



Evelyn Mills: hopeless romantic

## Marriage expert has mastered art of optimism

**EVELYN MILLS**

Founder of Marriage Maestros

When I founded Marriage Maestros in 2002, there was no established wedding planning company that specialised in tailor-made wedding design and service.

We have created a niche in the market. We take care of everything, from choosing fabrics for dresses, hair and makeup design to travel arrangements and wedding scheduling.

Our emphasis is on quality, not quantity. We want to offer something different to people, and work with them to find something practical, within their budget.

I have always enjoyed the hospitality industry, having worked in it for 14 years. I particularly like giving people more than what they expect. At the end of the day, that is what service is about.

I am a hopeless romantic who believes in love and the sanctity of marriage.

It is amazing when you find that one person you can spend the rest of your life with.

This is a very emotional job, and you have to be prepared to sway with the emotions. Often, you end up being a mediator of sorts between two families, the couple, or a group of bridesmaids. As a result, you have to be a very good listener, diplomatic and patient.

Aside from that, you have to be a multitasker and detail-oriented. You need a good sense of colour and style, an ear for music, and a knowledge of food and wine. You must be quick on your feet and able to make sound decisions at the drop of a hat.

Each wedding is an emotional experience for me. I get excited at every wedding I help to plan. Because weddings are planned over a long period of time, you get to know the couple well, and it becomes very personal.

I think the most challenging aspect of my work is having to always maintain a positive front, be excited and happy for others in spite of what kind of day you may be having.

My father passed away a week before a major wedding I helped to organise two years ago, but I had to be professional and not let my emotions and personal life affect my work.

But most rewarding are the friendships I make with the couples

## Weddings bells to work overtime next year

Dennis Eng

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Next year is expected to be a bumper one for weddings in Hong Kong, with more than 30,000 couples tipped to take the plunge.

The number of marriages will be fuelled partly by the attraction of Disney theme weddings and proposed legislative changes that will make this possible.

The Marriage Bill will be gazetted tomorrow and go before the legislature on June 1.

"Next year should be a very good year for weddings," said wedding planner Sharon Au Wai-fong. "I expect the beginning of 2006 to be busier than usual, mainly because of Disney. In fact, the number of weddings next year could be a five-year record."

The September opening of the Four Seasons hotel in Two IFC also would help, said Evelyn Mills, founder of Marriage Maestros. She does not expect an initial rush as couples will wait for positive feedback before planning their big day at the hotel, which would probably mean next year.

Gordon Cheung, who owns Wedding Planner, said many couples had decided to get married last year or delay the big day until next year as 2005 is considered less auspicious for marriages.

If proposed changes to the Marriage Ordinance are introduced, couples need only hire a qualified solicitor or notary to conduct their weddings. Appointed lawyers will be governed by a code of practice.

Secretary for Security Ambrose Lee Siu-kwong said as was the case now, couples would still be required to submit a notice of intention to marry to the Registrar of Marriages. A copy of the notice was exhibited for 15 days. Barring any objections, a certificate was then issued to allow couples to wed within three months of the notice being filed.

But couples will not be limited to City Hall in Central, marriage registries or "special places" such as licensed churches, and can wed at any time of day.

Disney is eager to capitalise on the change by promoting itself as a major destination for theme weddings.

In a sign that Chinese-style banquets are likely to dominate its business, the park will allow guests to play mahjong.