

Do not go in without a Plan . . .

We all want our event to be perfect. Unfortunately, it is very stressful to try and plan an event and manage our day to day lives. For this reason, we require a point of contact other than the bride or groom for weddings, simply because there is too much stress on the day of your event and someone outside the situation may be best at making decisions that need to be made to ensure your event runs smoothly. Sometimes, you may be required to bring in an expert to help you. With that in mind we met with Sarah Day from SAS Weddings and pulled her input on what to look for when hiring an Event Planner.

The Planner can serve as the liaison between the client and the vendors. From the venue perspective we are always cautious of this relationship as an inexperienced planner may make decisions that the client may not agree with or conflict with information previously provided by the client. One great thing a Planner can do for you is manage your event timeline. As you may have picked up from previous articles from Elk Point, keeping the day of flow is critical to having a successful event. The Planner can work with the start to finish logistics of event day from decorating to packing up presents at the end of the night. The one observation Sarah makes is that “family get to enjoy the day and not be bothered with the details”. Parents get to participate in the milestones, while the Planner manages the back-end logistics.

The best event planners that we work with at Elk Point are those that plan events as a full-time job. They have project management backgrounds and have worked several events in the past across many different job descriptions. This person will work to make your day the way you want it to be, not the way that they want it to be. They will offer suggestions to help make the day go smoothly and will work within the guidelines of the venue and other participating vendors.

Another great feature of working with a professional Planner is engaging their assistance in setting up and managing a budget for your event. Sarah with SAS Weddings reminds brides to “not be ashamed or embarrassed” by the amount of the budget. “There are ways to work around costs to achieve what you would like to accomplish”. The budget is a huge guideline when planning an event. With the average wedding in the greater Coeur d’Alene/Spokane area running in excess of \$15,000.00 and over \$40,000.00 nationally budget is a critical item that needs to be managed. A Planner can help with choices of venues, menu’s, vendors, etc. that achieve the financial goal of the event.

A Planner can help with the design, style, theme and budget of your event. They can assist in coordinating everything from chairs to draping and centerpieces. The Planner often has key contacts that they work with that provide these items and can provide a realistic expectation of what it takes to make your ideas work. Sarah is an expert at “bringing Pinterest to life” for her clients. Going back to our budget, Sarah has worked within those guidelines to implement a Pinterest idea for her clients.

How much contact you have with your Planner depends on you. Some Planners, such as Sarah Day with SAS Weddings, has different packages available that cover everything from “Day of Planning” to full blown “Full Engagements” that can cover everything from touring venues, dress

fittings, invitation design and dinner tastings. It is important to discuss what involvement you would like with your Planner prior to hiring your Planner.

Sometimes you just need someone to assist with the flow of the day. They will make sure people are where they are supposed to be, when they are supposed to be there. They will often assist a bride with some of the last-minute decision making on the day of the event. Some event planners have staff people that take this job, some even offer the service themselves. It is important to make sure this person is a full-time professional event Planner.

One thing that is going to cause problems with your Planner is surprises. Surprises often come about through a lack of communication. If your bridal party is planning a special song, trick, game or embarrassing decorating idea, Sarah at SAS Weddings would really appreciate it if they ran the idea by her first. Of course, there are things that a bride or groom definitely do not want to happen, which the Planner can communicate to the bridal party. Yes, it will probably mess with their fun, but at least the Planner is aware that something could happen and be prepared for the fallout from it. Or, the complete opposite could happen where the Planner can help bring the idea into reality and assist the bridal party in making the idea happen.

For those that have worked in the event industry, there are always stories of past events. Unfortunately, the most memorable stories are often the “bad” one’s. In most cases these stories have a common theme, alcohol over-consumption. A good Planner can help set expectations with their client about how the day will go and remind them to stay hydrated, so they can still enjoy a few drinks with family and friends as they celebrate. As Sarah Day says, “No day has more money, time, energy put into it than a wedding”.

When choosing an Event Planner it is very important to check their qualifications and referrals. Just because someone planned their own event which turned out the way they wanted it to does not mean they should be planning your event. Oftentimes, they are trying to relive their own event on your dime. Event Planners will meet with you before your event and will work with you to design and manage the event you want. They will also work with your vendors and communicate with them so that everyone is on the same page to ensure your event is the success you want it to be.