



UNIT-8

Post-Wedding Evaluation

Learning Outcomes

- ✓ How to evaluate a wedding after the event
- ✓ How to write a post-wedding questionnaire

Unit 8

Post-Wedding Evaluation

That's another success under your belt. Everyone had a good time, the vendors fulfilled their contracts, and the happy couple are now off on their honeymoon. You may feel like taking a vacation, but don't do it just yet. As mentioned in an earlier unit, the last phase of a wedding timeline includes a wrap-up and evaluation, as well as some other essential tasks which still need to be completed. These include a satisfaction assessment and asking the couple to complete a final wedding summary. You will probably also be involved in a few ad hoc services which occur after the actual wedding day. In this unit we will discuss the basics of carrying out a post-wedding evaluation and how to compile the wedding summary.

Carrying Out a Post-Wedding Evaluation

Successful consultants always look for ways to improve their services. Obtaining feedback from your clients and vendors can be very constructive and enlightening. A post-wedding evaluation is a process of collecting information from your clients and vendors to gain an idea of the standard and satisfaction of services provided and to continually improve your work. When conducting a post-wedding evaluation, eight things must be kept in mind:

- (1) why an evaluation is necessary;
- (2) when to carry out the evaluation;
- (3) what to evaluate;
- (4) qualitative and quantitative evaluation;
- (5) what to include in the questionnaire;
- (6) writing out the questionnaire;
- (7) the format of the questionnaire; and
- (8) the cover letter.

Why Evaluate?

There are four reasons to conduct an evaluation for a wedding, and they are all interrelated. Firstly, feedback from clients and/or vendors will give you an idea of what areas are working successfully and what areas may need some improvement. Secondly, information received will assist you in determining the satisfaction and importance of specific services; therefore, you will easily be able to determine which areas you need to prioritise. For example, you may have a full-service package which involves you accompanying clients to every vendor visit, but the clients' feedback consistently tells you they don't think this service is really necessary. You should probably reprioritise options for that particular package. Thirdly, any ideas for making improvements and any constructive criticism will encourage you to make alterations to your services and thus remain fresh. Fourthly, implementing some changes will bring about more client satisfaction over a period of time. Don't fear feedback, be it positive or negative. No business will be perfect but staying open to the ideas of those with whom you work will bring you closer to the creation of a better business and put you ahead of the competition.

The process of evaluating your services will actually save you money and time in the long run because it will help you understand your clients' needs. Getz (2005) states that evaluation should be a permanent part of all organisations that deal with events. This is because “nobody learns, and nothing progresses without open and honest evaluation” (p. 381).

When to Evaluate

A wedding evaluation is usually summative, which means that it occurs after the delivery of all services has been completed. For other events a formative evaluation occurs. This is when information is continually collected during the implementation of an event. It would be ridiculous to ask clients or vendors to fill out a questionnaire on the actual wedding day. You, as the consultant, must carry out informal formative evaluations of each wedding you plan. Write down brief notes of anything that didn't work or went awry and things that worked particularly well. All this information will appear in the final wedding summary.

What to Evaluate

Three main areas must be included in the wedding evaluation: product, process, and any psychosocial aspects. *Product* relates to tangible goods and services. *Process* concerns exactly how the work was done. A product-based questionnaire might be about the degree of satisfaction with the vendor variety provided to clients. A process item would be about whether or not the wedding consultant was constantly organised. *Psychosocial* concerns the human aspects and emotions tied into a wedding. For example, you might ask whether or not your services helped the couple feel less stressed during the wedding preparations and on the wedding day.

Qualitative and Quantitative Evaluation

Qualitative evaluation relates to words instead of numbers and is usually less structured. Each questionnaire must include, at the very least, two items which let the clients express their opinions and thoughts openly. You cannot form averages on qualitative data but you might see themes or patterns occurring which will give you valuable guidance. For example, if a specific venue continually generates feedback such as “it was too hot” or “the bathrooms were cramped” or “the chairs were unstable”, you will need to reconsider recommending that venue again.

Quantitative evaluation relates to numbers which may have either real or implied meanings. For instance, you might ask clients to give a budget breakdown, which will be based on expenditures; however, if you ask clients to rate how well they thought you communicated during the planning phase on a 1 to 5 scale, these numbers have implied meaning – 5 indicating a positive rating and 1 being the lowest rating. Quantitative information is easily compiled. If in one year you work with 15 different wedding clients, you might collect information from each of them using the same questionnaire. At the end of said year you could calculate averages based on the responses provided by your clients.

Three Types of Questionnaire Items

Usually, questionnaires include three kinds of items:

1. fixed-alternative,
2. scale,
3. open-ended.

Fixed-alternative items usually evaluate knowledge, which means there is a response which “is the case.” Fixed-alternative items with which you may be familiar are multiple-choice and true-false. For wedding evaluations, common fixed-alternative items comprise yes-no items, questions where the clients will tick off specific services they used, and also items asking for demographic information. Note that fixed-alternative items will usually be written as questions.

Scale items are utilised to evaluate feelings; hence, they allow for a variety of responses. Many questions are about the clients’ emotions rather than facts; thus there are really no right or wrong answers. Such questions should allow for grey areas, and therefore a scale item can be used instead of a fixed alternative. Let’s assume you wanted to ascertain whether your clients found you to be easily contactable when they needed you. It would be hard to put this question into a simple ‘yes or no’ format because it forces clients to make a choice, but the reality may have been that sometimes you were accessible and at other times you were not. Allowing the clients to give an answer on a scale ranging from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’ will give them more response latitude. Scale items will usually be written as statements.

Open-ended questions are used for assessing impressions and behaviours. They should be presented in such a way that they encourage written feedback. Open-ended questions usually take longer to answer than the fixed-alternatives and scale items; therefore, they should be limited to four or less. Too many open-ended questions will probably give your clients ‘response fatigue.’ It is the same with essay exams, and you know how tiring they can be! Don’t give clients that kind of experience as they will probably become frustrated and will not finish your questionnaire. Open-ended questions must have clear directions to ensure the answers are useful. Also, leave some space for any extra comments or requests to enable clients to provide information you may not have considered.

Writing the Questionnaire Items

There are a few common wording issues you will need to avoid when writing the questionnaire items. Below we look at five poorly written items as well as their more appropriate equivalents.

Firstly, avoid using double-barrelled questions. Babbie (2003) states that these types of questions involve a respondent being asked to give one answer to a combination of questions. This is a common problem in scale items. Look at the two items below and note the difference.

Poorly written: “My wedding consultant was punctual and organised.”

Better: “My wedding consultant was punctual.”

“My wedding consultant was organised.”

In the poorer example there are two questions presented in the one statement. It is possible that the consultant was actually punctual but was not organised, or vice versa. Ensure that every question is capable of standing on its own.

Secondly, don't write questions that contain confusing language such as double negatives. Think about the scale items shown below.

Poorly written: "I was never not satisfied with the communication skills of my wedding consultant." This would be better: "I was satisfied with the communication skills of my wedding consultant." The poorly written question is very difficult to interpret and guaranteed to be confusing.

Thirdly, avoid writing items that are vague. Consider the items below which are open-ended:

Poorly written: "Please talk about your vendors." Better: "Please list the three vendors that you enjoyed working with the most." The poorly written item actually creates more questions than it does answers. The clients will be thinking: "Which vendors?" "What do you want to know about them?" The clearly written item will assist you to hone your vendor list to recommend to future clients.

Fourthly, it is important to write items as concisely as you can. Babbie (2003) states that "respondents should be able to read an item quickly, understand the intent, and provide an answer quickly." Think about these open-ended items: Poorly written: "Wedding planning can be stressful with various influences and thoughts that you are dealing with, not to mention the pressure of family and financial burdens that you have to worry about all the time; nonetheless, your wedding consultant probably helped you deal with this stress so please explain how." Better: "Please list three ways in which your wedding consultant made your wedding day less stressful." The poorly written question is very long and complicated to the point that it's almost impossible to work out the point.

Finally, avoid items that might be seen as leading or even biased. Questions which either exclude respondents or perhaps encourage them to answer in a certain way are a problem for two reasons: leading/biased items take away any neutrality the evaluation process might have by excluding specific thoughts or groups from consideration, and biased or leading items are often embedded with social desirability cues. This means that respondents are pushed to answer in a particular way because it seems as though there is a "correct" answer that a consultant/planner is seeking. Think about this scale item: Poorly written: "All intelligent brides will hire a wedding consultant to help make wedding planning less stressful." Better: "My wedding consultant helped make the wedding planning less stressful." The poorly written question is biased because the way in which it is written assumes that only brides hire wedding consultants. This excludes couples, grooms or parents from being points of contact. It also has the social desirability cue of intelligence; therefore, if respondents want to be seen as intelligent they will feel obliged to agree with that statement.

Formatting the Questionnaire

Make sure you bear the usability of the questionnaire in mind when you format it. It should be easy for clients to answer all the items proficiently. The Table below contains fifteen rules for formatting that you must consider when writing out your questionnaires:

- Begin with a very clear heading which includes your business name and is immediately understood as a questionnaire for your clients to fill out.
- The heading must be followed by a brief statement explaining the purpose of the evaluation.
- Under the purpose statement, include an assurance of confidentiality. If one of your clients wrote a particularly good statement and you want to put it up on your website, you must ask for their permission to do so.
- Allow a space to fill in the client name, the couple's names, the wedding date, and the consultant's name.
- The client is not always the same as the couple. In certain cases, clients may be parents of the bride or groom. If the couple are out of town, for instance, a parent might plan on their behalf. Send the evaluation form to your primary point of contact to ensure there is no confusion.
- Item types similar in nature, e.g. open-ended, fixed-alternative or scale, should be grouped together to enable clients to easily move from one item to the next.
- Include instructions which help facilitate the completion process. This is normally necessary before the presentation of any scale items. Never just assume that clients will understand what to do. Make sure all instructions are very clear.
- The actual items must be easy to read. Ensure that a sufficiently large font is used in order that the clients don't need to squint. Avoid any unusual font styles which may be hard to read.
- Make sure the layout is well organised and straightforward. All items must line up neatly, and all open-ended lines should be the same length.
- Leave adequate space for clients to write, especially for open-ended questions. If lines are too close together, this will discourage any feedback.
- Do not create confusion by cramming too much onto a page.
- If your questionnaire is more than one page long, continually direct clients to the next page. You might write something like: "Please continue on the opposite side" or "...the next page."
- Clients don't want to write an entire essay and you should not expect them to. Typically, ten items, and no more than 20, will suffice.
- Be sure to include a message of thanks at the end of the document, as well as a request for the return of the questionnaire.
- Be sure to include a stamped, self-addressed envelope to enable the return process.
- Any grammatical, typographical or printing errors will harm your credibility. It's better to have no evaluation at all than to have a sloppy one.

Cover Letter

When the questionnaire has been carefully crafted, you may wish to send it to clients immediately. However, before you do this make sure you include a professional cover letter. In this cover letter, make sure you include:

- (1) the date it is sent;
- (2) a greeting;
- (3) the name of the couple and a reminder of the wedding;
- (4) the purpose of the questionnaire;
- (5) a desired return date and an indication that you have included a return envelope;
- (6) your contact information; and
- (7) final words of thanks.

Cover letters must be to the point; therefore, keep them short. You may wish to invest in stationery with your letterhead on it. This produces a more professional look. Allow your clients a few weeks for their honeymoon and settling-down period before you mail the questionnaire packet.

Vendor Feedback

The examples used so far cover client feedback but similar rules apply to creating a questionnaire for the vendors. Questionnaires to vendors must be used with *a lot of discretion*. Don't send the same questionnaire to the same vendor every time you work with him/her as they will probably become annoyed with it. The first time you and the vendor work together will be the best time to ask for feedback. Once they have had a chance to get to know you and your work, you might send an email or even give them a call about anything you feel you'd like to discuss.

As with your client questionnaires, you must fill in the top of the form. You need to remind a vendor of the couples' names, of your name and of the wedding date. Vendors, especially busy ones, will not know which event you are referring to if you don't do this. Don't get too frustrated or upset if you do not receive vendor feedback or if the feedback isn't stellar. They may not have time to do it, especially during the busy wedding season. It may also be the case that some vendors really don't appreciate the type of services consultants provide. Don't force the issue; just appreciate what feedback you do receive. In a situation where you have many vendors, be extremely careful not to inundate them with questionnaires. You can compare notes and produce a master list of the vendors who give feedback that can be assessed easily. You will begin to know your vendors over time and they will get to know you; hence, you will decrease the need for structured feedback from vendors.

A Wedding Summary

The most difficult aspect of evaluation is the attempt to give it meaning. Getz (2005, p. 381) explains, "Evaluation results often get filed and forgotten, especially if they are negative." When planning the very first wedding, you will probably remember every detail. Over time, however, weddings will start to blend together one after another and you may not remember specifics unless you complete a wedding summary for each one. By taking some time to review and to summarise details of every wedding you plan, you will be able to improve your skills and make any adjustments necessary. There will always be some smaller things which won't go right during the implementation of a wedding, but if you reflect on them later and speak with other consultants, you will gain more ideas on how to handle these situations in the future. Document everything carefully and be honest in your self-evaluations. Wedding summaries should include creative solutions which will help you be better prepared for any future weddings.

Making a compilation of the final wedding summary will be an efficient and easy process if you've remained organised all along. All clients must have their own file folders. File them in alphabetical order by surname and compile a cross-reference sheet on the computer which includes client names and dates of weddings. A wedding summary must include six aspects:

1. an executive summary
2. a write-up of the wedding if it is announced in a local newspaper (this usually includes a picture of the couple, which is a useful reminder)
3. the entire production schedule including the vendor list
4. the final breakdown of the budget
5. returned client questionnaires and completed questionnaires from any new vendors
6. samples of materials from a wedding that can be shown to future clients. This might include the program, escort cards, invitations, favours, and fabric swatches.

An executive summary can be a one-to-three-page overview. It should include the most unique and important elements of the wedding. Write it carefully so that it easily sparks your memory, even if it was many years ago.

Think about including these aspects in every executive summary:

- The names of the couple before and after the wedding
- The ceremony and reception venue
- The theme
- The final budget
- Excellent vendors
- Vendors who presented difficulties
- Any ideas and elements which may have been particularly unique
- Any moments that didn't go well, how they were addressed, and how any similar problems might be avoided in future
- Any feedback from clients, which will help you to continuously improve.
- Feedback from vendors (as applicable) that will help you continuously improve.

Finish off the bulk of your wedding summaries as quickly as possible after each wedding. It may take several weeks to receive final feedback from clients or vendors; however, don't wait until this particular information arrives to start your summaries. Firstly, feedback may never arrive if certain clients or vendors are not really inclined to return questionnaires. Secondly, as time goes by, you will probably begin to forget the specifics of one particular wedding as you move on to the next.

It is also a very nice touch to send all your couples an anniversary card on their first anniversary. You should do this only for the first anniversary and it will help keep you and your business on their radar. They may mention you to an engaged friend, saying how thoughtful you were to remember their anniversary. This may lead to a new client for you.

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Post-Wedding Evaluations

- ✓ Prepare evaluations to pinpoint any areas of success and also those that need improvement.
- ✓ Evaluate products, processes, and any psychosocial elements.
- ✓ Ensure wedding questionnaires are concise and keep the number of open-ended questions to a minimum.
- ✓ Format your questionnaires with easy usability in mind.
- ✓ Include a cover letter where you introduce the purpose of the questionnaire.
- ✓ Utilise vendor questionnaires with discretion.
- ✓ Complete a summary of each wedding.
- ✓ Be your own critic by carefully documenting events and self-appraising honestly.
- ✓ Consider sending your couples a first anniversary card.

Wedding Planner Sample Feedback Form

CLIENT EVALUATION OF SERVICES

Dear.....

We would like your feedback. In a continuing effort to offer our future clients the highest quality of customer service and the best overall experience with **Wedding Planning Services**, we ask that you please complete this evaluation form to help us improve our services. Our mission is to improve every phase of our service. Your answers will remain anonymous unless you choose otherwise. We place the utmost value on our relationship with you, and we thank you for your continuing support. Please check-mark everything that applies and provide any comments and suggestions you feel may better our services for future clients. There are five sections to complete.

Should you have any questions or require additional information regarding this evaluation form, please feel free to contact me.

Type of Service Provided:

Platinum Package: Full Service A to Z Wedding Planning Service

Gold Package: 2•Day Rehearsal and Wedding Day Coordination

Silver Package: 1•Day Wedding Ceremony & Reception Coordination

Bronze Package: A la Carte (Research, Planning, Consulting, Coordination)

SECTION I—HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT US?

1. How did you hear about **us**? (Please check-mark the appropriate box)

a. Bridesclub.com

b. Referral from a former client:

c. Referral from other:

d. Friend:

e. (Hawaii) Bridal Expo: Did you visit our booth? Yes /No Date:_____

f. Other:_____

PLEASE RATE THESE SECTIONS ON THE FOLLOWING SYSTEM

EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	N/A
5	4	3	2	1	0

SECTION II- PRE-PLANNING CUSTOMER SERVICE**A. Phone Etiquette:**

1. Sincere greeting and proper introduction
2. Tone of voice and enthusiasm
3. Communication comfortable and easy
4. Return of calls in a timely manner
5. Appointment scheduling convenient
6. Sincere conclusion and length of call efficient

5	4	3	2	1	0
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B. Email Correspondence:

1. Information provided was easy to read
2. Written confirmation of verbal discussion helpful
3. Easy to read and well written

5	4	3	2	1	0
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C. Meetings/Presentations:

1. Prompt for meetings
2. Meeting informative
3. Meeting times scheduled in timely manner
4. Agenda of meeting explained
5. Met within scheduled time allotted
6. Dressed appropriately for meetings

5	4	3	2	1	0
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D. Hawaii Bridal Expo:

1. Booth decoration was appropriate for presentation
2. Staff was dressed appropriate for presentation
3. Informative/knowledgeable regarding services
4. Customer service (attitude and welcoming)

5	4	3	2	1	0
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E. Website:

1. Informative regarding services provided
2. User friendly in regards to navigating the website
3. Always up to date when you return for visits

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Comments and Suggestions:

SECTION III – EVENT COORDINATION:

(Please check-mark the quality of service that you have received with the following areas for each line)

A. Coordinator and Staff's Competencies:

1. Displayed professional coordination
2. Planning & researches resources with ease
3. Knowledge of traditions, trends and etiquettes
4. Organizational skills demonstrated
5. Follows through with details
6. Appearance & dressed appropriately for occasion

5	4	3	2	1	0
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B. Customer Service:

1. Service oriented and accommodating
2. Respond time for any request in a timely manner
3. Listened closely to my concerns
4. Responded appropriately to my concerns
5. Teamwork and Overall Energy
6. Overall Customer Service Experience for Coordination

5	4	3	2	1	0
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C. Timeline:

1. Timeliness of service and on-track with schedule
2. Speed and sense of urgency for completion
3. Follow(s) up with me to assess timeline
4. Makes appropriate changes to timeline as it applies to the location, layout and timing of each event description

5	4	3	2	1	0
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D. Vendors:

1. Communicates well with vendors
2. Confirms schedule with vendors
3. Calls vendors regarding questions or concerns
4. Referred competent vendors when services are required

5	4	3	2	1	0
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Further Reading:

- ✓ John Rodney Turner, Martina Huemann, Anne E. Keegan, (2008), *Human Resource Management in the Project-Oriented Organization*
- ✓ Karin Bredin, Jonas Söderlund, (2011), *Human Resource Management in Project-Based Organizations: The HR Quadriad Framework*