

# CHAPTER 8

## *The Vendors*

### **Building a Contact List**

The role of the wedding planner includes both gathering and furnishing detailed information on wedding industry professionals. Every referral made by the planner should be researched thoroughly prior to an endorsement or recommendation.

One of the most important things to remember is that the planner's name will be attached to every event that is part of their portfolio. The risk of working with an unscrupulous or inexperienced wedding industry professional is too great a chance to take on an event that cannot be repeated.

How to choose a vendor? Some options are to join networking groups or wedding associations, depend on word of mouth from other wedding planners and interview vendors based on print advertising as well as online advertising. A thorough interview should be conducted by the planner to determine the following:

- Particular style or technique
- Specialties
- Pricing
- Staffing and availability
- Facility
- Substitution policies
- Type of equipment used
- Contracts

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It is highly suggested that the interview be a one-on-one at the vendor's place of business.

It is advised that the planner research and provide at least three contacts in the high, medium and low budget categories to feel comfortable with recommendations. AACWP members are introduced to new vendors at every monthly meeting and constantly exchange referrals for vendors they have used and appreciated.

### **Compiling the Vendor Database**

Compiling a database of vendors can be one of the biggest administrative projects you take on with regard to your business. Unfortunately, it's a must. The more time and energy you spend setting it up correctly from the beginning, the less time and energy you'll spend in the long run researching vendors.

There are many database programs available to purchase, but there are also some that you probably already have on your computer right now. Excel is a good place to start if you are just establishing your business. Create fields for Category/Service, Company Name, Contact Name, Phone, E-Mail, etc., so you have a system to search for a particular vendor.

Other database software products available include: Access, Outlook, Frogware and ACT.

#### Uses of a Database

- Maintain contact details for prospects, clients and vendors
- Generating form letters, newsletters or other marketing materials
- Conversation and correspondence records for follow-up and reminders
- Catalog of vendor services, prices and performance

## Considerations in Choosing Software

### *Integration*

What other applications are you planning to use with your database? The database is only as valuable as it is useful in accomplishing tasks. How easy is it to find an e-mail address or physical address? Can you take a set of records and use it in another application easily?

### *Technical Skill Level*

Choose an application within your skill set. The most advanced database application could be more effort than it's worth, especially if it's confusing to use. When your technical skills improve and you discover you need more functionality, moving data from a smaller application to a more sophisticated one is relatively simple.

### *Import/Export*

Some advertising sources provide lead lists. If you plan to use this service, be sure the format they provide is something you can import into your software with relative ease.

### *Backup/Restore*

Once you begin to use your database and rely on it for your business, having a backup copy becomes critical. Should something happen to your computer (disk failure, laptop stolen, etc.) you will want a recent copy of your database to restore the information. It's possible this could be on a thumb drive, on another hard drive, or even on a shared (networked) drive.

### *Hardware*

How much storage and horsepower will this require? For most users a recent vintage of computer and software will do the job. The thing to avoid is trying to use new software (<1 yr) with much older (4+ yrs) computers and software; you want to make sure your computer and software are compatible. Over time the

frustration and aggravation of trying to get things to work right is more than worth the cost of upgrading to a new computer or laptop. If you have an older computer, use the software of the same approximate generation.

### **The Vendor Contract**

It is the responsibility of the planner to review vendor contracts, outlining any conditions that may impact the event or client. Suggest highlighting any due dates that require action or follow up. Check for proper spelling, addresses, locations, contacts' names and telephone numbers (especially cell phone numbers) and any other pertinent piece of information. Any promises or agreements on the part of the wedding industry professional should be written on the contract. Do not rely on the memory or interpretation of the professional or your client. By reading the contract, everyone should have a clear understanding of what is to be provided and any costs associated with the services or products. Signatures of both the client and the vendor must be on the agreement to constitute a binding contract.

#### What Should the Contract Include?

- The date the contract was drafted should be specified.
- The address, telephone number and additional contact information for the company.
- The address, telephone number and additional contact information for the client.
- Exact time and date the services are to be rendered (stop and start times).
- Exact location where services are to be rendered (if more than one, all should be listed).
- The total cost for services.
- The amount and date the deposit is due, if required.
- The amount and date that payment is due in full.
- Types of payment accepted.

- Cancellation and refund policies of the company.

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- All items and details that are included in the total cost.
- Any additional charges that may be incurred, including:
  - Hourly rates if the client wishes to go into overtime
  - Charges for assistants and/or extra persons, if applicable
  - Mileage costs and travel fees, if any
  - Gratuity and tax
  - Other miscellaneous charges.
- Action plan in event of emergency, illness, etc., preventing original contracted vendor to perform agreed on activities.

### Additional Contract Terms

#### Bakery:

- Transportation costs for delivery and set-up
- Provision of a listing of any items to be returned (pedestals, etc.)
- Responsibility for arrangement of fresh flowers on the cake
- Listing of colors to be used on the cake and the cake flavors
- Number of layers and number of servings
- A sketch or picture of cake as an attachment to the contract

*Note that there is no tax on wedding cakes in the state of Texas.*

#### Caterer and Reception Sites:

- The exact address of the reception site.
- The location or room for the ceremony, the cocktail hour and the reception
- Access times for decorating and set-up/strike
- The estimated number of guests
- The due date of the final count
- The exact price for each guest

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- The type of service (buffet, stations, plated)
- A detailed menu
- Types of beverages (including alcohol) that will be served and the cost
- The number of servers provided
- The name of the person who will be in charge of the servers
- The time the meal will be served and duration of the meal period
- Accommodation of special food requests
- Cost for child's plate
- Proper attire of the servers
- Parking/Valet requirements and rates

### DJ, Band and Entertainers:

- The total number of musicians or DJ's that will be provided
- The DJ's name and/or listing of musicians
- The hours the entertainment will start and finish
- Number and length of breaks
- Requirements for the provision of meals
- Proper dress for the event
- Responsibility for arranging for adequate electrical support

### Florist:

- Transportation costs if floral items are to be transported
- Amount and type of personal service, if any
- Flowers to be used in all arrangements
- Specific rental items to be provided and provision for the return of the items
- Responsibility for removal of all items from the ceremony site and the reception site

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### Hotel Accommodations:

- Number of rooms
- Discounted room rates
- Agreement or contract obligation by client: credit card hold vs. courtesy hold

### Photographer:

- The total number of and size of photos included in the package
- The total number of proofs included in the package
- The cost of additional photos and/or proofs
- The name of the photographer who will be shooting the wedding
- Start and end time
- The final delivery date of proofs and photos
- Length of time photos will be posted online
- Availability of online ordering
- Proper dress for the event

### Supplier of Bridal Gown/Bridesmaids' Dresses and Tuxedos:

- The name of the designer
- The design or style number of the gown, dress, and/or tuxedo
- Dates for first fittings, final fittings, delivery/pick-up
- Itemized list of costs, including alterations and other charges

### Transportation Service:

- The pick-up and drop-off times and locations
- The total time duration of the rental
- The number of vehicles contracted
- The exact description of the vehicle selected including the color

### Videographer:

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- The total number of DVD's included in the package
- The cost of additional DVD's
- The name of the videographer who will be recording the wedding
- The hours the videographer will begin and end shooting
- The date the video will be available for proofing
- The approximate delivery date of the finished video
- Type of packaging provided
- Additional charges for extra editing or special effects
- Proper dress for the event

Contracts may also include an indemnity clause, exempting the company from any claims, losses, injuries or damages incurred. A company can be held liable only when such claims occur as a result of negligence or willful misconduct of the company or one of its employees.

Ask the company to specify what the employees/staff will be wearing in the contract. It is highly suggested in cases where some wedding industry professionals will be spending most of their day with the bride and groom that the client will provide food and beverage for the vendors.

In the case of negotiations, do so fairly and with respect. These are the professionals you will be working with on other events so mutual respect is definitely a must. The criteria for recommending one professional over another will be the client's taste, style and budget allowance as well as the professional's availability.