

What to Consider When Hiring a Wedding Planner

So you've made the decision to hire a professional wedding planner? Congratulations! You've just taken the first step toward ensuring that your special day progresses as smoothly as possible.

In the months leading up to the big day, your wedding coordinator may very well become your new best friend. A professional planner helps you maintain your sanity by assisting with all aspects of the event, such as creating a budget, choosing ceremony and reception venues, managing all deposits and payments, and incorporating a theme or design scheme.

Choosing a wedding planner can often be a leap of faith—after all, it's hopefully a one-time relationship, and you've most likely never hired one before. If you know other couples who've had a positive experience with a coordinator, you may want to consider asking for a referral. If that's not an option, you'll need to conduct a search for your own—no easy task in itself.

When meeting with a prospective wedding planner, don't rely on personality and likability alone. To ensure that he or she will be able to achieve your vision and execute your special day without a hitch, don't sign a contract until you've received satisfactory answers to the following vital questions:

- Can you afford them? If you're on a limited budget, look for a wedding planner that offers tiered pricing packages or a la carte options. Ask if they charge a standard flat fee, an hourly rate, or by percentage of expenses.
- Are they detail-oriented? This is by far the most important trait for a wedding planner to possess. Don't just take their word for it—request references from previous clients. If a coordinator is doing their job well, they should have a repertoire of dozens of satisfied brides and grooms more than happy to rave about their experience.
- Are they a control freak? Remember, unless you've instructed them otherwise, the wedding planner's job is to guide you through every step of the process, not to completely take over. Make sure the coordinator you choose is willing to let you have as much say as you want to ensure that your celebration is unique to you.
- Does the coordinator have established relationships with local wedding vendors? Ideally, they should be able to make informed recommendations for florists, travel agents, caterers, and other merchants. That said, make sure

- they truly have your best interests in mind and aren't suggesting a company for the sole purpose of receiving a monetary kick-back.
- Are they willing to manage all of your vendor communications? This can be a huge time-saver, eliminating dozens of follow-up calls, deposits, and confirmations. A comprehensive planning service should include the handling of all merchant relationships and related transactions.
 - Is your prospective consultant abreast of the latest trends and fashions for modern weddings? Unless you're striving for a period-themed event, you probably don't want your ceremony and reception to exude a dated air. An up-to-speed coordinator should be equipped to make recommendations for bridal fashions, innovative wedding favors, and contemporary twists on long-standing traditions.
 - Do they hold a certification or diploma from a reputable wedding planning school? Keep in mind that while a degree is preferred, it's not absolutely essential—education can't replace the value of seasoned experience and beneficial connections.
 - What's their communication style? Are they easily accessible via cell phone and email? Are they available on evenings and weekends? The most in-demand wedding planners provide "on call" service to their clients.
 - Does the planner coordinate weddings as his or her full-time job, or are they just moonlighting? If they're committed to another "day job" and just plan weddings on the side, you may find it more difficult to track them down when you (or your vendors) need them.
 - After getting all of the answers to these important questions, consider whether you get a "good vibe" about the prospective wedding consultant. Never underestimate the importance of your own personal judgment. You'll be working closely with your wedding planner for many months to come, so it's crucial that you feel comfortable communicating with them. In the best case scenario, you'll emerge from the experience as a very satisfied bride who's gained countless priceless memories—and is prepared to share a glowing referral to other couples.

At Frit Fru Weddings, we offer several plans that accommodate a range of price points, and we can also custom-design an arrangement to meet your specific needs. Shannon Valente, founder of Frit Fru Weddings, supplements her field expertise with a certification from the Wedding Planners Institute of Canada and a marketing

degree from the University of Guelph. Contact us today to find out how we can help you achieve your fairy-tale beginning.