



RMB PHOTOGRAPHY

SO YOU'RE *engaged!* WHAT NEXT?

By Lisa Presnell, PWC

PLANNING A WEDDING CAN BE VERY OVERWHELMING. There are tons of magazines and websites, not to mention many wedding shows. How is anyone supposed to know what to do? All the while, you are really thinking: “Holy Wedding Vows! Will someone just please tell me where to start?”

Not everything you read or hear is from a *true* professional. Leave it to the experts to guide you. Just remember to relax and enjoy this moment. Announce your engagement to your family and friends.

Once engaged, the first thing on your mind is getting ideas. Too much information (TMI) all at once can overwhelm you. Stop, breathe, and follow these simple steps that are sure to help you plan the beautiful wedding you want and deserve—while maintaining your sanity.

VISION VS. BUDGET

Discuss with your fiancé how you envision your special day. Most women have dreamed about their wedding day since childhood; others have not. Many men would rather the bride make the decisions;

other men want to be involved. Do you want a big wedding with grand décor, or do you prefer a small ceremony with sand between your toes? Regardless of your vision, the bride and groom need to agree.

There's no need to make phone calls to venues, florists, photographers, and other specialists if you haven't considered your budget. Otherwise, much time will be wasted and you'll have un-needed TMI stress. Who is paying for the wedding? How much do you have over-all? Break your budget down for each element of your wedding. This comparison of vision and budget serves as an important reality check. I refer to my personal reality as “Champagne Taste on a Beer Budget.” I always want more than I can truly afford. It's an unhealthy obsession. Realistically, can you afford your vision? Be honest with yourself or the planning process will become stressful rather than fun.

VENUE AND DATE

View locations online to save time. If you feel it's a venue that might correspond with your vision and budget, schedule an appointment with the manager. Before you do, share your vision and your financial plan, so that he or she might better assist you by making recommendations that will help you stay within your budget.

Review your calendars and discuss options. Don't set a date before checking out venues. A date should be flexible, as it is never flexible for the location.

THE PROFESSIONALS

You should choose your location and date prior to contacting other professionals. The facility may recommend or even require the use of their preferred professionals. The manager of the facility will guide you. Should they allow you to use your own vendors, please keep in mind that they have preferred vendors for good reason. These are the experts whom they trust and who are familiar with their venue.

As a professional wedding consultant, I want to say that you absolutely need to hire one. However, that wouldn't be fair. It depends on the size of your wedding and your party. For larger events, the value of a consultant is priceless. They offer a wide range of services. Only you can determine the value to you.

With these few tips, I think you are well on your way to planning a beautiful and successful day. Congratulations, have fun, and I wish you the best!

Lisa Presnell is a Professional Wedding Consultant and a member of the Association of Bridal Consultants. She has more than 12 years' experience in wedding and event planning. In addition to her role as Catering Sales Director for The Golf Club of Amelia Island, she is owner and operator of VOWS – Various Occasions & Wedding Services.