

8 Questions You Must Ask Any Wedding Professional Before Booking Them

Hiring the right team is critical to planning your dream wedding...and it can also be quite stressful.

How do you find the right match for you? How do you know who to trust? Where do you go for advice?

First of all, this is not an easy task and it's totally normal for couples to feel overwhelmed, frustrated or confused.

It's not like you plan a wedding every day! This is all probably brand new to you, so be patient with yourself.

A few tips to finding the right ones for you...

- **Do Your Homework.** You'll get much more out of a meeting or conversation with a wedding professional if you do a little background homework first.

Spend some time on the internet or talking to friends who've recently been married. Find out the average prices in your area and what services are available. Get an idea of what you like and don't like. Wedding websites like GetMarried.com can be a great resource. This way when you meet with a wedding professional you'll be able to ask better questions and have an idea of what to look out for.

- **Meet With Them.** An in person meeting is the best way to interview a potential wedding vendor. It lets you get the full experience of their personality, style and professionalism. If that's not possible, have a phone conversation.
- **Ask Questions.** There are no stupid questions! Make sure you get clear, specific answers to your questions. If you aren't sure what

something means, ask them to clarify. Keep asking questions until you completely understand.

If a wedding vendor has a problem with you asking questions, they probably aren't the one for you. The best wedding professionals are patient, understanding and take the time to help you make the best choices for your wedding. They truly care about the outcome!

- **Listen.** Don't just hear the words they say, really listen. Watch the vendor's body language. Are they confident and comfortable with their response? Do they look and sound nervous? Do you get a "funny feeling" about them? Take all the sights, sounds and feelings into account along with their responses; if your gut tells you something isn't right, it probably isn't.
- **Check References.** Portfolios are hand-picked to show off the best work, but they may not represent the "average" wedding performance. Videos are edited for the optimum presentation. But real referrals from satisfied clients are hard to fake.

Call up both client and professional references. Ask questions and use those listening skills. Even if they give a rave review, you'll often be able to "read between the lines" if there were any issues or problems.

Ask around and search the internet for reviews. Check the Better Business Bureau for any outstanding complaints against the business. Weigh all of this information into your choices.

Here are 8 Must Ask Questions to ask ALL your potential wedding professionals before booking:

- 1. How many weddings do you do per year? How much experience do you have?**

This is an extremely important question. Ideally, your wedding professional should have ample experience specifically with

weddings. Not only will they be more skilled in their craft, this also makes them a valuable source of information and ensures that your wedding day goes smoothly. Doing a large number of weddings per year may mean they sub-contract out to less skilled people.

2. How much do you cost?

Price is often relative, especially when you factor in experience, reputation and expert skill. Generally, the most talented professionals have a higher price tag because they are worth it. If you hire average or below average priced vendors, you will receive just average or below average services.

3. How much is the deposit?

Deposits should generally be from 1/3 to 1/2 of the total contract with the balance due prior to your wedding day.

4. What specifically is included in that cost?

Because packages often vary, it's likely that you won't be able to compare one vendor exactly to the next without doing a little figuring. The lowest cost isn't necessarily the best deal; some higher quotes include services that you have to pay extra for in other packages. Make sure you take this into account. Also remember that under qualified or hobby type vendors charge much less than professional and well trained people.

5. What happens if I cancel? What happens if *you* cancel?

Find out if your deposit is refundable under any conditions. Does the wedding professional have a back up plan if something happens to them or their equipment?

6. Do you use a written contract?

If the answer is No, RUN! A contract is designed to protect both

you and the wedding professional. Don't settle for a verbal agreement that won't hold up in court. Be very wary of vendors that do not ask for a deposit and require a written agreement.

7. Are there any additional fees?

Taxes, service charges and travel fees can add up quickly. Make sure you understand exactly what is included and if there are any other fees you'll have to pay. This should be clearly defined in your contract with the vendor. It is not uncommon for such fees to add as much as 35% or more to the total cost.

8. Are you licensed and do you carry liability insurance?

The answer you're looking for here is **Yes!** This protects you in case an unfortunate accident should occur on your wedding day. It's also a sign that this is a reputable business; since most "fly by night" operations don't bother with a business license or invest in insurance.

If chosen wisely, with the right wedding vendors you get expert help and priceless advice...for free!