

Wedding Planning

DISCOVER IF WEDDING PLANNING IS
THE RIGHT CAREER FOR YOU!



A WEDDING STATE UNIVERSITY PUBLICATION

"It isn't always rainbows and
sunshine but when it is, it's
always worth the sacrifice!"
- Victoria Lewis

The Queen of Weddings

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BEING A WEDDING PLANNER

Right now there is an explosion of desire to be a Wedding Planner. It's not surprising to find out that it is one of the fastest-growing careers in the country and when you have finished reading this study, you will see why.

It is easy to see the appeal of this career. According to the United States Department of Labor, in 2020 the median pay was \$51,560 per year. It is difficult to find another career that allows you to work part-time with a flexible schedule and still make a really nice full-time income.

Besides making a great income and flexible hours, it is great for a wide variety of personality types. It can be a great fit for those who love organization and routine, as well as those who like flexibility and are more of a creative type. It can be extremely fulfilling for those who want to be the "star of the day" or even "hero" if you will. Solving problems, being the boss all while being surrounded by happy people, good food, dancing, pretty things, etc... The list goes on and on. To top it all off you can make a ton of money working part-time! Honestly, what's not to love?

There really is no better feeling for some of us than to be involved with such an important milestone in a person's life. You can really make a difference to a couple who is looking for guidance and support but just doesn't have the time or the resources to pull it all together.

When contemplating a career in the Wedding Industry you may not have even recognized the full understanding of what all the different planning options are as a career.

This book will help you understand all of the options as a Wedding Planner or Coordinator, and the journey you may take to start your dream career.



WHAT IS A WEDDING PLANNER?

UNDERSTANDING WHAT A
WEDDING PLANNER REALLY DOES

CLARIFYING THE NOT SO OBVIOUS

First, let me be clear, just for the record my career of choice is a *Full-Service Event and Wedding Planner*. At this point, you may think you know what that means, however, you would be surprised how often I hear someone who is obviously mistaken say, “I basically do what you do” because I plan our company's work party or my daughter's ballet recital. To be honest, my first reaction is to be offended. Then I have to take a minute to breathe and remember that they really don't know what I do. So they are making an unfair comparison.

If you ask any group of people what a *Wedding Planner* does, you will most likely hear them list a few things. Their list would probably include: finding vendors and setting out the decorations. The list of responsibilities is typically pretty short and something most people think they can do themselves. So, of course, it seems like a pretty easy job.

There is so much confusion around the title “*Wedding Planner*” and it may be because it is a relatively easy career to get into, no one sees the full scope of job requirements or the skills needed to successfully do a great job. What they do see is, on the wedding day, you standing around and watching the event. So, ya that seems pretty easy. The majority of the work is done behind the scenes. This is why most people don't really know what a *Wedding Planner* does.

When you think about it, the answer is pretty easy. It is because most of what a *Wedding Planner* does is behind the scenes.

They handle so many details and it is spread out among so many people that it is hard to actually get a full view of what they do or have done during the planning.

If you ask a seasoned professional *Wedding Planner* what they do, the list would be overwhelming and seemingly endless.



So, you have to ask the question, “How then is there such a huge discrepancy in the view of what a *Wedding Planner* does?”

It is my goal in this lesson to give you a little more clarity on what a “*Wedding Planner*” does and help you decide if this may be a good fit for you. Then, I will tell you the options to get started.

Because being a *Wedding Planner* looks so effortless, many people, including those who work in the wedding industry think it is an easy way to up-sell their services and make a lot more money, so they will add, “*Wedding Coordinating*” to their list of services. A common example is a DJ saying they can add wedding coordination to their service.



Their sales pitch is that they can give vendor referrals and run the timeline. They assume this is all the Planner/Coordinator does because that is all they see. This is unfortunate because typically they aren’t able to service the clients properly so it actually becomes a disservice to the industry and an even bigger disservice to their client. That would be the same comparison to me bringing a microphone to the wedding and saying I am going to be the DJ.

Another common reason for the confusion is that there are also so many titles that are commonly and mistakenly interchanged with the title *Wedding Planner*. *Event Planner*, *Event Coordinator*, *Venue Coordinator*, *Wedding Coordinator*, *Event Designer*, *Destination Wedding Planner*, and *Day-of Wedding Coordinator* are just a few. You may even be thinking, “What is the difference?”

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?



CLEARING THE PLANNER CONFUSION

In the last section, I listed some titles that are commonly interchanged. Many people don't understand the difference between the roles and the various responsibilities that each one will offer or require. It is important for you to understand the differences so you can choose the fit that is right for you. You will also find that some options are a bit easier to get started in and will have the ability to grow or expand into additional options later as you gain experience, increase skills and gain industry connections.

Here is a list of some general types of titles that you find for Planners/Coordinators that are commonly found in the wedding planning industry. There are many more options that are in the world of "event planning" that is different from the wedding industry. For now, we will stick to mainly the weddings. We will look at each of these in-depth:

- Event Planner
- Event Coordinator
- Venue Coordinator
- Wedding Coordinator
- Event Designer
- Destination Wedding Planner
- Day-of Wedding Coordinator

FULL-SERVICE EVENT PLANNER



A *Full-Service Event Planner* offers planning services for all types of events including: corporate, social, private, non-profit, and a host of other events including weddings. They may also choose to specialize in a particular area such as corporate, birthdays, or boutique-style events.

An *Event Planner* differs from a *Wedding Planner* because they plan not only weddings but many other events as well. A *Wedding Planner*, on the other hand, will typically apply all their focus to weddings.

Event Planners have more flexibility in the choice of work they commit to. This will also allow them the benefit of being able to choose the days of the week they work. Often, if they choose to service corporate events, they will work mainly during the week and can have their weekends free because most corporate functions are held Monday-Friday. Whereas a *Wedding Planner* will be required to work weekends as well as during the week.

A *Full-Service Event Planner* must understand the logistics of multiple types of events. They may be required to book flights, lodging, and make complex travel arrangements. They may need to plan team-building exercises, secure entertainment, and fulfill the necessary riders that the entertainment typically requires. They may work with sports arenas, government agencies, large corporations, small businesses, and individuals.

Being a *Full-Service Event Planner* requires the largest variety of knowledge and experience out of all the planner/coordinator titles.

“A *Full-Service Event Planner* must also understand the logistics of multiple types of events and all of the dynamics that surround them.

VENUE COORDINATOR

Often, the title provided for this position which is given by their employer is, *Wedding Coordinator*. This can be very misleading for a couple planning their wedding because they think they are getting an actual *Wedding Planner*. The appropriate title should be *Venue Coordinator*. The *Venue Coordinator* is hired by the event facility, not by the couple planning their wedding. Their main function is to ensure the couple and their guests follow the policies of the venue.

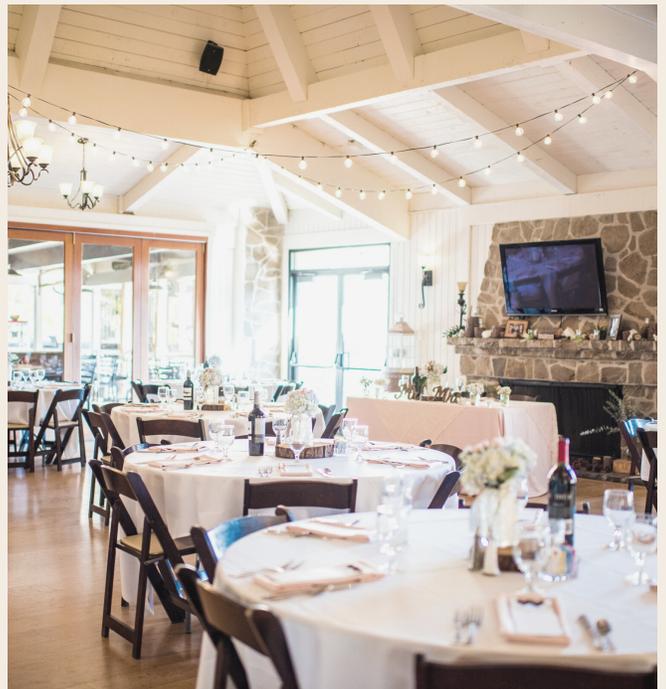
I have heard many clients say that they don't need to hire a *Wedding Planner* because their venue has one that comes with the facility rental. It is also worth noting that some venues or *Venue Coordinators* will tell their clients that they don't need a planner because they will help them with everything they need. They may commonly say this for a few reasons:

- It frees up additional money in their budget to spend on the venue.
- They don't want the planner to interfere with their way of doing things.
- They themselves may not really know what a *Full-Service Planner* does.

To their credit, some venues do offer some additional support services like running a portion of the timeline, setup, and vendor selection. Their support services are typically limited to how it relates to the responsibilities and preferences of the venue. For example, although they may refer vendors, they do not normally get involved in negotiating pricing, handling payments, or any other part of the relationship between the couple and the vendor. They typically don't write timelines, send vendor confirmations or assist the vendor with delivery or setup. They also will not assist with any details outside of their venue.

Another important detail is that for many larger facilities, the *Venue Coordinator* is rarely on-site the day of the event. If there is one on-site the day of the event, it is rare that it's the same person the couple has been planning with throughout the planning process.

“ Their main function is to ensure the couple and their guests follow the policies of the venue.



Sometimes there may be a *Sales Coordinator* that hands off the information to a *Venue Coordinator* or even a *Banquet Captain*.

FULL-SERVICE WEDDING PLANNER



A Full-Service Planner does most of the research on their own and will present it to the client for adjustments.

A true *Full-Service Wedding Planner* is responsible for all the elements that revolve around the wedding. This includes budget forecasting, dress shopping, website development, invitation etiquette, addressing, mailing, RSVP management, floor plans, décor planning, counseling issues for family and friends, keeping the couple in their budget, menu development, venue and vendor recommendations, accompanying the couple to appointments, rehearsal, day of coordination and supervision, post-wedding follow-up, and whatever else the couple needs to be done. The list of responsibilities is unlimited and often can vary depending on the needs of the couple.

Some couples like to be involved in various aspects of the wedding planning and may want to do a few projects, but for the most part, they typically want to tell the planner their hopes and limitations and then expect the planner to execute their vision. This service is popular among those who have limited time or who recognize wedding planning as a profession and want to have an event that reflects a professional touch.

A *Full-Service Planner* does most of the research on their own and will present it to the client for adjustments. Saving the couple time, money, and stress while producing a professional wedding, should be the focus of a *Full-Service Wedding Planner*. Even with a minimum budget, a couple should not be able to produce the same results with the same budget as an experienced *Full-Service Planner*. The Planner will have many contacts and can negotiate discounts that will benefit the client. They will also offer real and practical solutions to common issues that arise during the planning process.

DESTINATION WEDDING PLANNER

For many, this would be an obvious choice for the perfect dream job! Let's face it, a *Destination Wedding Planner* travels all over the world and doesn't have to pay for their own travel costs. It is easy to see the allure of this career. There are so many beautiful and luxurious places to get married around the globe, and as a *Destination Wedding Planner*, you could experience it all.

This type of planner may plan intimate small gatherings for just a few or large elaborate weddings with multiple-day functions.

Although they can experience the excitement of traveling all over the world, this also can bring with it a lot of stress. They are limited to the number of trips they will take to each location, and it does demand that a lot of the planning be done long distance with extreme organizational skills. You cannot always just run to the closest big retailer to grab a few forgotten items.

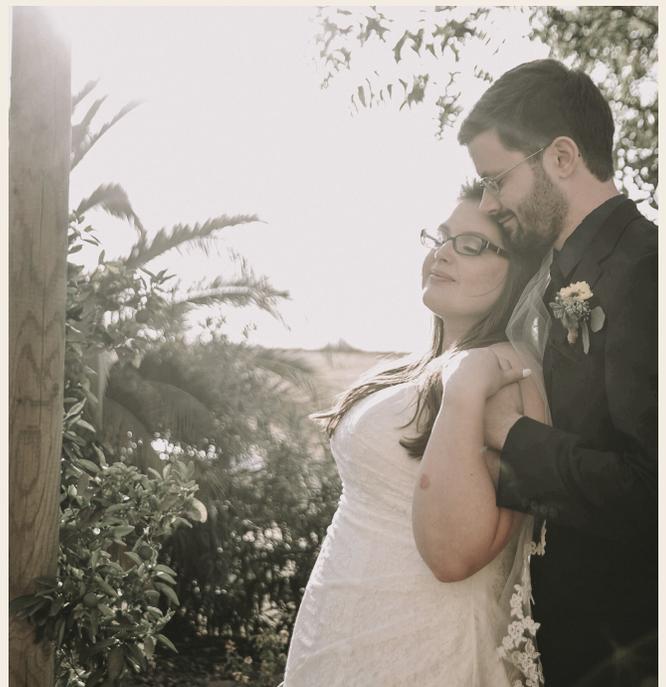
Once on-site, it can be a whirlwind of driving from location to location to secure last-minute plans. For this reason, many planners choose to work in the same destination locations for simplicity's sake, however, the majority of *Destination Planners* should be flexible and be guided in the direction the client may want to travel.

The *Destination Planner* does not have the luxury of working with the same vendors time after time. Unless of course, they have a team and the couple is willing to pay for all of their travel expenses. Obviously, this would become very costly.

Due to the intricacy of details, a *Destination Planner* is, by nature a *Full-Service Planner*. In addition to the actual wedding planning, they typically will also be responsible for handling all of the travel and itineraries for the guests of the couple as well.



Although they can experience the excitement of traveling all over the world, this also can bring with it a lot of stress.



EVENT DESIGNER



An *Event Designer* is typically responsible for developing the overall design of the wedding. They must pay close attention to continuity and design. They will assist in all the design elements that are in the wedding from the Save-The-Dates, to the Thank You Cards, and everything in between.

Although they focus on the details, they must also keep the big picture in mind. The services an *Event Designer* offers can vary. They can offer the limited service of concept design and sketches, or they can offer rentals and production of the decor items.

When people search for an *Event Designer*, they typically hire them for their design style. The client may offer their suggestions or ideas but an *Event Designer* should be seen as an artist. Although they may be somewhat flexible, they typically have their own style and like to stick with it.

They may offer suggestions for locations but should not offer recommendations for other vendors, etiquette advice, or suggestions for planning in other areas. On the actual day of the wedding, their services are limited to setup and tear-down. They do not run the timeline or direct other vendors. They typically do not stay on-site during the event, unless they are invited as a guest.

Out of all the services, the *Event Designer* receives the most accolades. Their efforts are easily seen and admired by everyone. Even when a *Wedding Planner* does all the event design, the client typically gets the credit. When the couple tells people they hired an *Event Designer*, people are expecting to be wowed!

“ Out of all the services, the *Event Designer* receives the most accolades. Their efforts are easily seen and admired by everyone.

DAY OF COORDINATOR

A *Day-of Wedding Coordinator (DOC)* is always hired by the couple getting married. This is different from the *Venue Coordinator* who is hired by the venue. Often, both will be working on-site the day of the wedding and must learn to work in harmony. It is beneficial for both to understand the unique functions of each of their jobs.

The main responsibility of a *Day-of Wedding Coordinator* is supervising the activities during the wedding day to ensure everything is progressing the way the couple has planned it.

This is a great career option for a lot of people who are just entering the wedding industry. It requires the least amount of responsibility and commitment with a maximum financial return and can offer the opportunity to gain a lot of experience. The typical *DOC* will work approximately 8 -10 hours on the wedding day with a few optional extra hours during the week for some additional preparation and can get paid up to 2/3 the price of what a *Full-Service Planner* will make.

Their job differs from a *Full-Service Planner* in the actual planning area. For a *Day-of Coordinator*, the couple will do all the planning and then hand off the plans to the *DOC* who will supervise what the couple has planned. The *Full-Service Planner* does the planning and the supervision.

Some coordinators will also do some light setup, but it is not automatically assumed they will provide set up services so additional fees can be charged for this service as well. A *Day-of Wedding Coordinator's* services can vary greatly and be as flexible or as refined as they choose.

Of all the services, this is by far the most in-demand. Most couples will hire a *Day-of Wedding Coordinator* because they understand what they do and their value. This brings us to the very beginning of our conversation when I explained that people think a *Wedding Planner* only supervises a wedding. This is the main function of a *Day-of Wedding Coordinator*.

“ For a *Day-of Coordinator*, the couple will do all the planning and then hand off the plans to the *Coordinator* ”





THE WHOLE TRUTH

THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE UGLY

Okay, now for a reality check. The wedding industry, in general, is really not a career choice for the faint-hearted. Before choosing this career path, you need to remember you are dealing with a lot of emotions from a lot of different people, unfamiliar religious and cultural backgrounds, a variety of family dynamics as well as personality types, and top it off with uncontrollable weather issues.

To be successful in this business you need to be level-headed at all times, and sometimes you need to be pretty thick-skinned.

Depending on your choice of career. You can choose one that demands a lot of long hard hours working most weekends as well as long hours during the week.

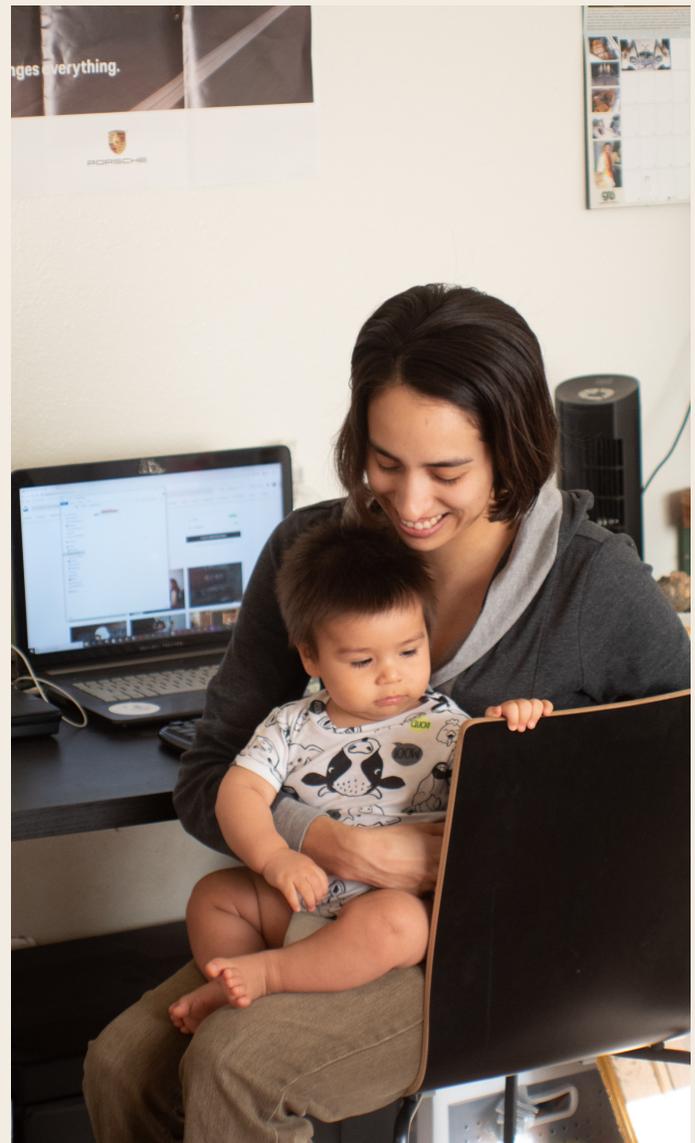
I was blessed to raise 3 kids as a single mom, had flexible hours, took events when I wanted, and took time off when I wanted, and neither I nor my children ever went without what we needed or wanted.

I must confess, although I do work long hours, I love every minute of it. True confession, I have had times when clients were not happy no matter how hard I tried. I needed to recognize that there there are people who just like to complain. On the reverse side, I had clients who have become dear sweet friends and we still share milestones together years later. I have had clients who blame me for their poor choices even though I clearly told them the outcome, and I have clients who recommend me to all their friends and family. Like anything else in life, there are great highs and painful lows.

Anyone who takes a job in this field needs to be fully aware, that this can be a tough choice. It definitely has its ups and downs, but then so does every career.

I truly love every minute of what I do and I take the good with the bad and still just can't get enough.

So, be realistic if you want to take a job in this field. It isn't always rainbows and sunshine but when it is, it is worth the rain you went through just to experience it.



A DAY IN THE LIFE...



WHAT DOES A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN EVENT PLANNER LOOK LIKE?

Firstly, I must say that it can be really difficult to say what a typical day looks like for a planner. An event planning career is very unique in that every day looks different than the one before. Each event is unique, requiring a wide range of tasks to be completed by the planner. This can vary not only based on the type of event, but the services being provided.

That being said, typically you may be meeting with clients to discuss the budget, attendees, overall vision, and atmosphere along with any take away goals.

Then the responsibilities would be to plan the entire scope of the event, including time, location, program, and cost. You may need create a presentation for the client, solicit bids from service providers, work with the client to choose where to hold the event and whom to contract for services. Inspecting locations and meeting with service providers to ensure they meet the client's requirements are also part of a normal day.

You may do venue tours, tastings, meet with vendors, or be busy at your desk doing your office.

You will coordinate services such as venues, travel and food service, rentals needs, etc., monitor event activities to ensure the client and event attendees are satisfied, review event bills and approve payments, dress shopping, tastings, table and decor samples, site visits, checking for electrical, catering, and delivery issues.

Remember as an Event Planner **EVERYTHING** is 100% your responsibility.

SKILLS REQUIRED



● Organizational Skills

Handling logistics concerning meetings, transportation, activities, and other aspects of events calls for exceptional organizational skills.

● Creativity

Coming up with inspired ideas and solutions – in consultation with the right vendors such as audio-video providers, destination management companies, furniture, and floral suppliers – calls for a creative sensibility.

● Time Management Skills

The job is deadline-driven, team management and relationship-building abilities, coordinating staff, guest speakers, entertainers, and event attendees is an integral part of the job. *Event Planners* must be comfortable prioritizing and recalculating multiple responsibilities over long periods of time.

● Excellent Verbal and Written Communication Skills

Event Planners are the liaison between multiple parties, from clients to venues to local vendors. This means that they must be able to respond to a variety of requests and needs.

Acute Attention to Detail

Event planning is all about noticing the details. Identifying potential issues or problems before they occur is a significant part of an event planner's work.

Business Acumen

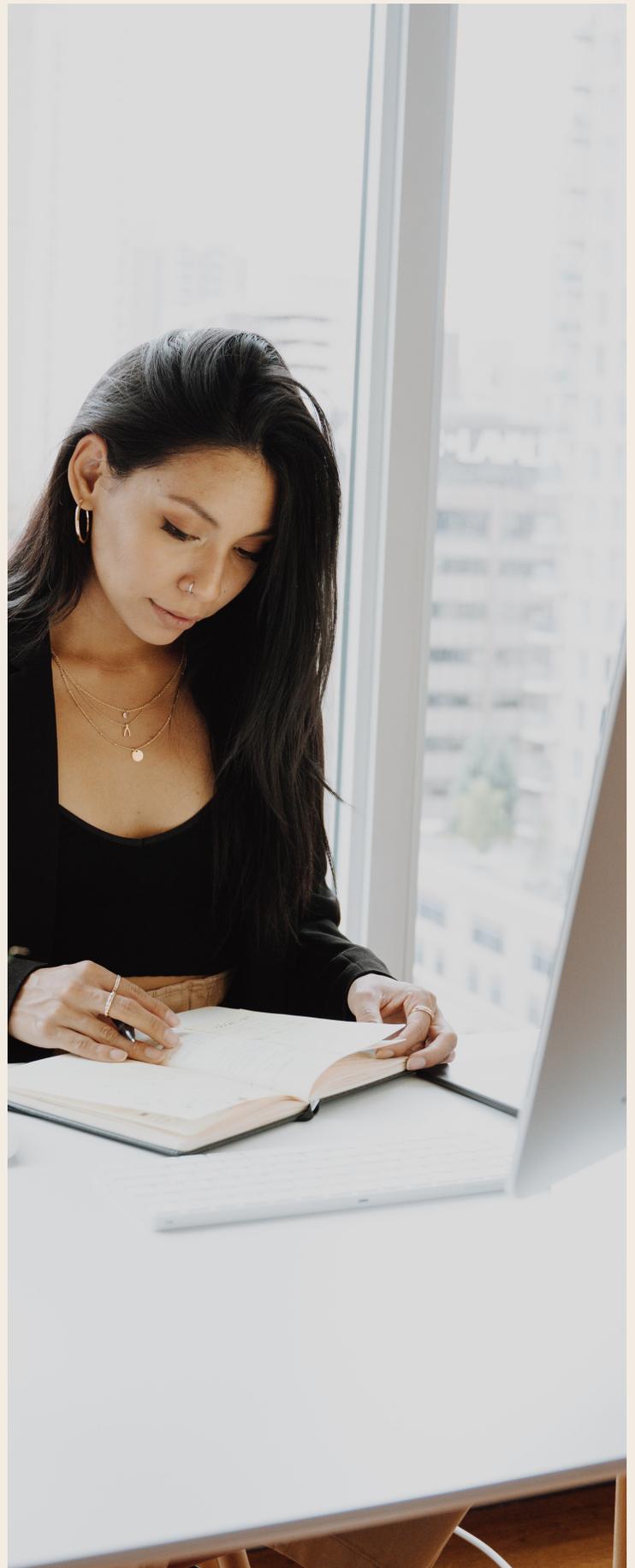
Event planning involves soliciting bids from venues, securing quality products and services, negotiating and verifying service contracts, reviewing event bills, approving payments, and other related tasks.

Computer Literacy

Fluency with project management software and spreadsheet and database software is essential for *Event Planners*.

Willingness to Travel

Many events take place away from the planner's home location. In addition, scouting venues and meeting with vendors is a significant part of the job. The need to travel, therefore, is non negotiable.





● Multitasking

For event organizers, multitasking is not an option but a must-have event planning skill to create unforgettable events. You need to juggle a lot of tasks, including ticket sales, event promotion, sponsorship acquisition, and day-of logistics. Adding to that, there are multiple events that you need to plan simultaneously. If you have a team, you can delegate some work, but ultimately it is your job to ensure that nothing falls through the cracks.

● Stress Management

Event planning often entails an enormous amount of multitasking. As fun and rewarding as this career can be, the stakes can be high, and so the pressure can be intense. It's essential to be able to manage these pressures and be able to take time for yourself, both to ensure you do a great job on each project and prevent burnout over the long run. This means being able to find a healthy balance between your professional and personal life. It also means taking time for self-care — whether it's meditation, journaling, or investing time and energy into your favorite leisure activities.

● Flexibility

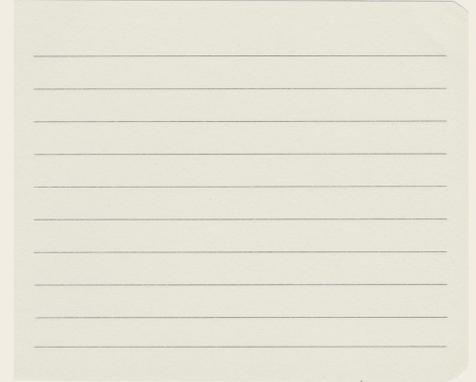
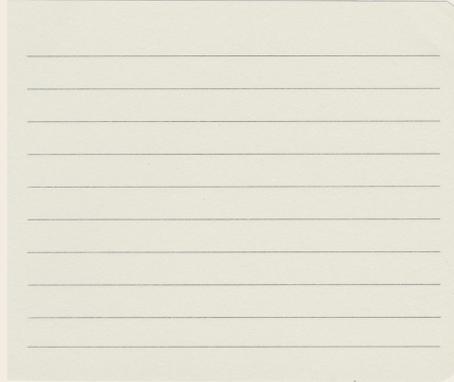
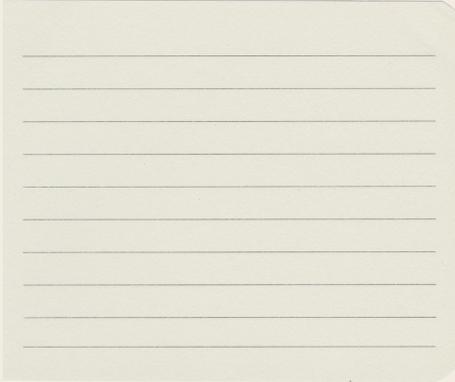
Change is relatively constant. Delayed flights mean delayed attendees. The client changes his/her mind onsite. Weather necessitates that an outdoor event be moved indoors. At some level, the job of an event planner is to foresee the unforeseen and be prepared to handle it.

DEVELOP YOUR SKILLS FOR THE CAREER YOU WANT!

Which skills listed above do you feel you Excel at?

What skills do you think you could improve on?

What skills do you think you have strong limitations in?



Do you know the areas you will need to improve? For more information on how to develop some of these skills visit:



THE PATH TO FREEDOM

There are probably just as many options to learn how to be a planner as there are types of planners.



For the last 10 years, I have developed and implemented a hands-on training program in my own business for people who think they want to be in the wedding industry as Planners or Coordinators. Through the program, many find out that there is much more to learn than they anticipated.

This is such a fast growing career that it has not had the chance to build a solid foundation for formal training, and because of this there are not many great options for training out there.

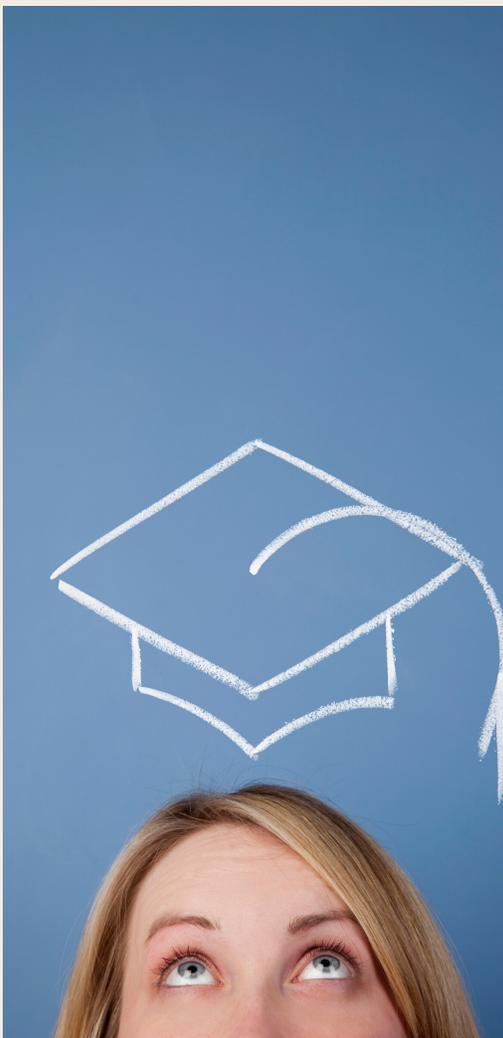


There are some programs online that you could consider. I would caution you to research them before you buy them. To get a better understanding and for research purposes, I have obtained some courses' training materials and was very disheartened when I saw what was given out. Then when I did more research, I realized that the programs I received were not written by people who were actual Wedding Planners, but were a school that purchased materials from someone who writes textbooks for a living and may have conducted some internet research to put the materials together.



There are some Universities that are offering some 4-year degrees that have an option of certification in Event or Wedding Planning as well. I recommend contacting the department that offers this training to ask if they have an experienced Wedding Professional as an Instructor. They do not commonly have an experienced Event or Wedding Planner as an instructor, and you may not get the education you are hoping for.

If you want to gain some hands-on experience, you could check with your local Wedding Planners to ask if you can shadow them for a year or two. This will offer you the experience and the opportunity to see if it is indeed the right choice for you. I would even suggest asking a few different planners if you can follow them to get as much experience and variety as you can.



Looking back, the most challenging part of my career has been the sheer lack of training and support available. It really is no one's fault. This has been an emerging, slow-growing career option that really has just exploded in the past few years. So, there really were no training options when I was building my career. I was left with no choice but to learn from my own mistakes and trust me there were many.

I am fortunate enough, that I have made it through and successfully brought my business to a point that I am now able to invest the time in an area I feel is vitally important. That is training other professionals.

I have been blessed to plan and organize all types of events, from budget-focused to celebrity and big-budget events, from local to destination, from small and intimate to tens of thousands.

My business has won numerous awards and has been recognized by the top professionals in the industry. Now, I can share with others my success secrets and help them achieve the same type of success.

When I first started in the industry, Wedding and Event Planners were few and far between. I really had no idea what it would evolve into. I really had no idea I would go on to plan Celebrity and Destination Weddings, win multiple awards, be inducted into the Hall of Fame, write numerous books, and develop a multi-faceted site that teaches thousands of people how to be successful in the Wedding Industry. With that being said, if this book teaches you nothing else, I want you to leave with the knowledge that you can dream big and achieve your dreams. All things are possible and I will be happy to be there with you every step of the way!



FINAL DESTINATION

There can be many roads that will take us to the same destination. You need to decide what is the right path for you. You can go to college, work for free in exchange for knowledge (called an internship), or you can visit our website to learn about one of our Wedding State University (WSU) Certification Training Programs. We offer several types of Wedding Planning & Coordination. In addition to becoming certified, you can also receive ongoing support to help guide you through building your career.

By becoming certified through WSU, you will gain confidence knowing you are learning from an award-winning, seasoned professional with over 30 years in the wedding and event industry. These programs are designed with the flexibility to allow you to learn at your own pace.

As you become more confident and want to grow, you will have all the support you will need through continued education. You will learn how to deal with difficult customers and vendors, marketing, sales, organization, and much more. You will have the option to ask questions and listen to live webinars and podcasts, even join a community of your peers to share your experience.

If you have been dreaming of this career, now is your chance. Only you can change your future. Join us today in one of the most exciting career choices you will ever make. Strike now while the iron is hot. Don't just be a dreamer, be a doer! You have the power to make your hopes a reality.



**ONLY YOU CAN CHANGE
YOUR FUTURE**



NOW THAT WE HAVE EXPLORED OPTIONS WHAT ONE(S) DO YOU THINK FIT YOU BEST?

What about each job type do you like?

Event Planner

Event Coordinator

Venue Coordinator

Wedding Coordinator

Event Designer

Destination Wedding Planner

Day-of Wedding Coordinator

Speak about why being a DOC could be a good place to start?

