



8 Questions You Must Ask Wedding Vendors Before Booking

As a professional wedding planner, I've learned that the secret to growing my business and providing the best service to my clients is to hone the art of building relationships with the wedding vendors who will play a key role in one of the most important days in a couple's life, their wedding.

Most wedding professionals network among themselves to find and create a team of experts in each field that they can work with. This will typically provide a better event for the client if they utilize their event planner's network of vendors since they are an already established team who know each other, understand how each other work and in many cases save the client of their bottom line since working together has eliminated the learning curve.

For those clients that want to seek their own vendor, that too is fine, as you may know of an expert from your own inner circle or use a reference from a trusted family or friend. In any case, developing a positive relationship with the vendors you will select to work with will give you a great start in the planning of your big day!

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.

Have goals in mind before you begin to understand what is it from each category that you want so you can narrow the pool, especially if you live in a large city or metropolitan area as there are many in each category to choose from.

Spend some time on the internet it is a great place to start in researching and locating potential candidates 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 and chat rooms 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. Select a list of vendors you are interested in.



Once you have narrowed your list to look at the top “5” for example or you may want to go with a smaller number like your top “3”, contact them and schedule a meeting or email them for an appointment. You don’t want to show up at a business unannounced and expect to interview, it is best to be prepared with a few questions.

- **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.

There are 8 general questions that you should be asking your vendors before you decide to book them for business. These questions will help you select the best vendor for each individual job.

For every professional, it is good to possess basic knowledge regarding the services they provide. General questions that must be asked include the following:

1. How long have they been in business? How many weddings do you do per year?
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.
2. What is their pricing structure?
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. Some vendors have payment plans if you choose to make monthly payments along the process.
3. How much is your deposit?
Vendors vary in their deposit; some don’t want a deposit while others want ¼ to ½ of their fee as a deposit with the remaining fee paid monthly. Other vendors may want the full fee up front so be sure to ask and it doesn’t hurt to negotiate the terms of the deposit, especially if you really want to work with that person.
4. What specifically is included in the 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.



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?
6. Do you have a 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.
7. Are there 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.
8. Can they provide references?

You should also have specific questions that are tailored to the different categories of vendors. There are different specific questions that you may want to find out about your caterer, baker, photographer, DJ or band ensemble for example.

- **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.

Once you have attended your meeting and conducted your interview, be sure to follow-up while you are shopping around seeking other vendors.

- **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.

When you have decided to select a vendor, be sure to let the other vendors know that you have decided to go with another vendor and not to leave them hanging out to dry (like laundry). Informing the other vendors provides an opportunity for them to work with other potential clients for the day they were reserving to work with you; it also looks professional on your part.

For the vendor you have selected to work with be sure to ask for a contract agreement and have your attorney check it out if necessary. You are now on your way to starting and maintaining what could be a lifelong professional relationship that you may go to for years to come.

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