

Wedding Planning As a Career

Discovering if Wedding Planning is the Right Career for you
and How to Get Started



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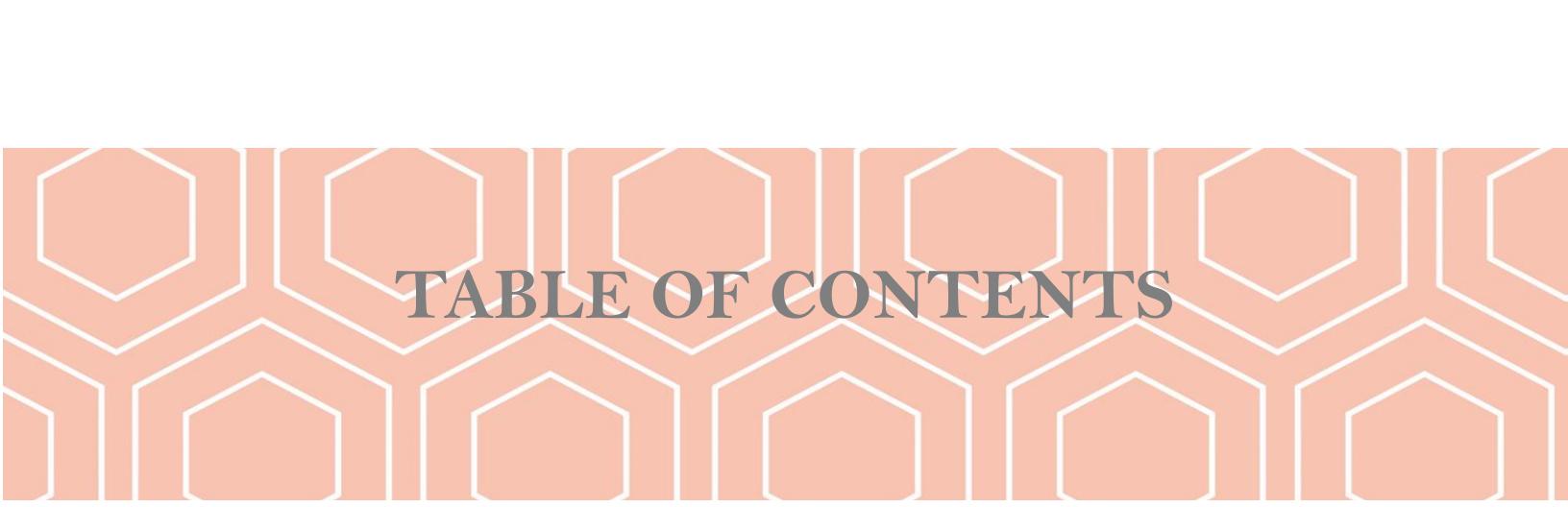


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Introduction

The glamourous life of... Being a Wedding Planner.

Right now there is an explosion of desire to be a Wedding Planner. Its not surprising to find out that it is one of the fastest growing careers in the country. According to the United States Department of Labor the median pay is **\$47,350 per year or \$22.76 per hour**. It is difficult to find another career that allows you to work part time with a semi-flexible schedule and still make a full time income.

It is easy for many people to see the appeal of this career choice. There are many great reasons to choose this career. It can provide a great income, flexible hours, and it is great for a wide variety of personality types. It can be a great fit for those who love organization and routine and for those who like flexibility and are more of the creative type. It can be extremely fulfilling because you can be the star of the day or even the hero if you will. Solving problems, being the boss, and you can make a ton of money working part-time and it can also be a very glamourous job. 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 they just don't have the time or the resources to pull it all together.

When contemplating a career in the Wedding Industry it is important to grasp a full understanding of what all the different planning options are.

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

- Chapter 1 -

What Is a Wedding Planner

Understanding What a Wedding Planner Really Does





Clarifying the not so Obvious

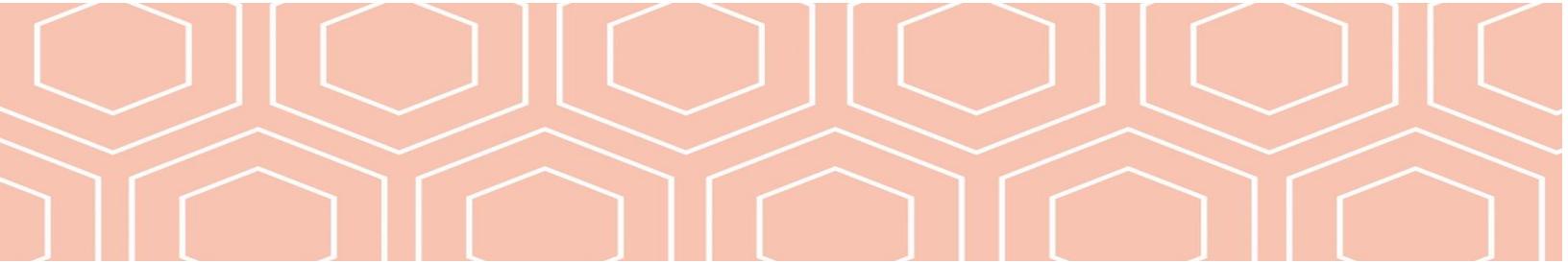
First, let me be clear, just for the record my career of choice is a Full Service Event and Wedding Planner. At this point you may think you know what that means, however, you would be surprised how often I hear someone say, “I basically can do what you do.” To be honest, my first response it to be offended. Then I have to take a minute and breath, then remember, they really don’t know what I do.

There is so much confusion around the title “*Wedding Planner*” and it may be because it is an easy career to get into. (Note, that I didn’t say be successful at.) Most people don’t really know what a Wedding Planner does, it is easy for anyone to say they are a “*Wedding Planner*” and the general population doesn’t see it as a true profession, is confused, and because of this, it is not taken seriously.

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 and supervising vendors and setting up a few 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.

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 and what they really do?” 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 gets a full view of what they do or have done during the planning.

It is my goal to give you a little more clarity on what a “*Wedding Planner*” does and hopefully it will help you decide if this may be a good fit for you. Then if you think you still want to jump in, I will tell you the options you may want to look at to get started in your new career.



A Day In The Life

Long Lunches and Private Jets

If you have seen the movie, The Wedding Planner with Jennifer Lopez, you probably have a pretty good idea of what a Wedding Planner does. We really for the most part have long lunches with friends and of course are whisked away on private jets to visit potential wedding venues all around the world.

Okay, sorry. I was exaggerating a bit! Its not that that couldn't be a reality for some, but to live that lifestyle, you either will have to be very lucky, meaning be in the right place at the right time, or know the right people, or work really hard and put in the time to reach that point.

So then you ask, "What is a real day in the life a typical Wedding Planner like?" Although most Wedding Planners would say there isn't really a typical day, I can share what we may do in a typical week. On any given day I will, have meetings with new or potential clients, current clients, vendors, conduct venue visits, drafting and present floor plans, designing table display samples, proof and edit invitations, write time-lines, and send vendor confirmation, attend dress fittings, tastings, review budgets and guest lists, then of course run the rehearsals (usually) on a Friday night. Then typically Saturdays I work on site from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. I will set up, supervise, and clean up the wedding. All in addition to actually running the business end with recordkeeping, marketing, balancing my business budget, supervise, guide, and train staff. The list could continue on and on.

Still, the reason it looks so easy, and that we don't really do much, is when guests or clients arrive and actually see me working, everything is set up and I am pretty much standing around supervising all of the planning that I have already put in place. So, you really can't blame the general public for not understanding what a Wedding Planner does. No one has ever really followed me continually from point A to point Z.



So, because it looks so effortless, many people including Wedding Vendors that provide other services think, it is an easy way to upsell their services and make a lot of money so they will add, “*Wedding Coordinating*” to their list of services.

This is unfortunate because they aren’t able to service the clients properly. It can become a disservice to the industry and an even bigger disservice to their client. This is another situation that will just add to the confusion of what a Wedding Planner does.

There is another problem that causes confusion to the concept of being a Wedding Planner. 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, Designation Wedding Planner, and Day of Wedding Coordinator are just a few. You may be thinking, “What is the difference? Aren’t they all the same thing?” Well, that is just what everyone else thinks and why there is so much confusion and few people really know what a Wedding Planner really does.

What's the Difference?

Clearing the Confusion of the Many Types of Planners





Types of Planners

In the last section I listed some titles that are commonly interchanged. Many people don't understand the difference and the flexibility or 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 are easier to get started in and then have the ability to grow or expand into additional options later as you gain experience or connections.

Here is a list of some general types of Planners/Coordinators that are commonly found in the Wedding Planning industry. There are many more options that are in the World of Event planning. For now, we will stick to just the Wedding World. We will look at each of these in depth:

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

What Is The Difference?

Job Description 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 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 can do weddings, but they also may do other events. A Wedding Planner on the other hand typically will focus on just weddings.

Event Planners have more flexibility in the choice of work they commit to. This also will 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 can have their weekends free as many corporate functions are held Monday-Friday. Where as Wedding Planner will be required to work weekends as well as during the week.

A Full Service Event Planner must also understand the logistics of multiple types of events and all of the dynamics that surround them. 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 also need to have a deep understanding of sound requirements and other specialized skill sets that surround their events of choice.

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

What is the Difference?

Job Description Venue Coordinator

Often the title provided for this position given by their employer is Wedding Coordinator. This can be very misleading for a couple planning their wedding. The appropriate title should be Venue Coordinator. The Venue Coordinator is hired by the event facility, not by a couple planning their wedding and 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 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 client 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:

1. It frees up additional money in their budget to spend on the venue.
2. They don't want the planner to interfere with their way of doing things.
3. 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, set up, and vendor selection. Their support services are typically limited to how it relates to the venue's responsibilities and preferences. 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 do not write timelines, send vendor confirmations or assist the vendor with delivery or set up. They also will not assist with any details outside of their venue.

Another very 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 the same person the couple has been planning the details with throughout the wedding planning process is there on the wedding day. Sometimes there may be a Sales Coordinator that hands off the information to a Venue Coordinator or even a Banquet Captain.



What is the Difference?

Job Description

Full Service Wedding Planner

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 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 those 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 discounts that will benefit the client. They will also offer real and practical solutions to common issues that arise during the planning process.

What is the Difference?

Job Description 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 amount of trips they will take to each location and it does demand that a lot of the planning be done long distance and extreme organizational skills. You can not 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. Many planners choose to work in the same destination locations for simplicity 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. They don't have the security or reassurance that everything will work out from experience.

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.

What Is The Difference?

Job Description

Event Designer

An Event Designer is typically responsible for developing the overall design of the wedding. They must pay close attention to the 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 including, the guest book and party favors.

Although they focus on the details they also must 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 stationary and florals.

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 many 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 set up 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 of 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!

What is the Difference?

Job Description Day of Coordinator

A Day of Wedding Coordinator is always hired by the couple getting married. This is different than 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 together. 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 commitment with a maximum financial return and can offer the opportunity to gain a lot of experience. The typical Day of Wedding Coordinator will work approximately 8 hours on the wedding day with a few optional extra hours during the week for some additional preparation and can pay up to 2/3 the price of what a Full-Service Planner will charge.

Their job differs from a Full Service Planner in the area of the actual planning. For a Day of Coordinator, the couple will do all the planning and then hand off the plans to the Coordinator 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 set up but, it is not automatically assumed they will provide set up services and 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.

The Whole Truth

and Nothing but the Truth?





The Good the Bad & the Ugly

Okay, now for a reality check, the wedding industry in general really is 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 even 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. As with most careers, there are many ups and downs. During my career, I have experienced more than my fair share of joy as well as sorrow.

I work a lot of long hard hours. I work most weekends as well as long hours during the week. I don't take much time off, but on the other hand, I raised 3 kids as a single mom, had flexible hours, took events when I wanted and took time off when I wanted to and neither I or my children ever went without.

I must confess, although I do work long hours, I love every minute of it. I have had times when clients were not happy no matter how hard I tried, we all know people who just like to complain. I have 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. So, you can clearly see there are great highs and painful lows.

Anyone who takes a job in this field needs to be fully aware, that this can be tough choice. It defiantly has its ups and downs, but then so does every career. To all my friends and family, they as well as I, would classify myself as a workaholic, but I can't help it. 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, its worth the rain you went through just to experience it.

The Path to Freedom

Training Options





Training Pathways

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

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.

There are some programs on line. I would caution you to research them before you buy them. 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 who purchased materials from someone who writes text books 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 a 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 experience 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.



Training Pathways

Looking back the most challenging part of my career has been the sheer lack of training and support available. It really is no ones 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 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!



Conclusion

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 the knowledge or you can visit our website to learn about one of our Wedding State University Certification Training Programs. We offer several types of Wedding Planning & Coordination. In addition, become 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.

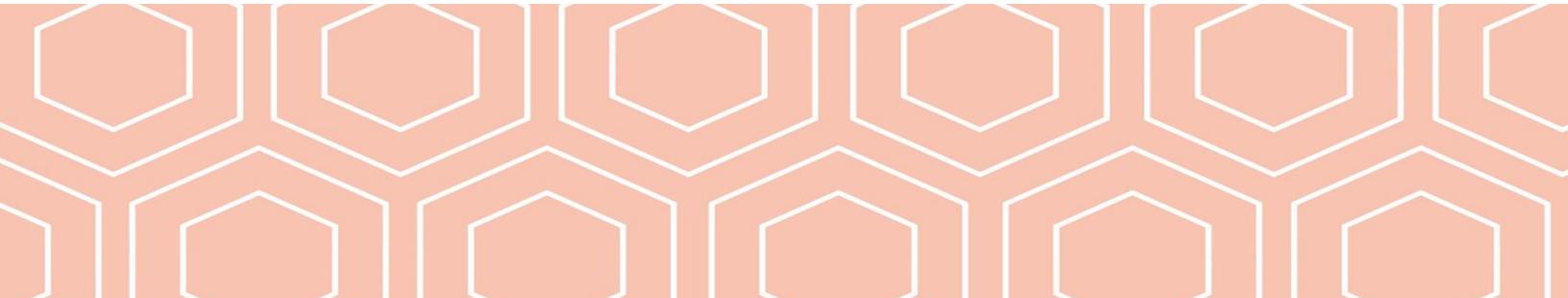
If you have been dreaming of this career, now is your chance. Only you can change your future. Join us today in one of the most exciting career choices you will ever make. Strike now while the iron is hot. Don't just be a dreamer, be a doer! You have the power to make your hopes a reality.



Many people hope success will someday come to them..... I just couldn't leave something that important to chance.

Victoria Lewis

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