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# STRATEGIC *Planning*

*What a Professional Wedding Planner Can Do for You.*

ONE THING'S FOR SURE: WEDDING PLANNING IS A LOT OF WORK. From interviewing vendors to signing contracts and budgeting expenses, you've got a long to-do list as a bride and groom. A professional wedding coordinator can help you ease the stress and plan your day efficiently and exquisitely.

Whether they're known as coordinators, consultants or planners, these professionals know the wedding industry and can be a very valuable tool for couples preparing to tie the knot.

They can share their experience, attention to detail, creativity and patience. As the bride and groom, you'll benefit from all these amazing qualities.

By Kristen Castillo

**EFFICIENCY**

Coordinators know the industry and can help guide you through the maze of vendors and services. With a pro's assistance, you won't waste time, money or energy wondering what to do next.

A consultant keeps the day moving and works with all your vendors to make sure things go as planned. They'll help you make decisions; they'll review contracts; and they'll be the voice of reason when you're feeling super stressed about your big day.

**BUDGET HELP**

"An experienced consultant will know how to save the bride time and money," says Rozanna Zane of *Affairz Event Consulting*. "A consultant can offer suggestions on how and where to cut costs, and how to build a realistic budget for the bride. It's important for a bride to know at the beginning of the planning process the true cost of a wedding before setting a guest list or wedding expectations."

Even brides on a limited budget can benefit from hiring a planner who can maximize the buying power and streamline the wedding planning process.

With a professional by your side, "you're not just guessing how much flowers will cost," says Burger.

If you've never planned a huge event like a wedding, you have no idea where to get started or how much you can expect to spend. A planner can help you sort out the details.

"I save brides a lot of money and I save them a lot of time," says Cynthia Zatkin of *Cynthia Zatkin Events*. "We figure out her budget and show her exactly how much she needs to spend. I know her budget and know what she wants to do."

Zatkin says she can work with budgets large and small, along the way helping a bride fine tune the wedding vision. One way to trim a budget is to opt for a smaller ballroom. Another option is to host wine and champagne at the reception, instead of a full open bar.

**VENDOR REFERRALS**

"If you hire a coordinator you can get vendor referrals right off the bat," says Burger. "You'll save time and make sure you'll get great vendors."

Consultants plan weddings and major events all the time. They know the best vendors and who has superior service. They often get discounts and preferred status from other clients. Best of all, they share all this insight with you, the client.

With vendor referrals, "you know the vendors are reputable,"

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says Nahid Farhoud of *Wedding Elegance*.

Why spend time and energy searching for vendors when you can get professional assistance to find vendors that can work with your style and your budget?

**STYLE EXPERTS**

Planners know a thing or two about style and fashion. They work many high profile events and can share their fashion and décor expertise with you.

"I also assist many brides doing décor and acting as a personal stylist," says Zatkin. "A really good coordinator is a design expert. She matches style, personality and taste."

From picking out a gown that suits your figure to helping you select jewelry, Zatkin loves helping a bride look her best. "I'll help them find accessories so they have a full ensemble that looks really good on them," she says.

**DECISION-MAKING**

It's not always an easy choice to decide which vendor to hire or which invitations to order. Your coordinator can help you prioritize your plans.

"Some brides hire a consultant to handle all of the planning, they may have little time to handle the planning so they hire someone who can," says Zane who advises brides to meet with a few planners to get a feel for the different planning style.

"Other brides are looking for a wedding 'coach' to stay by their side throughout the planning process. Our approach to wedding planning is to first figure out what the bride needs. We go into every wedding with a clean slate, open and flexible to whatever the bride needs and wants. From there, we create a

plan that meets her needs and planning style.”

So relax, your coordinator won't make your decisions for you – after all what's the fun in that? – especially since you've been waiting for your wedding day for years. She wants to help you plan your day and make sure it goes smoothly.

No matter how much or how little  
*planning help*  
 you need, you can ask a  
**PROFESSIONAL COORDINATOR**  
 for assistance.

#### PLANNING PACKAGES

Many brides see hiring a planner as a luxury, but think again. There's a planning package for every bride and every budget.

Don't assume coordinators only do full service coordination. Most coordinators offer smaller packages such as month of packages, week of and day of packages. Many offer a la carte planning too.

Nahid Farhoud of *Wedding Elegance* often does a la carte planning with a two hour minimum. For example, a couple asked her to do a venue search for them. They provided their specifications including budget and number of guests attending and Farhoud came up with a list of venues for them to consider.

No matter how much or how little planning help you need, you can ask a professional coordinator for assistance.

“Most coordinators will be willing to customize a package,” says Burger.

Prices range from \$1200 to \$2000 for a month of package; the cost of a full service package runs from \$3500 up to \$8000 or more depending on the size and scale of the wedding.

“Most consultants offer a free initial consultation. Take advantage of this meeting and get some questions answered and to figure out what consulting services you truly need and can

afford,” says Zane. “Some consultants can customize a package that meets your planning and budget needs.”

### STRESS-FREE PLANNING

By some estimates, wedding planning takes one-hundred or more hours. If you do all the work yourself, it’s like having a full-time job, which is super stressful if you’re already working part-time or full-time.

“Most importantly, you get a stress free wedding day when a coordinator helps out,” says Burger. “That’s maybe the most valuable part.”

Two of the many ways coordinators reduce your stress is by handling all details large and small and running the minute-by-minute schedule of a wedding.

“I focus on making the wedding easy for my client,” says Zatkan. “Make it easy and you’ll have happy brides.”

As a bride you want to be a happy and relaxed, not worrying about every little thing. Working with a coordinator can ease your workload and help you make the most of your big day. ✨

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