

Photography

Unit 9

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All the guests have returned home, the cake is eaten, the flowers have died, and the dress has aged to yellow. What remains are the memories, many of which have been captured digitally or on film. Photography comprises 10 percent of the average wedding budget. However, its enduring results justify why many couples invest 15 percent or more. Consultants typically advise clients to get the best photographer they can afford because their photographs can continually bring them back to their wedding day.

Changes in technology have revolutionized wedding photography. This section will highlight (1) the movement from film to digital photography; (2) the two primary styles of photography; and (3) album design and trends in photography.

The Movement from Film to Digital Photography

While some wedding photographers still use film, the vast majority have moved to digital because of the benefits it offers their clients. First, digital improvements over the past several years allow color, saturation, and sharpness to be superior to what film can achieve. Second, digital allows for online proofing, which means that the couple and their friends and family can look through the proofs regardless of where they reside. Third, digital allows for almost instantaneous feedback.

Finally, digital images can be safely stored in multiple locations so there is no fear of losing original work. Digital media is mistakenly thought to be less expensive to execute than film. Top photographers run five or more high-end computers with enormous amounts of storage in each to handle the flow of processing. They also constantly update their cameras to have access to the latest technology. Rodney explains that digital processing takes three times the effort of film processing, owing to the number of images captured as well as the creativity that goes into modern album design. When helping your clients compare prices, ensure that the photographer's packages include photo shoot time, production time, album design, reprint costs, and options regarding access to digital negatives.

Selecting the Right Photographer

Although it may seem to be a somewhat daunting task, choosing a wedding photographer is a very important part of planning a wedding. By following a few simple steps, you can be rest assured that all should go well on the wedding day.

Not all couples will prefer the photojournalistic style, and many photographers remain partial to the traditional style. As a wedding consultant, you should introduce both styles to your clients and allow them to select the one that speaks to them. The number of images that a photographer will take at a wedding can vary significantly based on personal style and approach, so this is an important consideration when comparing photographers. Recommend to your clients that they meet with a minimum of two photographers to take a

look at sample albums and get to know them in person. The personality of the photographer can be as important as the skill set, and each couple should feel that they can get along with the photographer. Furthermore, each couple has a sense of what they want their wedding album to look like, and there is no single correct interpretation. It is also important that the wedding consultant and the photographer get along well, in particular for a traditional photo shoot. The consultant will be the main point of contact with the photographer and can indicate what pictures are requested as well as gather those who will be featured in the images. This allows the couple to enjoy their day without worrying about herding the bridal party, family members, and others for key photos. The photographer should also understand the cultural needs of your clients. When, where, and how wedding photographs are taken can vary significantly by culture, as illustrated in

Considering Client's Photographic Needs

Once you've made a few appointments to meet with some photographers, consider what it is that your client actually requires from them and what your expectations are, both in terms of their personal style and their work.

Questions To Ask from the Photographer

Ensure that you prepare some questions to ask your photographer before you meet with them.

The list below may be of assistance to you.

- Do they have recent examples of their work? This will usually be in the form of display albums. Ensure that the albums that you view are examples of the actual photographer's individual work; rather that of someone else's who works for the same company/studio.
- Is the photographer that you actually meet with (at your appointment) the one who will be taking the photos on the day? Many studios have more than one photographer, and the one that you meet with may not necessarily be the one who is booked for the ceremony.
- How long has the photographer been working in the industry, and what are their qualifications? Experience is something that may make a considerable difference when it comes to wedding photography.
- Is the photographer (or studio) accredited with any professional associations?
- Does the photographer use film or digital cameras (or both)?
- Does the photographer have back up equipment? If you are familiar with photography equipment, you may wish to ask about the type of cameras used, type of lenses etc.
- How much does the photographer charge? This is a tricky one. Ensure that you know exactly what you are getting and how much it will cost. See the section below for more information on costs involved with wedding photography.
- Does the photographer sign a contract with you, what does it involve and does he/she guarantee their work? Ensure that if you are to sign a contract with your photographer that you have read it in its entirety and understand it. It may be a

good idea to compare contracts from one photographer to the next to ensure that you are getting the 'best deal'. Always obtain a copy of the original for your record.

- How long does the photographer take to prepare and deliver the album after the wedding?
- Will you be able to keep the negatives (if your photos are taken with film) or a copy of the photos on disc (if a digital format has been used)? If so, are there any extra costs for this service?
- Are there any optional extras available that you should know about? Many photographers offer an array of extras when it comes to wedding photography. These may include options such as parent's albums, enlargements, pre-wedding portraits, extra pages for the wedding albums and photo frames.

Viewing the Photographers Portfolio

When meeting with the photographer, you will be given the opportunity to browse through a portfolio of their work. These are often in the form of display albums, however it will vary from one photographer to the next.

When given this opportunity, you should know what to look for in order to choose photos that are of good quality and clarity.

Here are some things to consider when browsing through the photos:

- Firstly think about your first impressions. Do you like what you see? Do the photos catch your eye?
- What emotion do you feel when viewing the photos? Do you sigh in awe or disappointment from the photos?
- Are the photos the type that you dream of, or dread for your wedding album?
- Do the photos look natural or 'set up/posed'?
- Do the people in the photos look content and happy?
- Are the colours bright and crisp, and of a good clarity?
- Are the photos in focus?
- Is the technical aspect good?
- Are the photos printed on a good quality paper and have they been well presented?
- Are the layouts and designs of the albums appealing to you?
- Are the wedding albums of a style that suit your tastes and budget? Are there several to choose from?
- Are the albums well constructed and do they protect the photos from dust and light?
- Are the pages used in the wedding albums acid free?
- Can additional pages be added to the albums?

Do not be afraid to be critical when browsing through display albums and portfolios. You will no doubt be paying good money for your wedding photos, and you only get one chance at having them taken!

Wedding Photography Costs

The cost of wedding photography will vary from one photographer to the next. You should however find a very 'general' consensus amongst them in terms of the different fees that they may charge and optional extras.

As a general idea, the costs that you may come across in relation to your wedding photos may include the following:

- A set price package deal, including wedding ceremony, reception, album, photos etc. You will need to read through the inclusions thoroughly to ensure that you are aware of what is included.
- Location fees. Some photographers may charge a fee if they are required to travel over a certain distance for your wedding. These may also apply if you wish to have photos taken at various locations throughout the day.
- Fees to stay throughout the entire reception (after the wedding ceremony).
- Fees for extra pages in the album.
- Fees for extra photos to be taken (the photographer may have a limit on the amount that they will take on the day).
- Fees for different styles of photography. For example the photographer may only provide digital images and you may request digital and film.
- Fees for hand colouring on black and white prints.
- Fees for an assistant.
- Fees for a copy of the negatives or images on disc.
- Fees for extra albums, such as parent's albums etc.
- Fees for enlargements.
- Fees for thank you cards and envelopes.
- Fees to have the photos placed on the internet.
- Fees for framing.
- Fees for other custom designed options.

Styles of Photography

Two primary styles of photography are traditional and photojournalistic. Consider your parents' or grandparents' wedding album. You probably see a fair amount of black and white, but more significantly, all the pictures are carefully posed. Using the traditional style, photographers will even stop the reception to stage a moment. For example, the bride and groom might pretend to cut the cake to get a good pose. Then they move on to the next staged moment. Wedding albums used to include nothing but groups lined up and the couple.

TABLE 10.1 Comparing Two Wedding Photography Styles

Traditional Style

- Posed
- Staged
- Directed
- Front and center
- Hands-on
- Significant communication
- Traditional mount album

Photojournalistic Style

- Candid
- Natural
- Spontaneous
- All angles
- Hands-off
- Little communication
- Flush mount album

Only within the last decade has the photojournalistic style evolved within the context of weddings. This style means that the photographer is documenting real moments, almost like telling a story. It is very candid, fluid, spontaneous, and versatile. Photos are taken from a variety of directions, with pictures from angled positions more likely than those taken front and center. When hiring a photojournalist for their wedding, most couples will still request a few staged photographs, but the vast majority of the images will be real moments that are captured.

Most photographers, regardless of style, will work with at least one assistant and generally have more than one if there are more than 500 guests at the wedding. With an assistant, one photographer can capture images of the bride as she is getting ready while the other can be with the groom. Furthermore, at many ceremony sites, one can be on the floor, while the other can get the overhead perspective from the balcony. Importantly, some ceremony sites do not allow photography, and even those that do generally have strict policies regarding photographer location and flash. Experienced wedding photographers will use available light rather than flash and remain unobtrusive by using a telephoto lens and gathering images from the back of the ceremony site.

Album Design and Trends in Photography

The albums that result from the two styles of photography are also vastly different. With a traditional album, the photographs are bound and bordered. Clients can split the page apart and pull the photograph out of the page. The onset of digital photography and the photojournalistic style allowed for the origination of the flush mount album. Flush mount albums allow a picture or a group of pictures to be the page, just like photographs in a book or magazine. Top-quality flush mount album companies offer up to a 200-year guarantee and coat the pages to protect the photographic paper from liquid spills, fingerprints, fading, and peeling.

Keep in mind that with any album, your clients will definitely get what they pay for, with the album leaders offering noticeably superior quality. For example, only the highest quality flush mount album companies have patented binding systems that allow the center seam to be flat, offering a beautiful panoramic spread without a bulky midpoint.

The flush mounted album has also increased the options for album size. Traditionally, couples would have one album made and then get a handful of individual photos reprinted for family and friends. Now, the couple's entire album can be readily duplicated in a smaller size.

Most couples will want a mixture of color and black and white photos in their albums. The flush mounted style allows for a seamless integration of color and black and white. Black and white or sepia photos, which include brown and gray tones, are classic, elegant, and timeless. The lack of bright colors allows the viewer to focus on specific details; for example, rather than noticing the pinks and yellows in a bouquet, the eye is drawn to the shape of the petals and the curve of a ribbon. Also, black and white is forgiving in that inconsistent makeup or an inadvertent wine stain on a white tuxedo is less likely to stand out. From an historical perspective, black and white allow for consistent documentation.

Counsel your clients to inquire about the average processing time for wedding albums. The time needed between the wedding and delivery of the final album is influenced by factors such as (1) the photographer's style and post-wedding process for creating and designing an album; (2) the client's turnaround time, which includes the review of proofs, final image selection and/or feedback regarding album layout; and (3) the album company's production time.



A lack of bright colours allows the viewer to focus on specific details.

Beyond changes in technique and album design, three additional trends in photography are engagement photo shoots, photo guest books, and photo-video hybrids. Top photographers

will schedule engagement photo shoots two or three times a year. Spring and fall are common, and the photographer will often select a beautiful outdoor location and can meet with a dozen or so clients over a period of a few hours rather than making individual appointments with each couple. Engagement photos can be used for newspaper announcements, save-the-date notices, and holiday greeting cards.

A more recent trend is to flush mount engagement photos to create a personalized guest book. Therefore, instead of having a generic guest book, clients can have their photos go across the top of each page and then lines for signatures are provided underneath. A final trend is the photo-video hybrid. Videography offers the ability to capture audio, which is particularly important for couples who would like to have specific moments such as the exchange of vows or the voice of a soloist captured. Digital photography and related software products allow for the creative placement of images in a slide show that is set to music. As the video capabilities of digital cameras continue to evolve, more couples may opt to hire a photo-video hybrid specialist.

Plan for the Day

Once you have decided upon a wedding photographer, it's a good idea to meet with them in advance to plan for the photos. This should allow both you and the photographer to gain an understanding of how the day should proceed and also ensure that your clients' photographic needs are met.

Discuss locations for photo shoots and take into consideration the time it will take to travel to each, the weather (have some back up locations in case of inclement weather), sunset times, traffic, and ceremony and reception start and finish times.

Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Photography

- Introduce your clients to both traditional and photojournalistic styles of photography; including sample albums, to determine which best suits their personalities.
- Be aware of the dates available for engagement photographs for photographers who schedule them two or three times a year.
- Help your clients make a list of the "must have" photos that they wish to be taken.
- Be familiar with the rules for photography at area places of worship.
- Ensure that the photographer will have an assistant for the wedding day.
- Ask the photographer to tell you the average number of images s/he takes at weddings.
- Determine if the photographer will be shooting all color or if a percentage of black and white is available.
- When comparing packages, ensure that the photographer's options include photo shoot time, design and production time, album options, reprint costs, and the option to purchase the digital negatives.

