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Wedding planners can save headaches

Many engaged couples are turning to wedding planners to make their big day hassle-free. To find the perfect planner, three of the industry's experts - Evelyn Mills, Sonya Yeung and Vindy Lui - offer some helpful tips.

"Weddings are a very personal affair, where you invest a lot of emotion and time, and you have very high expectations. So it's important to have a good connection with your wedding planner," says Mills, founder and group creative director at Marriage Maestros. "It's a marriage between you and your wedding planner - he or she will be your sounding board and this person will help guide you in the right direction."

While many couples find a wedding planner through word-of-mouth, or the internet, Mills says if you already have a wedding venue in mind, ask the venue for recommendations since those planners will be familiar with the site.

To ascertain a wedding planner's experience, Mills suggests asking about their knowledge of venues, flowers and customs - and if there are any limitations. Pose questions such as: Can the venue accommodate a stage or dance floor? Are the loading areas and

lifts big enough for oversized decorations? Will your requested flowers be in season or is there a less expensive alternative? Does the hotel or banquet venue have a good reputation in terms of food quality, service and timing?

As the creative director at Bliss Creations, Yeung says "having a wedding planner saves headaches. They manage expectations from vendors and clients; a lot of times couples are the problem not the vendor. So we make sure both sides are happy."

In terms of working style and vendor selection, Yeung says each wedding planner is different. "Some offer a lot of flexibility and some don't. You might only get a selection of one or two vendors, while others will endeavour to find a vendor to suit your budget. Some planners are open to ideas and want feedback, and some may not be as open or good at communicating."

Yeung adds some planners are strict in the style of wedding they offer, while others are willing to create the style you want, say a high-end look, but within your budget. Once you've found your perfect wedding planner, how much it's going to cost varies greatly. Yeung

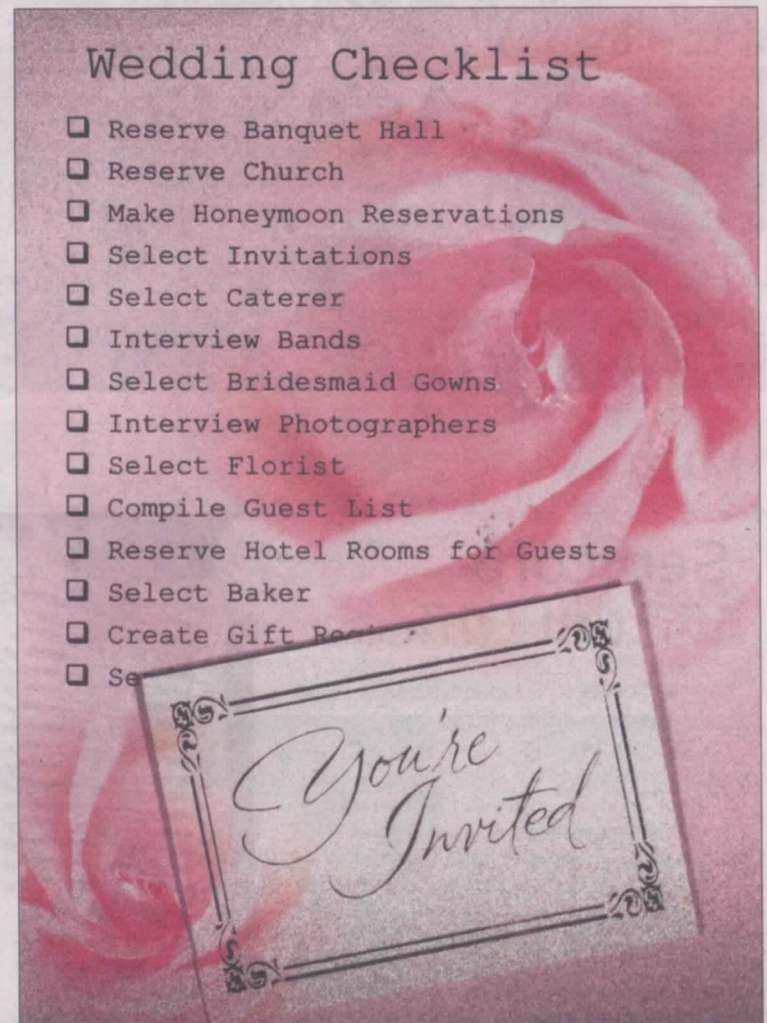
explains some planners charge a per cent of the total event, some on the vendors used, some on a bulk package price, and some split charges based on the site and project management.

For couples looking to cut costs, you can get a wedding planner for free at many hotels. At The Peninsula, where some 300 small- to mid-size weddings are held every year, the director of catering and wedding planner-in-chief, Lui, says the hotel's wedding planners are a complimentary service if you book your wedding at one of the hotel's venues, such as the garden suite or the Felix restaurant. The hotel will take care of everything - including booking the celebrant, photographer, flowers and make-up artist, if required. "If you are very busy and you can't source the vendors yourself, then we can provide a wedding planner as a free service," Lui says.

But is a wedding planner necessary? "No, I don't think it is," Mills says. "It depends on the size and how complicated the wedding is. If you like to plan and you are an organised, level-headed person then it can be fun to plan your own wedding."

Wedding Checklist

- Reserve Banquet Hall
- Reserve Church
- Make Honeymoon Reservations
- Select Invitations
- Select Caterer
- Interview Bands
- Select Bridesmaid Gowns
- Interview Photographers
- Select Florist
- Compile Guest List
- Reserve Hotel Rooms for Guests
- Select Baker
- Create Gift Register
- Select



Wedding planners can make sure the big day goes off smoothly.