes and go for final fitting of your wedding attire. You can even draw up your itinerary and photo shoot list. You should also collect any items that are not being delivered to the venue. You can even arrange the transport for your honeymoon.

THINGS TO BE DONE ON THE DAY

Ensure that the rings are with the best man and all the deliveries have been received. Also, pay any outstanding payments to the suppliers and finalize the extra costs. Make sure that the people appointed with certain tasks are doing them carefully. Also, make an arrangement to take gifts and other souvenirs to home.

THINGS TO BE DONE AFTER THE WEDDING

After the wedding, the hired items should be returned and extra expenses must be settled.