



don't settle

for less

Get the wedding reception
you've always dreamed of

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“hi, how much do you charge for a wedding?” This is how most phone calls to wedding professionals start. There are so many components that go into giving a bride a cost for services. I'd like to provide you with some questions to ask and answer before you begin with, “What's your price?” As a result, you'll get the wedding you really want as opposed to the one you end up with because you didn't know what to ask. First of all, the key to achieving the wedding you want is communication. ➔

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Since I am a disc jockey, most of the information discussed here will revolve around entertainment for your reception, but the information can be used with many other types of wedding vendors as well.

Going back to that initial phone call, many brides start off asking about price. Truth be told, there are a lot of factors that go into determining the price of a product or service so it is not a question that is quickly answered. Many wedding professionals offer a range of different services for weddings depending on what the couple wants. Putting into a different perspective, it would be like going to a restaurant and asking, “How much is dinner,” without looking at the menu. At the beginning stages of the relationship between wedding couple and wedding professional, it is an impossible question to answer accurately for your wedding, simply because we don’t know anything about what you want...yet.

When shopping for your wedding services, it is best to first find out if the company you are interested in is even available for your date. If they are already booked, then price won’t matter much. Let’s look at some other key things to ask:

How were you trained in your profession? What you don’t want is a business owner buying gear, illegally downloading a bunch of music and calling himself a DJ. Too often, these

“DJs” book weddings and “wing it” while they learn as they go. Sure, they’re going to make a mistake now and then, but they say they have been in business for years so they have experience. What they have done is just gotten better at making the same mistakes.

The best method for a DJ to learn his profession is to go to school. There are a few professional DJ schools that teach all the nuances that go into running a successful wedding reception, as well as how to solve some of the challenges that could come up at any time. So, ask your DJ if he or she has completed any educational courses.

Is the business licensed? Most counties and some cities in Florida require businesses to have an occupational license (it goes by different names in different counties) in order to operate legally. While not a guarantee of quality, working with a licensed business shows some level of seriousness on the vendor’s behalf.

Does the wedding professional belong to a local or national industry association? The largest national association for DJs is the National Association of Mobile Entertainers (NAME). Also, there are local associations like the Florida Entertainment Alliance (FEA). Being a member of an association shows that the company meets the requirements necessary for membership. If a DJ is not a member of NAME or FEA, ask which organizations he or she belongs to and how long he or she has been a member. Belonging to any of these organizations can ensure that you’ve found an experienced and reputable DJ to execute your wedding reception.

Does the business carry liability insurance? More and more venues are requiring DJs and other wedding professionals to maintain a liability insurance policy. In a world where someone can win a lawsuit because of spilled hot coffee, why take the risk of not being covered if someone were to get injured at your reception? So, be sure to inquire as to the level of insurance he or she carries and if it’s enough to work at your venue of choice.

Will the company you are considering work well with the other professionals you have hired? Let’s use the cake cutting as an example. Before announcing the cake cutting to the guests, a DJ should make sure you and your husband are actually ready to do it, let the banquet staff know it’s coming up, tell the photographer in case he/she wants to change lenses and inform the videographer in case he/she needs to swap batteries or tapes. And, let’s not forget the wedding planner; he or she will need to be on hand to ensure you have everything you need. If the DJ does not communicate effectively, then you and all of your guests could be left standing by the cake waiting for the other professionals to get into position. You’ll need a DJ with good communication skills and knowledge of the other wedding professionals to effectively coordinate your details. ➡➡

Will the DJ do the wedding the way you want it done?

There are some DJs out there who will say, "I've been doing this a long time. I know what I'm doing. I'm the professional, I, I, I," and completely dismiss what you want. If you feel the DJ you are speaking with is going to let his/her ego come before your wants, continue your search until you find someone you feel confident will conduct your wedding in the manner you want it executed. After all, you are hiring the DJ to work for you, not the other way around. Having said that, I offer this caveat; whether it is the DJ or another wedding professional you are working with, use the benefit of their experience to guide you, not dictate to you. Work with your professionals to come up with a plan that will incorporate your vision, yet still lead to a successful reception.

Will I receive a written contract? It is amazing the amount of calls we get from brides days before the wedding because their DJ just backed out. If you don't have a contract with a DJ, you really don't have a DJ. I know it sounds like common sense, but it happens enough that it bears mentioning; get everything in writing. This protects both you and the DJ (or any other wedding professional for that matter). Finally, if a DJ does not require some type of retainer fee or down payment, chances are your date is not going to be held.

Now you know some questions to ask before determining if you've found the perfect DJ for your wedding. In order to get an accurate price however, you will need to be asked some questions as well. Some questions you may get asked are:

Where will the reception take place? Depending on how far the reception venue is from the DJ's place of business, there may be travel fees associated with the price.

Will you be doing the ceremony on the same property as the reception? Being in Florida, a lot of weddings take place at the same location as the ceremony. Most DJs are capable of providing ceremony music as well as reception music. This is often an additional fee, but one you won't regret. Not only can a DJ provide music for your ceremony, but you'll appreciate having a sound system for guests to actually hear the ceremony taking place. If your ceremony and reception are in two different locations, there may be an additional charge for multiple systems.

What are the times of the reception? Your DJ will need to be set up and ready before your guests arrive and he or she will want to know how long the event will last. Receptions typically run 3-5 hours and there is usually a difference in price depending on how long a reception is. This should be spelled out in the contract along with any fees associated with going overtime, if necessary.



How many guests will be at the reception? What might be a great sound system for a wedding of 50 may not be adequate for a wedding of 300. This could affect your price if a bigger sound system is needed.

Will the meal be buffet style, served or just heavy hors d'oeuvres? While this may seem like an odd question for a DJ to ask, knowing the type of meal you are planning will help determine how much time you may need. For example, it will take more time to serve your guests a four course dinner than it is for them to go through a buffet or hors d'oeuvres stations.

Today's DJs may also offer more than just music. It is not uncommon for a DJ to provide, not just lighting for the dance floor, but up-lighting for the head table or cake table as well as your monogram or names projected on the wall or dance floor. An increasing number of weddings are doing video montages. If this is something you are planning for, ask your DJ if he/she offers projectors and screens for rent.

These are just some of the things to ask and expect to be asked when planning the wedding of your dreams. Hopefully you can shop for your wedding professionals with a little more insight as to what goes into providing you the service you want. If I can leave you with just one more thought, it is this: When you find the right wedding professionals, you will know it in your heart. All other things being equal, go with whom you feel comfortable with rather than who is cheapest. Rework your budget if necessary. There are no do-overs in weddings. If you try to economize on what is most important to you, you may discover it is the worst money you have ever saved.

We'll see you on the dance floor!