

Wedding Planner

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A successful wedding requires that a whole host of independent contractors come together on the day and work seamlessly together. Managing those contractors along with making a decision a minute can drive the most loving family to conflict. So considering the massive amounts spent on weddings each year its not surprising that families don't mind spending a little extra to hire a wedding planner, to make sure everything runs smoothly on the day. Also known as a bridal consultant this job demands excellence and can provide handsome financial rewards in return.

Before The Start-Up, Let's Not Get Ahead Of Ourselves

No qualifications required here, just some very specific personality traits. You'll need to have an excellent eye for detail, be a master planner and be able to keep a cool head in any situation. Since you'll be consulting on everything from how many guests to invite to the choice of champagne, it's also important that you have excellent etiquette skills and are well informed on the latest wedding fashions and trends.

The Start-Up

To get started you'll need a few essential items including reliable transport, a cell phone, diary or day planner and a computer. If you can afford it a laptop is ideal as you'll be mobile for a large part of your workday. You'll charge anywhere from \$50 an hour to a flat fee of \$1200 or more. Do research on the Internet to establish the best price bracket for your wedding planning service. The exact price you charge will depend on your experience and local competition.

This is a business that relies heavily on word of mouth and referrals, getting the word out there will take some work. Use a part of your start-up budget to print business cards and brochures. Make sure your business looks trustworthy and established by getting your logo and other promotional materials designed by a professional. We recommend buying one of the logo packages on Elance.com or finding a talented graphic designer in your local area.

Finally don't forget to look the part. As a wedding planner you will be asking clients to place a tremendous amount of trust in you to get things right the first time. Portray a professional image on conduct yourself with diplomacy at all times. Making others feel at ease during stressful situations is a very important part of your business.

Making It Work

Prepare yourself for clients who hire you to run the show but still think they know better. Be prepared to listen more than you talk and to suggest ideas in subtle ways that make them feel like they thought of it themselves. Don't forget that even though you are running the show, the client is still in charge.

At some point you might get tired of dealing with sloppy contractors chosen by your clients. Consider forging professional relationships with contractors you can trust, such as catering companies and musicians. This way you will be able to control more of the wedding and leave less to chance.

Marketing

The large amount of independent contractors involved in most weddings makes this the ideal [networking](#) industry. Spend time building solid business relationships with florists, hair salons and stylists, specialist stores, caterers, chefs and even popular wedding bands.

Advertise your services in local wedding or bridal magazines, at specialist bridal stores and online. To get the best exposure online it's a good idea to invest in an attractive three to four page website. Create trust by having a photo gallery of your best weddings and plenty of testimonials from clients. Drive traffic to your site using Google Adwords or some other pay per click (PPC) program like MSN Ad Centre. PPC campaigns can be targeted at very small geographical areas making them highly cost effective when managed properly. If potential clients are using the Internet to look for a wedding planner in their area then this could be your best form of advertising. Outsourcing the running of your PPC campaign can be very expensive, we recommend doing it yourself. Perry Marshall's [The Definitive Guide to Google Adwords](#) is an essential read to get started.

Don't Forget

As with all consulting jobs how you charge for your time is a sensitive issue. If you charge per hour be sure to keep an accurate log of hours worked. If you charge a set rate you'll need to be careful you don't end up doing more work than you are getting paid for. Use a contract to define exactly what your set rate includes and have a price structure to govern any extra work.

Finally don't forget that you'll need to keep up date on the latest wedding trends; magazine subscriptions are the easiest way to accomplish this.