



UNIT-1

The Wedding Planning Industry

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Identify the concept of Marriage in various Religions
- ✓ Explore the Wedding traditions in different countries
- ✓ Recognize the Role and Scope of wedding consultancy

Unit 1

The Wedding Planning Industry

The word “wed” is derived from the ancient Greek word for “pledge.” And that’s exactly what a wedding is, no matter what country it takes place in, no matter what culture it’s part of. To wed is to pledge yourself to another.

The popular concept of marriage is that it is a union between a man and a woman. Another concept about marriage is that it is a social sanction of the union and it is accomplished by different rituals and ceremonies. Yet another view about marriage is that it is a system of roles involving primary relationships. Marriage is one of the deepest and most complex human relationships. It is the cornerstone of a society. It involves social sanction, generally in the form of civil or religious ceremony, authorizing two persons of opposite sexes to engage in sexual union.

Marriage is a bringing together. It is a bringing together of two people, of two families, or two tribes, or two villages, or even two countries. Marriage is that powerful. Marriage is not something to be entered into lightly. Marriage is a pledge meant to last a lifetime.

The Concept of Marriage in Different Religions

Marriage among Muslims

Marriage among Muslim is universal and obligatory. Marriage places an essential position in Islam. Keeping in view the immense importance of Marriage Islam declares Marriage as a one-half faith. Since the Muslim community discourages celibacy, marriage has to be performed. In Islam, marriage is a contract between a man and woman to live as husband and wife. A formal, binding contract is considered integral to a religiously valid Islamic marriage, and outlines the rights and responsibilities of the groom and bride. The marriage must be declared publicly. Divorce is permitted.

Characteristic features of Muslim marriage are; acceptance of the proposal of marriage by the bride; capability of the bridegroom to enter into a marriage contract; preference system i.e. parallel cousins (father's brother's daughters) and cross cousins (mother's brother's daughters) are given preference; and marriage is valid only if it is free from legal complications.

Marriage among Christians

The Christian community has two major denominations: Catholics and Protestants. The Catholic owe allegiance to the Pope. The Pope is the supreme authority in the Catholic Church. All the teachings of the Catholic Church has the approval of the Pope. - The Protestants have several denominations or groups. Hierarchical approach is limited within each denomination. As per the teaching of the Catholic Church marriage is a sacrament. There is no provision for divorce. However a marriage can be declared null and void if one of the spouses is already married and the partner from the first marriage is still alive. A

marriage can also be declared null and void in case if the spouse is of unsound mind, impotent etc. at the time of marriage. But the procedure to get a marriage declared null and void from Church is very tedious as the clearance has to come from the Vatican.

Among the Catholics mixed marriages are permitted (with a person from any other religion). However the Catholic spouse has to make an undertaking that the offspring would be brought up in the Catholic faith. Among the Protestants divorce is permitted. Marriages are usually performed within the church in the presence of relatives and friends. Married couples are free to register their marriage for legal purpose. Protestant couples usually seek divorce from a court of law. Among the Protestants, remarriage is also permitted after divorce. According to the teaching of the Church free consent from both the parties is must. Consent must be an act of the will of each of the contracting parties, free of coercion or grave external fear.

Marriage in Hindus

The Hindu concept of marriage is that it is a sanskara (tradition) and a religious sacrament, not a contract. It is a holy union of the two souls and not simply of two bodies. It is an indissoluble bond which could be broken only by death.

Marriage among Jews

In a Jewish wedding both the bride and the groom are walked down the aisle by both of their parents, which is different from other religions.

Jewish couples are married under the chupah, which resembles a decorated tent like structure. This symbolizes that the bride and groom are coming together and creating a new home. This religious tradition comes from the Biblical wedding of Abraham and Sarah.

The ketubah is a Jewish wedding contract. The rabbi reads it under the chupah after the ring ceremony. Many couples frame their ketubah and display it in their home. Traditionally, the ketubah was written in Aramaic, but today many Jews use Hebrew instead. Like most married couples have documents to show they are married. The rabbi reads this contract under the chupah after the ring exchange.

Wedding Traditions

Chinese Wedding Traditions

Red is the Colour of Weddings in China

Red is central to the wedding theme of China. It signifies love, joy and prosperity and is used in a variety of ways in Chinese wedding traditions. The bride's wedding dress is often red, as are the wedding invitations, and wedding gift boxes or envelopes for cash gifts. Even the bride and groom's homes are decorated in red on the wedding day.



Before the Chinese Wedding Day

Before the wedding celebration, a Chinese bride traditionally goes into seclusion with her closest friends. This Chinese custom gives the bride-to-be some time to symbolically mourn the loss of her friends and family. Sometime before the couple are married, the groom's family carries wedding gifts in red baskets and boxes to the bride's house. One of the baskets will contain "uangsusu" or 'milk money'. Others will contain personal things for the bride, so that on her wedding day all of her personal belongings will be in the groom's house. The bride takes the gifts to another room where they are sorted through. Three days before the wedding day, women from the bride's family reciprocate, bearing gifts -- including some 'returns'-- in red wrappings to the groom's family.

The Day of the Wedding Ceremony

Wedding anniversaries in China, are carefully chosen according to astrological signs. It is also customary for couples to be married on the half-hour or their wedding day rather than at the top of the hour. In this way, the couple begins their new lives together on an 'upswing', while the hands of the clock are moving up, rather than down.

On the morning of his wedding day, the groom is symbolically dressed by his parents. The groom arrives at the house of his bride on the way to the wedding chapel. He brings gifts of cash, wrapped in red tissue, to give to his bride's friends, in exchange for 'letting her go'. In some families, the wedding couple serves tea to both sets of parents while kneeling in front of them as a symbolic gesture of asking for permission. The bride and groom then leave for the wedding site together.

Chinese Marriage Ceremony and Wedding Reception

The wedding ceremony is usually attended only by the couples' immediate families. Just after the ceremony and before the wedding reception, the bride who honours tradition will serve tea to her in-

laws in a formal ceremony. The couple will usually go to a professional studio for wedding pictures before they proceed to their reception. The wedding reception is, an elaborate standing only affair.



A welcoming speech is usually performed by an MC who is hired for the occasion. The speech is followed by a cake cutting ceremony. The traditional wedding cake is immense, with many layers. The layers symbolize a ladder that they couple will 'climb to success', so couples will cut the cake from the bottom and work their way up. The cutting of the cake is the only event of the reception. The bride and groom feed each other a piece of cake with arms entwined, trying not to destroy the bride's elaborate makeup. A piece is then cut for each of the parents and for the grandparents, who are fed by the bride and groom holding the cake together. Sometimes a wedding toast is given and guests are invited to greet the newlyweds and their parents. Musical entertainment, which ranges from a simple keyboard player to a symphony or orchestra, accompanies the receiving line. It is customary for guests to shake hands again before leaving the reception. At more elaborate Chinese weddings, a sit-down reception may feature a 9 or 10 course meal as well as musical entertainment.

Chinese brides often change outfits at least three times during the reception

Wedding Traditions in India

Sweets, eggs, and money are woven into to wedding themes of India. They symbolize, respectively, a sweet life, fertility, and prosperity. The Hindu wedding ceremony includes customary rituals to ward off evil spirits. After the wedding vows have been exchanged the groom's father or brother showers flower

petals on the newlyweds; then he holds a coconut over the bride and groom's heads and circles it around them three times. An Indian groom often wears a turban with a veil of flowers streaming down in front of his face to protect him from evil spirits.

Traditional Indian brides wear pink and red saris on their wedding day, adorning themselves extravagantly with as much jewellery as possible. Henna staining, a customary art form, is still practiced by Indian brides to be. On the eve of her wedding vows, following a traditional ceremonial cleansing, the bride-to-be will have her hands and feet painted with henna, in beautiful paisley or medallion patterns.



Then a special wedding gift is given to the bride, a necklace signifying her married status.

Wedding Traditions in Indonesia

Customary Engagement Etiquette in Indonesia

An Indonesian engagement could easily last for many years. During this time, ceremonial gift giving takes place between the bride and groom's families to strengthen their familiarity.

Indonesian Wedding Ceremony

An Indonesian wedding programme is a very important event. Everyone that is even slightly acquainted with the bride and groom may be invited, and this could mean thousands of guests. The majority of invited guests do not attend the actual ceremony, but it is considered rude to be invited to the wedding reception, to share in the joy of the newlyweds, and to not attend.

Wedding Reception Celebration

There is often an elaborate processional into the reception site, which consists of a long chain of flowers. Professional dancers perform traditional Indonesian dances, while family and guests await the arrival of the newlyweds. It is customary for the traditional Indonesian bride and groom to greet each guest in a long receiving line, before the reception festivities can begin.



The Betrothal

The Japanese betrothal ceremony, called the *yuino*, is an exchange of symbolic gifts between the groom's and bride's families. Some popular gifts are: *konbu*, a sea weed whose name can be written to mean "child-bearing woman"; a long white piece of hemp, representing a wish that the couple will grow old and gray together; and a folding fan, which spreads to show future wealth and growth. The main gift is money (about \$5,000), tucked in a special envelope called a *shugi-bukuro*, which has gold and silver strings that are impossible to unknot. The other gifts are given in ornate rice-paper envelopes.

Sake-Sharing Ceremony

The traditional Japanese ceremony is a Shinto ceremony, though many Japanese in America celebrate weddings with a Buddhist ceremony. Regardless of religious rituals, most Japanese also include a cultural sake-sharing tradition at the wedding, popularly called *san-san-kudo* -- san means "three," ku means "to deliver," and do means "nine." This ritual dates back to a time when sharing sake created a formal bond as strongly as a handshake did in Victorian times. Using three flat sake cups stacked atop one another, the bride and groom take three sips each from the cups. Then their parents also take sips (for a total of nine sips), cementing the bond between the families.



Honouring the Parents

Japanese weddings usually take some time to acknowledge the parents of the bride and groom. In some weddings, the couple offers bouquets of flowers, a toast, or a personal letter of love and thanks. Any of these gestures is a beautiful way to honour your parents at the wedding.

Speeches

Wedding speeches and blessings are very important at Japanese weddings. Family, friends, colleagues, and teachers all stand up at one point or another to wish the couple well. Traditionally, these speeches might be moralistic tales about matrimony's importance; in America, they have evolved into heartfelt messages of love from close friends and family.

Korean Wedding

Engagement Parties

Most Korean-American engagement parties are now held in restaurants. Gifts are exchanged -- sometimes worth \$30,000 to \$40,000! -- and family members are formally introduced. The bride may wear the traditional *hanbok* (a special engagement dress). Entertainment is expected, but can range from classical Korean music to family members singing along with a karaoke machine.

A Wild Goose

Before the wedding, a beautiful tradition takes place: The groom gives the bride's mother a wild goose (traditionally, a live goose was used; today it is often a wooden goose). Wild geese mate for life, so his gift is a promise that he will care for her daughter for life.



A Gourd of Wine

The traditional Korean wedding is held at the bride's family home. Vows are taken in a ceremony called *kunbere*: Bride and groom bow to each other and seal their vow by sipping a special wine poured into a gourd grown by the bride's mother.

Dates & Chestnuts

A few days after the ceremony, the couple visit the groom's family for another wedding ceremony, the *p'ye-baek*. Here the bride offers dates and chestnuts -- symbols of children -- to the groom's parents, while sitting at a low table filled with other symbolic offerings. The parents offer sake in return, and as a final gesture they throw the dates and chestnuts at the bride, who tries to catch them in her large wedding skirt.

Wedding Banquet

Korean wedding banquets can be very simple: Noodle soup is the only required dish. In fact, the wedding banquet is called *kook soo sang*, which means "noodle banquet." Long noodles -- symbolizing a wish for a long and happy life -- are boiled in beef broth and garnished with vegetables. *Dok*, a sticky rice cake, is served at most Korean events, especially weddings.

Wedding Traditions in Pakistan

Four Day Wedding Ritual of Pakistan

Traditional Pakistani marriage celebrations last for four days.

First Day of the Celebration

On the first day, the bride and groom's families each dress in yellow, and celebrate the upcoming nuptials separately. The betrothed couple will not see each other from this day until the ceremony.



Second Day of the Celebration

The second day is reserved for a big celebration called Mendi that includes dancing and singing ancient songs. On this day, the groom's family delivers the wedding dress to the bride's family, and then her family takes the groom's wedding attire to his family.

The bride's family string hundreds of coloured lights over and around their home, creating an ostentatious announcement of their daughter's forthcoming marriage. Here, the bride-to-be receives a traditional henna staining of her hands and feet. This traditional Muslim art form invokes intricately designs to create beautiful symbolic patterns. The bride-to-be is waited on by her family while the henna stain dries overnight.

Third Day is the Marriage Ceremony

The wedding rites and ceremony in Pakistan take places on the third day. The Pakistani bride and groom who continue their traditions wear garments of red. The bride's gown is very elaborate, as are her veil and jewellery. Men wear a distinctive traditional turban. After wedding vows are exchanged, the Holy Koran is held over the new bride's head as she joins her husband's family. The official paperwork is signed in the presence of an Islamic priest and the guests.



Fourth and Final Day of Wedding Program in Pakistan

On the fourth day, the couple hosts their first dinner as husband and wife. The groom's family invites all of the guests to their home for a feast. This is called 'valima'

Wedding Traditions in Thailand

Before wedding bells can be heard in Thailand, the couple getting married prepares food for the monks. In return, the monks will give the bride and groom a blessing.

Wedding ceremonies in Thailand usually include only relatives and close friends of the couple.

It is a Thai marriage ritual for the bride and groom to sit together on the floor, each with their hands pressed together, fingers pointing up under their chins. The couple's hands are also linked by a chain of flowers. The oldest relative leads the wedding ceremony and to wish the couple luck, he dips their hands in a conch shell containing water. Their parents and other guests will then do the same.



In rural areas, an elderly couple may arrange the bridal bed for the newlyweds and leave good luck tokens such as; rice, sesame seeds and coins. This Thai wedding custom symbolizes good luck and fertility.

Wedding Traditions in Turkey

The Turkish marriage celebration continues after the wedding ceremony for several days. The newlywed bride may return home the morning after her wedding vows to see her family and friends, who then might perform a henna ritual on her.

A Muslim wedding programme in Turkey lasts from four to seven days, starting with separate celebrations of the bride and groom's families. From this day on, the couple getting married cannot see each other until their wedding ceremony.



A Turkish bride might wear a beautifully embroidered silk wedding dress with a red velvet cape.

Russian Wedding Traditions

Russian Civil Ceremony

Russian church weddings are not considered official, and so couples wanting to get married must exchange their wedding vows at a Russian marriage civil ceremony. Here, the bride and groom receive bread and salt, symbolizing health, prosperity and long life.

The Russian civil ceremony is often considered unimportant to friends and relatives of the bride and groom. The main affair is the wedding reception, a great two day celebration with music, dancing, feasting and drinking.

Traditions at a Russian Wedding Reception

Once the reception celebration has begun, a relative or close friend will make a wedding toast to the bride and groom. In keeping with Russian custom, everyone throws their champagne glasses on the floor. It is considered good luck if the glasses break when they hit the ground.

Russian Orthodox Marriage Ceremony

When a traditional Orthodox couple get married in Russia, they are crowned as royalty for the day. The bride and groom must stand on a special carpet as they recite their marriage vows, but first they race each other to it. Whoever reaches the carpet first will, presumably, be the head of the household.



African Wedding Traditions

Africa is a large and varied continent containing some of the oldest civilizations on earth. It is home to a wide diversity of religions and cultures, and this colourful diversity is reflected in its diverse and colourful weddings traditions.

If anyone wedding tradition might be said to be indicative of the African continent it would be the importance of *family*. An African wedding is, more than anything, the bringing together of two people as a single family, or the combining of two families or even the mixture of two tribes into one family unit. The concept of *family* is one of the unifying ideas of the African continent.

There are more than 1,000 cultural units in Africa and each culture, each tribe has its own wedding and marriage traditions, many of which can trace their origins back hundreds or even thousands of years.

There are also many different religions represented in Africa. Many northern Africans, especially, have been influenced by Muslim traditions, while further south there are more Christian, Hindu, and even Jewish traditions interspersed with more ancient traditions.

In many places in Africa young girls are trained to be good wives from an early age. They may even learn secret codes and secret languages that allow them to talk with other married women without their husbands understanding what is being said.

Depending on which part of Africa you are in, wedding ceremonies can be extremely elaborate, some lasting many days. Often huge ceremonies are held during which many couples are united at the same time.

In Sudan and in other areas along the Nile a man must pay his wife's family in sheep or cattle for the loss of their daughter's labour in support of the family. A wife may cost a man as many as 30 to 40 head of cattle. Often it is difficult to pay the family yet still have enough cattle left to support his new wife.

In Somalia a man is allowed to have as many as four wives if he can support them all, and it is not uncommon for a girl to be engaged before she is even born.

Bright festive colours, song, dance, and music are vital elements of many African wedding ceremonies. Common to all wedding ceremonies is the concept of transitioning between childhood and adulthood. In many African cultures children are encouraged to marry as young as 13 to 15 years of age, as soon as they have reached physical adulthood.

Divorce is rare in African marriages. Problems in a marriage are often discussed with both families and solutions found. Often entire villages join in to help a couple find solutions to their problems and keep a marriage from failing.



Marriage is sacred the world over, and that is definitely true in Africa, no matter which region or which culture you come from, and no matter what your religious beliefs. In fact, many cultures have a special totem that is designed to remind a couple that cultural and tribal differences must be allowed for in order to make a marriage succeed.

English Traditions

Getting Married in Great Britain

Wedding flowers are scattered by a small girl preceding the English bride and her wedding party, who walk together to the wedding chapel or the wedding site. The flowered path and symbolic walk express hope for the bride's path through life to be happy and lovely. English bridesmaids wear wedding dresses very much like the bride's, so she cannot be singled out by any jealous evil wishers, who might curse her for her happiness.



Brides sew a good luck charm, such as the silver horseshoe of royal British brides, to the hem of their wedding dresses. Old English wedding tradition also calls for the bride to carry a horseshoe, streaming with ribbons, for good luck.

English Wedding Ceremony

Traditionally, an English couple getting married will exchange their vows outside the wedding chapel doorway, allowing the ceremony to be witnessed by anyone who might want to watch.

Traditional English Wedding Receptions

Traditional English wedding cake is a fruitcake, usually made with raisins, ground almonds, cherries and marzipan. The fruitcake is served at the wedding reception along with another traditional cake -- the groom's cake -- which originated during the Tudor period. It was once English custom for this to be a fruitcake as well, but today; the groom's cake is likely to be chocolate.

A unique Victorian wedding reception event is called a 'ribbon pull'. A sterling silver charm is purchased for each of the bridesmaids. A ribbon is tied to each one, and the baker places them between layers of the wedding cake as it is being assembled. Before the bride and groom share their first slice of cake, the bridesmaids gather so that each can pull one ribbon, claiming for herself a future good promise.

The wedding tradition of tying shoes to the cars of newlyweds also began in England during the Tudor period. Originally, wedding reception guests threw shoes at the newlyweds as they were leaving the church for good luck. The modern tradition is to tie shoes to the honeymoon vehicle. The English consider rain on a wedding day a sign of good fortune.

Austrian Wedding Customs and Traditions

Proposal

In the past when the marriage proposal was a more formal procedure, the prospective groom sent his friend or members of the family to represent his interests to the prospective bride and her family. If they

saw a blind man, a monk or a pregnant woman it was thought that the marriage would be doomed if they continued their journey as these sights were thought to be bad omens. If, however, they saw goats, pigeons or wolves these were good omens which would bring good fortune to the marriage.

Surnames

It was thought unlucky for a woman to marry a man whose surname began with the same letter as hers. The sentiment was summarised in the following rhyme:

“To change the name and not the letter, is to change the worst and not the better.”

The bride should not practise writing her new name before the wedding. This is thought to bring bad luck by tempting fate.

Choosing the Day

Although most weddings take place on a Saturday it was considered unlucky in the past. Fridays were also considered unlucky particularly Friday the 13th. The famous old rhyme advises a wedding in the first half of the week:

“Monday for wealth, Tuesday for health, Wednesday the best day of all, Thursday for losses, Friday for crosses, Saturday for no luck at all.”

The Wedding Dress

It is thought unlucky for the bride to make her own wedding dress. It is also unlucky for the groom to see the bride in her wedding dress before until she arrives the ceremony.

The bride should not wear her entire outfit before the wedding day. Some brides leave a final stitch on the dress undone until it is time to leave for the ceremony when the outfit is completed.

The Veil

Traditionally, brides have been thought to be particularly vulnerable to evil spirits and many of the customs and traditions associated with weddings are to provide protection.



Flowers

A combination of red and white flowers is avoided by the superstitious because they stand for blood and bandages. The groom often chooses a flower for his buttonhole which also occurs in the bride's bouquet. This is a vestige of the time when a knight would wear his lady's colour to display his love.

On the way the wedding

When the bride is ready to leave the house for the wedding ceremony a last look in the mirror will bring her good luck. However returning to the mirror once she has began her journey will result in bad luck. Seeing a chimney sweep on the way to a wedding is thought to bring good luck and it is still possible to hire one to attend wedding ceremonies. Other good luck omens when seen on the way to the ceremony include spiders, black cats and rainbows.

Bad weather on the way to the wedding is thought to be an omen of an unhappy marriage, although in some cultures rain is considered a good omen. Cloudy skies and wind are believed to cause stormy marriages; snow on the other hand is associated with fertility and wealth.

Bridesmaid

Bridesmaids were dressed in a similar way to the bride. The bridesmaids were thought to act as decoys to confuse evil spirits and thus protect the bride.



The Couple's first Purchase

It is said that the first partner who buys a new item after the wedding will be the dominant one in the relationship. Many brides ensure that they make the first purchase by arranging to buy a small item such as a pin from a bridesmaid immediately after the ceremony.

French Wedding Traditions

French Traditions and Traditions before the Marriage Ceremony

The traditional bridal trousseau, or hope chest, originated in France and came from the French word *trousse*, meaning bundle. The popularity of a bride wearing a white wedding gown on her day of matrimony began in France several hundred years ago. The custom of having fragrant flowers as decorations and bridal bouquets has also been popular for centuries. Each flower represents a special and unique meaning to the bride and groom, and especially fragrant flowers helped freshen things up a bit, before deodorant and perfumes were invented. Wedding bells in France were usually heard in spring and summer when it was warm enough for everyone to bathe!

Still practiced in small villages today, is a traditional French custom, for the groom to call on his future bride at her home on the morning of their wedding day. As he escorts her to the wedding chapel, the town's children stretch white ribbons across the road, which the bride cuts. The groom usually walks his mother down the aisle just prior to the main wedding procession. As the newlywed couple departs from the wedding site, laurel leaves are scattered in their path for them to walk over.

French Wedding Reception

A wedding toast is made to the newlyweds sometime during the traditional French wedding reception. Following this toast, they drink, as husband and wife, from a specially engraved, double handled goblet, usually a precious family heirloom passed down from generation to generation. After the wedding reception, and even later into the couple's wedding night, friends of the newlyweds might show up outside their window banging pots and pans, singing boisterous tunes. The groom is expected to invite them in for drinks and snacks.



German Wedding Traditions

Before the German Wedding Day

According to German wedding tradition, when a baby girl is born in Germany, several trees are planted in honour of her birth. When her wedding date is set, the trees are sold, and the money is used for her dowry. A unique German pre-wedding custom is the creation of a wedding newspaper by the friends and family of the bride and groom. This newspaper, or booklet, is filled with pictures, articles and stories of the engaged couple. The newspaper is sold at the wedding reception, to assist with the expenses of the honeymoon.

German Marriage Celebrations

A traditional wedding day, in Germany, could actually last three days. First, German couples who are getting married must have a civil ceremony at the city centre, which only family and close friends attend. The next night is the big wedding party. The bride and groom invite all of their friends, neighbours and acquaintances. German wedding tradition says it's good luck for guests to bring old dishes to break. The newlyweds then sweep up the broken pieces together; symbolizing that nothing will ever be broken in their house again.

Religious Marriage Ceremonies in Germany

On the third day, the German religious wedding ceremony takes place. German brides do not have traditional wedding attendants except for flower girls.

As the newlyweds leave the wedding chapel, they throw coins to the children watching.

A wedding reception follows the religious service. It is customary for the 'best man' to steal the bride from the reception and take her to a local pub, where they drink champagne until the groom finds them. Then the groom has to pay for all that they drank. Later, friends of the couple block all the reception site exits with ribbons and garlands. When the couple is ready to leave for their honeymoon, the groom must pay a toll to exit, usually the promise of another party.

Marriage in the Arab Culture

Celebrations

There are often multiple celebrations leading up to the actual wedding ceremony. There is the engagement celebration that is usually held in the bride's family's home where the groom may formally ask for the bride's hand. Then there is the party after the marriage contract is signed, and all of this happens before Henna night. This party could be compared to a bachelorette party in the west, in that only women are invited to this event. There may be dancing and refreshments, but the main event, so to

speak, is the woman who draws the Mehndi on the bride's and guests' feet and hands. This is a type of temporary tattoo in some very intricate and beautiful designs.

The Wedding Reception

The wedding reception is, of course, what all of this has been leading to, and there are a lot of different customs for this event. In rural areas you may see a lot of traditions that are not unlike what happens in the west. Speeches, dances, and singing are common, and the bride and groom may even cut the layered wedding cake and throw a bouquet of flowers. Out in more rural areas you may come across more reserved events, or ceremonies that have a little more traditional setting.



Wedding Etiquettes

Planning a wedding is an enormous undertaking. In fact, some say a wedding is as complicated to put together as a large theatre production. There is one major difference, however: a wedding must be planned according to rules of etiquette.

Wedding etiquette is defined as “the practices and forms prescribed by social convention and authority” as they pertain to a wedding (American Heritage College Dictionary). In other words, etiquette is a set of rules that should be followed, in the same way you must play by the rules in any game. For example, in the game of golf, you're required to play by the strict rules dictated by the United States Golf Association (USGA) in their little rule book. The USGA has rules for everything, including the size of the golf ball, how many golf clubs you're allowed to carry in your bag, and which player should putt first on the green. Always followed in a professional golf tournament, these strict rules of golf are comparable to the traditional rules of wedding etiquette, which are usually followed for a formal or ultraformal wedding.

In today's world of less formal weddings, however, couples prefer to bend the rules, depending on their wedding's degree of informality. This contemporary spin can be compared to a less formal game of golf where a foursome plays a casual, friendly game and takes all kinds of liberties. For example, a player may be encouraged to “just kick it out of the rough, Fred,” an action which is known in golf circles as a foot wedgie. Or, if a golfer doesn't like his drive, he can take a mulligan—golf jargon for a “do-over.” If you're planning a very formal wedding, you'll probably choose to follow the rules precisely. However, even if you're planning an informal wedding, you should be familiar with the rules before you decide how far to bend them. You'll also find that certain rules must be followed for all weddings, even a super-casual

wedding on the beach, because you don't want to damage precious relationships or hurt anyone's feelings.

The Role and Scope of Wedding Consultancy

As couples begin thinking about their wedding, they are often confused as to how much to spend, where to obtain specialised services, and how to choose vendors. There are things to plan about everything from invitation wording to planning their honeymoon. Couples often find they want experienced professional help.

Not long ago, a wedding coordinator was thought of as a luxury, only used by the wealthy. Now a coordinator is essential to the well planned affair. It is no longer "trendy" to engage a coordinator. Being experienced in negotiating contracts with caterers, florists, photographers, and other suppliers, the coordinator saves valuable time and money. The coordinator can take advantage of discounts not available to private parties and avoid costly mistakes, while turning your dreams into reality.

The wedding planner ensures that everything goes exactly as planned right from the initial stage to the closing stage. He not only assists client in making right selection and choosing the perfect wedding vendors and venue but also maintains a balance in what is happening, when it is happening, who is doing it while keeping a strict watch that everything goes within budget.

According to a survey the average wedding in 2006 cost approximately \$26,000 versus \$15,000 in 1990, representing a 73 percent growth. As Weddings; entail significant financial output on typically first-time purchase decisions. A wedding planner brings experience to the process.

Global trends indicate that wedding planners are bound to be increasingly in demand.

An individual entering the wedding business from a planning perspective has many titles from which to choose. Some of the more common include wedding consultant, wedding planner, bridal consultant, wedding coordinator, wedding director, and wedding designer.

Some of the job titles used to refer to someone who plans weddings are:

Wedding Coordinator The term "wedding coordinator" is occasionally used in place of "*wedding planner*." but, some of these individuals are involved only in coordinating the wedding ceremony.

Wedding Consultant The term "*wedding consultant*" refers to someone who owns a wedding planning business. A wedding consultant may plan the entire wedding, part, or simply give advice to couples who want to plan their own weddings.

A Bridal Consultant Nearly all bridal consultants are *wedding planners* who assist with all aspects of the wedding. This title is also used to refer to people who work in retail stores, like bridal shops, and focus on working with brides.

A Wedding Director This term is every so often used in the southern part of the country for a wedding coordinator who is occupied only with the wedding ceremony.

Wedding Planner A *wedding planner* assists in actually planning and organizing all or *any* aspect of a wedding ceremony, along with the reception.

Today's bride is spending more money than ever before to ensure that her wedding day, the single most important day of her life, is planned to perfection. Once reserved only for the very rich, today's brides-and grooms-to-be, who are often busy with individual careers and yet wanting to make their wedding *uniquely personal*, are turning to wedding planners for help. They help to save time, money and significant stress when preparing for their wedding.

Skills required for a Wedding Planner

Sense of Humour

The first thing it takes is an honest, "sense of humour," This is a business where you're constantly depending on the professionalism and reliability of up to a dozen or more people to create a bride's dream wedding, there's always the possibility that something will go awry or bomb out completely. That's why, having a sense of humour and the ability to think on your feet are key to keeping things on track or fixing the problems that will inevitably turn up a healthy *sense of humour*, will make your job easier.

From indecisive or emotional brides to controlling parents and absentee vendors, your work is cut out for you. Having a good sense of humour is a great helper for you on your career.

Personal Qualities You Must Cultivate

Major traits that mark a great and successful wedding planner, are:

Organizational skills

Remember, you are being assigned to "*organize*" a wedding. There will be countless times that you will have to cope with a number of errands in addition to dealing with several people, *and all at the sametime*. It's essential to ensure that these numerous tasks and details are handled in a timely manner so that your wedding runs effortlessly.

Interpersonal proficiency

A necessary trait to needed to attract new clients and to work successfully with many people, also to profitably correspond with the bride and groom to discover what they really want.

Imagination

A wedding is the most important high point in most people's lives as well as something they will want to remember and cherish for their lifetime. As a wedding planner, you will be called upon to use your ingenuity to come up with exclusive ideas for ceremonies and receptions even when hired to put on a "traditional" wedding. Bear in mind, each couple that hires you will be different and have elements of their wedding that are special to them.

Persistence

Patience is a virtue that is critical for your success. You" find, you'll have to be patient, both with your clients and your business itself, because each wedding you're hired for will require different things of you. And, it is exactly that variety, that challenge, and that desire for excellence that makes the wedding consulting business so vital and exciting.

Planning skills

- a) Can you handle a variety of tasks at different stages, and all at the same time?
- b) Are you *detail* oriented?
- c) Are you *motivated* and able to work without another's direction?
- d) Are you *disciplined enough* to work even when it's sunny and warm outside, when you can hear the birds are singing, or the house needs repairs?
- e) Are you happy working alone without the benefit of conversational coworkers.
- f) Can you handle emotionally fragile brides, demanding mothers, and irritable suppliers, without succumbing to the impulse to flatten them?
- g) And finally, can you laugh graciously when things do go wrong, then think fast to fix them?

If you can answer these questions, truthfully, and in the affirmative you have the qualities of a wedding planner.

Calm

You will be the bride's (and the groom's!) rock. From miscommunications with vendors to major meltdowns at the ceremony, you must be able to keep your cool in the wake of a calamity. A wedding planner should always have a Plan B ready for action in case of an emergency.

Charming

You are the face of your business and your clients' representative. Impeccable communication and social skills are imperative. Your reputation as a wedding consultant depends on your ability to network and maintain great working relationships with vendors and venues. Wedding planners must know how to communicate and work with all personality types. Not everyone you encounter will be pleasant and easy to please. You must be able to defuse any situation to get the results your client desires.

A Great Negotiator

The bride and groom will be counting on you to order flowers, hire the band and photographer, recommend a caterer, and help find venues for the ceremony and reception. You must be able to find the best service for the lowest price. This becomes easier as you create a reputation for yourself and develop professional relationships with vendors and venues. Your connections will get you better deals, which you can pass on to your customers.

Good with Money

Starting a wedding planner business requires that you be able to manage your own expenses and stick to a budget, as well as be responsible for someone else's money and budget. Previous experience with money management is vital -- even if your only experience consists of controlling the household finances.

Organized

A wedding planner might be responsible for almost every aspect of the big day: the venues, theme, flowers, food, refreshments, attire, photography, honeymoon, and other details of the wedding. Keeping track of all the nuances, contract dates, and deadlines requires an enormous amount of organization and attention to detail. Your calendar will be your new best friend.

A Plethora of Knowledge

A good wedding planner has fashion sense, good taste in music, and an eye for colour, flowers, and themes. You must be able to keep up with the latest bridal trends and fads, hot honeymoon destinations, and of course, traditional wedding etiquette. Many wedding consultants also learn about different religious ceremonies and traditions so that they can accommodate couples of any faith.

Consultant Pack Ages

Consultants often also provide individualized à la carte or ad hoc services. While services will vary from planner to planner, for a comprehensive package, also known as a full package, the consultant is generally involved from the onset of the planning process. This is the most expensive type of package, where the consultant offers initial and ongoing assistance with any or all of the following services: (1) budget preparation; (2) vision and theme determination; (3) creation of timelines and checklists; (4) selection, negotiation with, and booking of vendors; (5) design of invitations and other stationery elements; (6) compiling of guest lists, mailing out invitations, and tracking; (7) ceremony and reception preparation; (8) direction in the completion of necessary contracts, forms (e.g., marriage license), and tests (e.g., blood tests); (9) on-site direction of rehearsal, ceremony, and reception; and (10) final payment and wrap-up with vendors.

Some planners will only accept comprehensive packages, because they want to be involved with every step of the planning process. When starting your business, however, you will most likely want to diversify your services.

Partial wedding packages are generally vendor-based and occur when the couple primarily requires assistance in pinpointing and selecting the service providers appropriate to their vision and budget. A wedding consultant can offer invaluable advice to the couple that does not have the time to comparison or quality shop. The partial package allows the consultant to assist with vendor selection, contract negotiation, scheduling of appointments, day-of coordination, final payment, and follow-up.

Day-of packages have become increasingly common and are designed for clients who have completed the planning process, yet desire assistance and coordination during the wedding day and often during the rehearsal as well. The consultant is involved prior to this period on a limited basis, primarily to obtain the necessary information to make the day flow. Specifically, the consultant will need a list of all vendors and will help in the preparation of the wedding day timeline. These materials will ensure that the consultant can be the primary point of contact during the rehearsal and wedding so that the couple can enjoy themselves without constant interruptions. The drawback of this type of package is that if the couple has made less-than-ideal vendor decisions, then the consultant will end up troubleshooting more than is the case when consultant-informed decisions are made. Generally, wedding consultants can recommend a variety of trusted and established Vendors. These relationships greatly facilitate the day-of process.

Therefore, in cases where the consultant has not been involved in the vendor selection process, it is imperative to obtain the vendor list as soon as possible. By touching base with each of the selected vendors in advance and confirming all arrangements, the consultant can more readily mitigate problems that may arise on the wedding day.

In addition to packages, many consultants offer à la carte or ad hoc services on a for-fee basis. While this may entail just about anything that pertains to the wedding process, some of the more common added services include the writing and placement of announcements; the coordination of engagement parties, showers, post-wedding events (e.g., day-after luncheons), and honeymoons; gift selection and purchases; preparation of seating lists; and the sending of thank-you cards.

What Wedding Planners do?

A wedding planner usually performs the following duties during the course of conducting a wedding party:

- Finding a venue for the reception and/or ceremony or vow-exchange site;
- Helping with budget analysis and/or preparation;
- Helping client with choice of colours, wedding themes, and/or styles;
- Helping with the choices of dresses;
- implement or coordinate themes and decor;
- setting up the ceremony and reception spaces: providing guest logistics, such as seating, arrangement, selection, refreshments;
- Assisting with speech and vow preparation;

- Planning and preparing the itinerary;
- meeting vendors and deliveries, and handling any no-shows
- solving other last-minute emergencies
- running the rehearsal
- making sure that the wedding party is on time and in the right places
- coordinating the reception timeline
- dealing with wedding crashers and unruly guests
- Finding accommodations for out-of-town guests;
- Planning the honeymoon;
- Making hotel arrangements for after the wedding
- Ensuring that the space is left clean and that the client will get the deposits back
- Collecting personal items wedding gifts and making sure they get back to the client safely.
- Returning rentals and borrowed items.

Roles of a Wedding Planner

The wedding planner will fulfil a variety of roles throughout the planning and implementation of any wedding. The nature of the package will influence those roles, as the comprehensive package will allow the consultant to become more fully involved in the lives of the couple and their families, whether desirable or not! For any given couple, the planner may take on seven common roles: service provider, decision maker, organizer, artistic designer, psychologist, mediator, and friend.

First and foremost, it is critical to remember that the wedding planner is in a business relationship with the couple. As a service provider, you have specific obligations to fulfil and must maintain the highest standards of professionalism. (The third section of this text is devoted to establishing and building a sustainable business.)

Although the business relationship is paramount, other roles will emerge, some related to the nature of the business and others to human nature. The wedding planner will often become the decision maker by default. In particular, couples who select a comprehensive wedding package may do so because they simply do not have the time or desire to make all of the decisions that pertain to their wedding. In such cases, it is still important to give the couple the sense that they were involved in the final decisions. Even limited participation provides a feeling of ownership and accountability. As the consultant you should never sign any contract on behalf of the couple, nor should you sign your own name to any vendor contract.

A third role you will take on as a wedding planner is that of organizer. As the couple's consultant, the assumption is that any person involved in a given wedding can turn to you for direction. Timelines, checklists, and itineraries are crucial to maintain a sense of order and clarity amidst all the confusion that can arise. A key facet of organization is time management. The wedding planner must be able to prioritize the tasks that need to be completed and to decide when each must occur. Having a comprehensive calendar for each wedding and written agendas for each meeting will help keep both you and the couple on task.

Your fourth role will be that of artistic designer. Many individuals get into the business of wedding planning because they have inherent good taste and a sense of flair that friends and family members have commented on throughout their lives. These traits lend themselves to helping couples make their visions reality. The wedding planners must be careful, though, to not over impose their views on the couple. Generally, however, a wedding planner is hired in part because the couple wants artistic design advice regarding cake selection, stationery essentials, floral décor, and other decorative elements.

Few weddings are stress free, and so the fifth role that a consultant often acquires is that of psychologist. The bride is typically the primary point of contact and spends on average 17 months in the wedding planning process (Fairchild Bridal Group, 2005). If you are involved from the onset, the bride will likely turn to you in moments of anxiety, pressure, and strain. The line between business communication and interpersonal communication blurs as trust develops (Knapp and Vangelisti, 1996; Littlejohn, 1989), and the bride may seek reassurance from you in times of emotional stress. Should the stress of wedding planning move beyond the individual level, the wedding planner often acts as mediator, a sixth role. Mediators are not problem solvers per se; instead they respond to conflict-laden situations by encouraging empowerment, constructive listening, recognition, and negotiation (Bush and Foger, 1994). As a mediator, the wedding planner can help disputing parties by creating a forum where each gets to speak and listen, then allowing the parties to work together to clearly define the problem, seek alternative and creative solutions, and ultimately implement an agreed-upon strategy (McKinney, Kimsey, and Fuller, 1995). Many wedding planners form vendor relationships with marriage counsellors, whom they can recommend to clients who are facing significant relational crises.

Finally, the relationship between the couple and the wedding planner may evolve to the point of friendship. In many cases, consultants start their businesses by working with friends and family members. Because wedding consultants/ planners depend on referrals, often friends will suggest your services to other friends, and your business grows from there. It is important to recognize that you do not have to befriend your clients to have a successful business. In fact, you may have clients whom you do not like at all, which does not mean that you cannot have a successful working relationship with them. Friendship should be viewed as a natural outcome of some client-provider interactions rather than a forced business necessity.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *Easy Wedding Planner: Workbook & Organizer, (2008), By Elizabeth Lluch, Alex Lluch*
- ✓ *Wedding Planning Made Easy: The Ultimate Wedding Planning Guide, (2012), By Kayla Andrew*
- ✓ *Wedding Planning For Dummies, (2013), By Marcy Blum*