

You're Engaged! Now What?

*Tips and Advice from a Wedding Professional to
Get Your Wedding Plans on the
Right Track
By Kandice Brooks*



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According to the Bridal Association of America's Wedding Report, 30% of all engagements happen between December and February, with the majority happening around Christmas and New Years. Regardless of when you've gotten engaged, congratulations and get ready for the adventure that is wedding planning. So he's asked and you've said yes, what's next?

Create a budget

The first thing to do is sit down with your intended for a serious discussion about your finances. Determine what type of wedding you can afford to have. If you will need the financial assistance of others, such as your parents, speak with them immediately. You **MUST** have a clear picture of your budget before you proceed.

Pick a date

Your choice of date will have an impact on your budget. May through September are commonly the peak wedding months. Vendors such as banquet halls and limousine companies usually charge more during these months. Be aware that if you chose to marry near the date of a major holiday, such as Christmas or Valentines Day, that things like flowers will be more expensive.

Start on the guest list

I cannot stress enough the importance of your guest list. The guest list can make or break your budget. The number of guests determines the size of venue you need, the number of invitations, the amount of favors, food and drinks. . .you see where this is going. Keep the guest list in check and you have a better chance of staying on budget.

These three steps will get you going in the right direction on this exciting journey.

Bridal Shows

After walking through what seems like an endless maze of booths, collecting cards and information from countless wedding vendors, how do you feel? You may be excited, overwhelmed or confused. Some may even feel slightly ill from too many free cake samples! Now it is time to make sense of all the cards, brochures, etc. that you've collected and get one step closer to wedding success.

1. Categorize

Dump everything in your complimentary bag out on the floor and place them into their appropriate category. All photographers into one pile, all florists in another, ceremony/reception sites in another, etc.

2. Pick your favorites

To determine your favorites, ask yourself the following questions. Was there a stand out vendor in one of your categories? Was there a package price that fit perfectly into your budget? Was there one particular cake that was better than all the rest? If you happen to have more than one favorite in a category, place them in order of preference.

3. Go surfing

Visit their website. Check out their photo gallery. Bring yourself up to speed on their services and products, so that you can decide if you want to proceed to step number 4.

4. Give them a call

Schedule a consultation with your favorites as soon as possible. If you need to leave a message or send an email, take note of how fast they respond to you. How do they answer the phone or reply to your email? Are they professional? This is a key characteristic that should be a determining factor as to whether or not you give them your business.

At your consultation get to know the vendor and see whether or not this person is a good fit for you, your wedding and your budget. If they are, sign a contract and move on to the next item of your to do list. If they are not a good fit, thank them for their time and move on to your next choice in the category.

Planning with the 3 Cs

As the date of your wedding gets closer, it is easy to get stressed out. All the details involved and the hard work can even get to the most laid back person out there. As a professional wedding planner, I have a tip that I use for every event that I work on. It is to use the 3 Cs:

Communication

Webster's dictionary defines the word communication as an exchange of information or opinions. The last time I checked, people are not mind readers. Make sure that you clearly communicate your wants and needs to anyone involved with your wedding, especially your wedding planner if you have one. It seems like a no brainer, but you would be surprised at the things that people "forget" to mention beforehand.

Courtesy

Noted American psychologist and philosopher, William James said, "The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated." Translation, a sincere please and thank you will get you a long way. Yes, it is your day, but that does not give you a license to be a tyrant. Your attitude and action towards others will go a long way in getting people to help you.

Common Sense

Use your judgment! If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

The ABCs of DIY

My name is Kandice and I'm a DIY-aholic. Anything that Martha Stewart or B. Smith publishes immediately earns a place of honor on my bookshelf. When I see something on TV or magazines, I immediately think to myself, I can do that. Most times I'm successful with my "experiments," but sometimes things don't go as planned.

Do it yourself projects are fun and feeds that little creative person inside of us all. Let's face it, that feeling of accomplishment you feel when someone exclaims with genuine surprise, "You did this?!", makes you feel like you've won a gold medal.

Nothing can kill a DIY project faster than time. Unfortunately, time does not stand still when you're working on your favors, invitations or whatever great little project, Martha has motivated you to create. FYI - Martha has staff, assistants, etc. that help her complete her projects. More than likely, you have your friends, who between kids, work, and boyfriends **MIGHT** be able to help you.

Once you set your event date, hit the ground running on your DIY projects. The clock is ticking. . .

A. Create a mock up

This lets you see what works and what doesn't. Should it be bigger, smaller or a different color.

B. Get all your supplies together

If things need to be ordered, do it now. It is not a good look to find out too late that the paper you ordered is not the color you thought it would be. Even worse, the company may no longer carry the items you need.

C. "Hire" staff

Enlist the help of your family and friends, but offer to "pay" them. Not actual money (though some may prefer this) but offer a home cooked meal, babysitting, etc.

Properly completed DIY projects for your event add a touch of creative flair and sentiment. Learn the ABCs for great results every time.

Do I Really Need A Planner?

You would be surprised at the number of times I get this question. In this day and age, a person's inclination is to cut costs and go the course alone. BUT and this is a big but, an experienced planner can actually save you time and money. How?

1. An extensive list of vendors

An experienced planner can consult one of the many vendors, he or she has a working relationship with to get you a deal or at the least find one that is within your budget.

2. Knowledge of venues

An experienced planner will know if not all, but a great deal of the ideal venues in your area. He or she can direct you to the places within your budget.

3. Time Saver

Instead of calling about 10 different caterers or photographers a planner will handle those things for you. They can set up appointments according to your schedule and save you from a lot of legwork.

4. Focus Finder

Are you one who has difficulty making decisions? An experienced planner can assist you. They will also keep you focused on your budget and keep you as close as possible to your bottom line.

If you are interested in getting a planner for your wedding, contact Signature Soirees to schedule a free consultation to determine your needs. We offer full service wedding planning, month of wedding and day of wedding coordination. We also offer a full listing of A La Carte services including hourly consultation, invitation assembly, reception décor and more. Visit our website at www.signaturesoires.com for more details or call us at 866-880-7902.