# Post-Wedding Evaluation

# Unit

# 15

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## Post- Wedding Evaluation

Another successful wedding to your credit! The vendors came through, everyone had a fabulous time, and the newlyweds are off to Jamaica for their honeymoon. You may be ready for a well-earned vacation, but don't write off this wedding just yet. As you have learned earlier , the final phase of wedding timelines includes wrap-up and evaluation, and some essential tasks still need to be completed, including satisfaction assessment and the completion of a final wedding summary. You may also be involved in some ad hoc services that take place after the wedding day. This chapter will introduce the basics of conducting a post-wedding evaluation and discuss the compilation of the wedding summary

## Conducting a Post-Wedding Evaluation

Successful wedding consultants are always looking for ways to improve their services, and obtaining feedback from clients and vendors can be constructive and enlightening. Post-wedding evaluation is defined as a process of collecting information from clients and vendors in order to draw conclusions about services and make continuous improvements. When conducting an evaluation, there are eight things to keep in mind: (1) why evaluation is necessary; (2) when to evaluate; (3) what to evaluate; (4) quantitative and qualitative evaluation; (5) types of questionnaire items; (6) writing questionnaire items; (7) questionnaire format; and (8) the cover letter.

## Why Evaluate?

Evaluation in the context of weddings should be conducted for four interrelated reasons. First, feedback will allow you to pinpoint areas of success and areas that need improvement. Second, the information provided will help determine the importance of and satisfaction with specific services, therefore helping you prioritize. For example, if your full-service package includes the provision that you will accompany the client on each vendor visit, but your clients consistently give you feedback that they do not feel this service is necessary; you can reprioritize the options for this package. Third, constructive criticism and ideas for improvement will encourage you to make changes and stay fresh. Finally, implementing changes will lead to increased client satisfaction over time. Do not be afraid to get feedback, both positive and negative. No business is perfect, but your openness to the ideas of others will get you one step closer to perfect than your competition. Over time, the evaluation process will save you both time and money because you will better understand the needs of your customer base. Getz (2005) explains that evaluation needs to be a permanent part of any organization that deals with events because "nobody learns, and nothing progresses without open and honest evaluation" (p. 381).

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## When to Evaluate?

The timing of an event evaluation can be either formative or summative (Jordan, DeGraaf, and DeGraaf, 2006). The evaluation of weddings is generally summative in nature, which means that it takes place after service delivery is complete. For other types of events, formative evaluation also occurs, which means that information is collected during the actual implementation of the event. However, in the world of weddings, it would be inappropriate to the point of ludicrous to ask vendors or the couple to fill out a brief questionnaire on the wedding day. As the consultant, you should conduct an informal formative evaluation of every wedding, where you jot down notes of things that went awry as well as those that went particularly well. This information will go into the final wedding summary.

## What to Evaluate?

A wedding evaluation should include items that assess three primary areas: product, process, and psychosocial elements. The product pertains to the tangible goods and services, while the process is specific to how the work was done (Jordan, DeGraaf, and DeGraaf, 2006). For example, a product-based questionnaire item might pertain to the degree of satisfaction with the variety of vendor options provided to the client, whereas a process item would relate to whether the consultant was consistently organized. Finally, the psychosocial relates to the human element and all of the emotions that are tied into

weddings. For instance, you might ask whether your services allowed the couple to be less stressed on their wedding day.

## Quantitative and Qualitative Evaluation

Quantitative evaluation is concerned with numbers that can have real or implied meanings. For example, if on one hand you ask a client to give a budget breakdown; this will be based on actual expenditures. On the other hand, if you ask a client to rate how well you communicated during the wedding planning on a scale from 1 to 5, the numbers have an implied meaning, with 5 indicating the most positive rating. Quantitative information can be readily compiled. For example, if in a given year you have 15 wedding clients, you can collect data from each using the same questionnaire and then at the end of a year calculate averages based on the compiled responses.

In contrast, qualitative evaluation deals with words rather than numbers and generally is less structured. Every questionnaire should include at least two items that allow clients to express their thoughts and opinions openly. While you will not be able to formulate averages on qualitative data, over time you may start to see themes emerge that offer valuable guidance. For instance, if you include an item that asks your clients to comment on the quality of the reception venue and you find that for one particular venue, comments such as “It is too hot,” “The ladies bathroom is cramped,” and “The chairs felt unstable” crop up again and again, you may seriously want to reconsider whether you recommend that particular venue.

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## Three Types of Questionnaire Items

Questionnaires typically include three types of items: fixed-alternative, scale, and open-ended. Fixed-alternative items generally assess knowledge, meaning that there is technically a response that “is the case.” Fixed-alternative items that you are familiar with are true-false and multiple choice. For wedding evaluation, common fixed-alternative items include yes-no items, questions where clients check off specific services used, and items requesting demographic information.
Figure 21.1 includes a sample questionnaire. In this questionnaire, numbers 1, 2, and 7a are fixed-alternative items. Note that fixed alternative items are usually written as questions.

Wake side Weddings

**Post-wedding Client Questionnaire**
By completing this questionnaire, you are helping the consultants at Wake side Weddings
to consistently improve their services
Your answers will remain confidential

Scale items are used to assess feelings and therefore allow for a range of responses. Many questions that you have for your clients deal with their emotions rather than fact, so there is no right or wrong answer. Such a question should allow for a more gray area; thus, it is more appropriate to use a scale item rather than a fixed alternative. For example, assume that you wanted to determine whether the client found that you were easy to contact when needed. This would be difficult to put into a yes-no format because it forces the client to make a choice when it could have been the case that sometimes you were accessible and at other times you were not. By allowing the client to answer on a scale that ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree, the client has more response latitude. In Figure 21.1, the items contained in numbers 3 and 4 are examples of scale items. Note that scale items are usually written as statements.

Open-ended items are used to assess behaviors and impressions and must be presented in a way that encourages written feedback. Because open-ended questions take much longer to answer than fixed-alternative and scale items, you should limit the number to no more than four. If there are too many open-ended items, your clients will suffer from what is known as response fatigue. You have taken essay exams in the past and know how tiring that can be. Don’t put your clients through that sort of experience, as they may get frustrated and not finish the questionnaire. Also, though not as structured as fixed-alternative and scale items, you want open-ended questions to be directed so that the answers will be useful. You should also always leave an area that requests comments and additional suggestions so that your clients can provide you with information that you may not have considered requesting. Numbers 5, 6, 7b and the “Comments and Suggestions” area are examples of open-ended items in Figure 21.1. Open-ended items can be written as questions or statements.

## Writing Questionnaire Items

When writing questionnaire items, there are some common wording problems that you will want to avoid. In this section, five types of poorly written items and their more appropriate counterparts will be presented.

First, avoid double-barreled questions. Babbie (2003) explains that double-barreled questions are those where you ask the respondent to give a single answer to a combination of questions. This problem frequently emerges in scale items. For example, consider the two options below for a scale item where you are assessing the respondent's level of agreement:
Poorly written item: "My wedding consultant was punctual and organized."
Better: "My wedding consultant was punctual."
"My wedding consultant was organized."
In the poorly written example, two questions are presented in one statement, and it could be the case that the consultant was punctual but not organized, or vice versa. Make sure that each question can stand alone.

Second, avoid writing questions that have confusing language such as double negatives. Consider the scale items below:
Poorly written item: "I was never not satisfied with the communication skills of my wedding consultant." Better: "I was satisfied with the communication skills of my wedding consultant." The poorly written item is incredibly difficult to interpret and sure to lead to confusion. Third, avoid writing items that are overly vague. Consider the open ended items below:
Poorly written item: "Please talk about your vendors." Better: "Please list the three vendors that you enjoyed working with the most." The poorly written item creates more questions than answers. The respondent is left to think: "Which vendors?" "What do you want to know about them?" On the other hand, the item that is clearly written will help you hone your list of vendors to recommend to future clients.

Fourth, items should be written as concisely as possible. Babbie (2003) explains that a respondent should be able to read an item quickly, understand the intent, and provide an answer quickly. Consider the following open-ended items: Poorly written item: "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 item is so long and complicated that it is almost impossible to discover the point.

Finally, avoid items that are leading or biased. Questions that exclude respondents or encourage respondents to answer in a particular way are problematic for two reasons. First, leading or biased items remove the neutrality of the evaluation process by excluding certain groups or thoughts from consideration. Second, leading or biased items often are embedded with social desirability cues, which means that the respondent will be pushed to

answer in a certain way because it appears that there is a "correct" answer that the consultant wants to get. Consider the following scale item: Poorly written item: "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 item assumes that only brides hire wedding consultants, which is biased in that it excludes grooms, couples, or parents from being the point of contact. Furthermore, it has the social desirability cue of intelligence; that is, if the respondent wants to be perceived as intelligent s/he will feel forced to agree to the statement.

## Formatting the Questionnaire

When formatting the questionnaire, keep the usability in mind because you want it to be as easy as possible for respondents to answer all items efficiently. Below are 15 formatting rules that you should take into consideration:

- Start with a clear heading that has your business name and sets forth the fact that this is a client questionnaire.
- The heading should be followed by a brief statement that gives the purpose of the evaluation.
- Below the purpose statement, include an assurance of confidentiality. If there is a particularly fabulous statement from a client that you would like to include on your Web site, you should follow up and ask permission to do so.
- Include a space where you fill in the name of the client, the couple's names, the wedding date, and the name of the consultant.

The client may or may not be the same as the couple. In some cases, the client may be a parent of the bride or groom—for instance, if the couple is out of town and a parent is planning on their behalf. Mail the evaluation to your primary point of contact to avoid confusion.

- Similar item types (fixed-alternative, scale, open-ended) should be clustered together so that the respondent can easily flow from one item to the next.
- As necessary, include instructions to facilitate the completion process. This is usually needed prior to the presentation of scale items. Do not take anything for granted or assume that the respondent will understand what to do.
- The items themselves should be easy to read, so make sure the font is big enough so that the respondent does not have to squint. Avoid unusual font styles that are difficult to read.
- The layout should be organized and straightforward. Items should neatly line up, and all of the open-ended lines should be the same length.
- There should be adequate room for the respondent to write, in particular for open-ended items. If the lines are squished together, it will discourage feedback.
- Do not try to crowd too much on a given page, as this will create confusion.
- If the questionnaire is more than one page, consistently direct the respondent to the next page. For example, "Please continue on the opposite side" can be used when designing a two-sided questionnaire.
- Do not expect your clients to write a dissertation. Usually 10 items, and certainly no more than 20, will be sufficient.

- At the end of the document, you should include a message of thanks and a request for the return of the questionnaire.
- Always include a self-addressed, stamped envelope to facilitate the return process.
- Grammatical, typographical, and printing errors will harm your credibility. You are better off having no evaluation than having a sloppy evaluation.

## The Cover Letter

Once you have carefully crafted your questionnaire, you will be anxious to send it off to a client. But not so fast, If you just toss it into an envelope without an appropriate cover letter, all of your efforts may have been in vain. When writing a cover letter for a post-wedding evaluation, be certain to include the following seven elements: (1) date sent; (2) greeting; (3) naming of the couple and reminder of the wedding; (4) purpose of the questionnaire; (5) desired return date and indication of an included return envelope; (6) contact information; and (7) final words of thanks. The cover letter should be short and to the point. Invest in letterhead stationery for a professional touch. Figure 21.2 offers an example of a cover letter. Give the couple a few weeks to enjoy their honeymoon and get settled in before mailing out the questionnaire packet.

## Vendor Feedback

While the examples in this chapter have primarily applied to your clients, the same rules apply when creating a vendor questionnaire. Vendor questionnaires should be used with extreme discretion; do not send a questionnaire to the same vendor each time you work with her or him, as the vendor is bound to get annoyed. The best time to request feedback is the first time you work with a vendor. Once vendors get to know you personally over time, you can send an e-mail or make a quick call if you have anything you would like to discuss about a particular wedding. A sample vendor questionnaire can be found in Figure 21.3.

Similar to the client questionnaire, you need to fill in the top part of the form. If you do not remind the vendor of the couple's names, your name, and the wedding date, the vendor will have no idea which is the wedding of interest. Do not get distressed if vendors do not return the form or if their feedback is not stellar. During the busy wedding season, there simply may not be time. Moreover, some vendors do not fully appreciate the services that consultants provide. Don't try to force the issue, and be appreciative of any feedback you do receive. Sample question number 5 is included as a cross-check to make sure you have not requested feedback from this particular vendor in the past. If you have several associates, you will need to be very careful not to bombard your vendors with questionnaires. Compare notes and create a master list of vendors who have given feedback that can be readily

accessed. Again, over time you will get to know your vendors well and they will know you, so the need for structured vendor feedback will decrease.

## The Wedding Summary

The hardest part about evaluation is giving it meaning. As Getz has observed, “Evaluation results often get filed and forgotten, especially if they are negative” (2005, p. 381). When you plan your first wedding, it will be incomprehensible that you will ever forget even a single minute detail; however, over time your weddings will start to morph together, and you will not remember the specifics unless you make a point of always completing a wedding summary. It is only in taking the time to review and summarize the details of each wedding that you can make adjustments and improve upon your skills. There will always be small things that don’t go quite right during wedding implementation. By reflecting on these issues a few days later and talking with other consultants, you can come up with ideas for handling similar situations in the future. Careful documentation and honest self-appraisal will allow you to be your own best critic. The wedding summary includes creative solutions so that you are better prepared for the next wedding.

If you have been organized all along, compiling the final wedding summary should be a fairly efficient process. Each client should have a separate file folder. In your file cabinet, order them alphabetically by last name. Also, create a cross-reference spreadsheet on your computer that includes the client’s name as well as the date of the wedding. The wedding summary should include six parts: (1) an executive summary; (2) the write-up of the wedding if announced in a local newspaper (as this generally also includes a picture of the couple, which is a useful reminder); (3) the entire production schedule including the vendor list; (4) the final budget breakdown; (5) the returned client questionnaire and any completed questionnaires from new vendors; and (6) samples of materials from the wedding that can be shown to future clients, such as the program, invitation, escort cards, favors, and swatches of fabric.

The executive summary should be a one- to three-page overview, including the most important and unique aspects of the wedding. If carefully written, the executive summary should immediately spark your memory and bring you back to the wedding, even if it took place 10 years ago.

Consider including the following aspects in each executive summary:

- The names of the couple, both before and after the wedding
- Ceremony and reception venues
- Theme
- Final budget
- Vendors who were especially excellent
- Vendors who presented difficulties
- Elements and ideas that were particularly unique

- Moments that did not go well, how they were addressed, and how similar problems can be avoided in the future
- Feedback from the clients that will assist with continuous improvement
- As applicable, feedback from vendors that will assist with continuous improvement

Complete the bulk of the wedding summary as soon as possible after a wedding. Although it may take several weeks to receive final feedback from a client or vendor, do not wait until this information arrives to initiate the summary. First of all, the feedback may never come if a client or vendor is not inclined to return the questionnaire. Second, as days and weeks pass, you will start to forget the specifics of one wedding as you move on to the next.

As a final follow-up, consider sending each of your couples a first anniversary card. This should only be done for the first anniversary and is a nice touch that will keep your business on the couple's radar screen. During a casual conversation with an engaged friend, a former client may mention how thoughtful it was that you remembered their anniversary date, and this just might lead to a new client!

## Consultant Checklist and Reminders for Post-Wedding Evaluation

- Prepare an evaluation in order to pinpoint areas of success and those in need of improvement.
- Evaluate the product, process, and psychosocial elements.
- Keep wedding questionnaires concise and limit the number of open-ended items.
- Format questionnaires with usability in mind.
- Include a cover letter to introduce the purpose of the questionnaire.
- Use vendor questionnaires with extreme discretion.
- Complete a summary of every wedding.
- Be your own best critic through careful documentation and honest self-appraisal.
- Consider sending each of your couples a first anniversary card.

## Wedding Planner Sample Feedback form

# CLIENT EVALUATION OF SERVICES

Dear Client,

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 Service**, we ask that you please complete this evaluation form to help improve our services. Our mission is to improve every phase of our service. Your answers will be kept anonymous unless you choose otherwise. We place the utmost value on our relationship with you, and thank you for your continuing support! Please check mark all that applies and please provide any comments and suggestions that you feel may better service our future clients! There are five sections to complete the entire evaluation.

Should you have any questions or require additional information regarding completing this evaluation forms, 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:** Ala 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 referraebsite A ☐
   b. Referral from a former client: ☐ ☐

Other:__________c. Referral from other than client: ☐
Friend Other:_______________ d. Hawaii Bridal Expo:

Did you visit our booth?

Yes No Date:_____________

## PLEASE RATE THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS ON THE FOLLOWING SYSTEM

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

### S ECTIO N II – PRE-P LA NNING CUS TO MER S ERVICE

| **A. Phone Etiquette:** | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 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 | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

| **B. Email Correspondence:** | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Information provided was easy to read | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2. Written confirmation of verbal discussion helpful | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3. Easy to read and well written | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

| **C. Meetings/Presentations:** | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 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 | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

| **D. Hawaii Bridal Expo:** | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 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) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

| **E. Website:** | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Informative regarding services provided | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2. User friendly in regards to navigating the website | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3. Always up to date when you return for visits | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

**Comments and Suggestions:**

## S ECTIO N III – EVE NT CO O RD INATIO N:

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

| A. Coordinator and Staff's Competencies: | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 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 | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

| B. Customer Service: | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 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 | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

| C. Timeline: | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 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 | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

| D. Vendors: | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 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 | ☐ | ☒ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |