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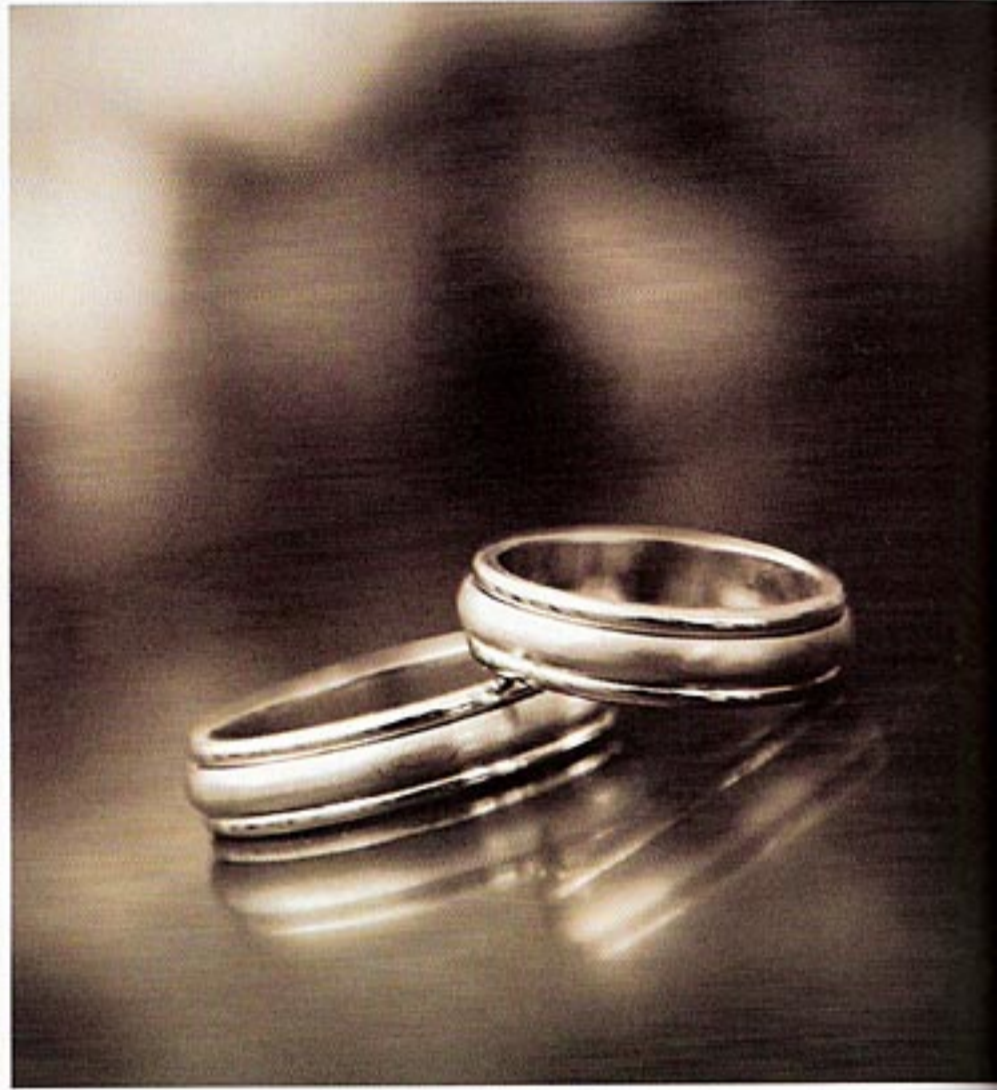
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WEDDING WISDOMS

By: Michael J. Nolte, guest writer



Frequently I am asked by Kansas Citians for "just a couple words of wisdom." But where do you begin, when surveying the vast land of wedding planning?

I've been a professional wedding coordinator for 29 years. Last year I directed my 1,000th wedding. From intimate affairs on Thanksgiving morning for 40 in a great room overlooking a frozen lake and a mantel brimming with white tulips, to 1,025 guests seated in a tent on the front lawn in the largest wedding in the history of the city, I've seen a lot of wedding scenarios play out.

With that depth of experience, I have watched couples unite for better or worse in varying degrees of anxiety or relaxation. What makes the difference? If I was to offer "just a couple words of wisdom," they would be, interestingly enough, *surprise* and *delegation*.

Let's define what those random words mean in regard to a positive wedding experience.

SURPRISE

We live in a society where we know the identity of the caller before hearing the friend's voice, can learn of our child's gender before birth, and "preopen" gifts from our wedding thanks to bridal registries. Where is the surprise?

And yet the same is true regarding all the hope and hype about weddings. When brides share details about the colors, the theme, the unique elements, there is little to anticipate and thus leave some guests feeling a little "been there, done that." Keeping guests and bridal party in suspense is a good thing. But how can this be accomplished?

1. When shopping for your bridal gown...go with no more than two trusted advisors. One of them should be the person paying for the dress. When others ask for description, simply state you would like to keep it a surprise. Those of us that can remember royal weddings recall the anticipation associated with those brides as they stepped out of a glass carriage. Nowadays, it's the red-carpet events that are the "big reveals." The anchors gush on and on about details regarding the gowns of the celebrities. You are the celebrity on your wedding day. Keep the details hush and enjoy knowing the secret.
2. Limit the wedding talk to either professionals in the field or with people that are paying the bill. Friends and your fiancé will grow somewhat tired with constant wedding talk. I always urge couples to have short planning periods. Hire the vendors, make decisions, don't second-guess yourself and then go back to the love that brought you together. Don't allow the wedding to become a monster that capsizes an engagement.
3. Make every effort to not see each other before the walk

down the aisle. The need for photography before the wedding to eliminate additional post-ceremony time. However, the aisle moment is breathtaking when preserved.

Solution: Take photos of the bride and groom individually with their families and attendants before the ceremony, leaving just 20-30 minutes of photos to be taken post-ceremony. Then have a hospitality room available with drinks and appetizers to keep guests entertained. This way guests are having such a good time mingling, that the postponed arrival of the newlyweds is a mute point.

4. Lastly, refrain from opening your present early and then quickly re-wrapping it, to act surprised. Here I am referring to friends and family members that arrive at the church, ready to dress, but sneak a peak at the interior decorations first. My advice is to hire seasoned professionals that you trust, then allow them to work their magic. As they put the finishing touches on the flowers, candles and aisle runner, let all the magnificence sink in, just like a guest. Then when you walk through the door, you've kept surprises not only for your guests, but for yourself as well.

DELEGATION

1. Many mothers of the brides try to do so much themselves. This practice can quickly trickle down, and pile unneeded stress on the bride. I recall a Longview Mansion bride years ago that insisted on making place card flower pots filled with seeds, potting soil, and moss. She then personalized each pot with the guests name, written in gold on the sides. Her stress level zoomed to a 10 when the rain started to fall on this outdoor ceremony. She didn't order photographs for three years she was so disappointed with her wedding.

Solution: Refrain from tackling a large project, and thus utilizing much personal time when the wedding is only two short weeks away. If the deed isn't finished by then, it probably should be released from the wedding itinerary. Be careful in employing friends to help as well. I've often heard the feedback from many friends that are feeling more of a "maid" than a bridesmaid.

2. Leave the heavy lifting to a pro. When it comes to any last minute prep: wedding cake, catering, lighting, decorating, flower, hire it done. This also includes clean-up duties. I've sadly left receptions only to watch the family in their wedding finery haul out everything, including the trash! Let the taste of a wonderful wedding be savored as long as possible.

3. Wedding coordination is also a great aspect to delegate to a professional. Though every bride now has her file folders of pictures, contracts and swatches... who is going to be the one to glue all that together for the week of the wedding? Inevitably all questions for direction will come back to the bride or the bride's mother, unless they have effectively delegated, to ensure they too can be guests at their own party. The best planners are like the best heart surgeons, ones who have performed once-in-a-lifetime procedures so frequently that they are never thrown by a crisis. They have a calm reassurance that will carry the day smoothly when unexpected events occur. I once had a seamstress who answered objections to her pricing with the following, "You never know how inexpensive a pro-

fessional is, until you've hired one that isn't."

I urge you to simplify your wedding planning to the point that you can still have many elements of SURPRISE, but promise yourself you will practice DELEGATION so that you can actually enjoy the surprises yourself.

My concluding "couple of words" would be those with which I end all e-mails to my brides, "This is going to be fun!"

Michael Nolte is the owner of two bridal salons: Hawthorne Plaza and Briarcliff Village. The company is named by NBS, "Top 10 Couture Salons in U.S." (2007). Nolte is the Director of Wedding Planning Services for National Bridal Service. He is the designer of "Michael Nolte" a collection of bridals now available at 50 salons nation wide. **B**



Bridal gown and veil designed by Michael Nolte.