



Time To Say ‘I Do’ To A Memorable Wedding (Guest) Experience

ESTATENVY connected with a DIY bride-to-be and a professional wedding planner to provide insight into planning a wedding for everyone—including the newlywed couple.

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Weddings are complicated. Ask any bride-to-be and they are sure to say it is hectic to plan for the “big day.” Trying to make sure everyone is happy can be a struggle for many engaged couples. With dozens of factors, venues and vendors, it can be difficult to find a starting point or prioritize tasks. However, professional wedding planner [Alexis Alvarez](#) of [Lillian Rose Events](#) and Meagan Kelly, [a well-researched DIY bride](#), reassure that taking a breath and being yourself is the key to successful planning and having a wedding that celebrates the newlyweds while being a smash hit for guests. Alvarez and Kelly both stated that [figuring out a budget](#) is the most critical point to establish. Kelly sat down with her fiancé to predetermine their budget, and Alvarez agreed that’s where she starts with her client couples. “Initially, I work with the couple to determine where they are in the planning process,” said Alvarez. “We sit down for a Discovery Meeting in which we establish what their budget is, what their priorities

are and what factors are non-negotiable. Around 75-80% of the couples I work with are multicultural couples, so it's important to understand the couple's goals in blending cultures, ensuring there are no feelings of underrepresentation." Alvarez said that the second meeting involves a design presentation in which she and the couple check-in, "making sure everyone is on the same page with budget and priorities. From there, it's important to find a venue and big vendors for food and photography. However, once a budget is set and the couple has their non-negotiables in order, it's very much up to the couple as to what they plan next, according to Alvarez. She expressed that budget and priorities often determine what the couple seeks out next, whether it's design and decor, venues, food, floral arrangements or photography. For Kelly, once a budget was established, the venue was most important. "For my fiancé Matt and I, we were eager to pick out a venue so we could really envision the day," Kelly said. "Even before that, though, I was reaching out to photographers on Instagram and Pinterest. Several phone interviews later, we decided on our photographer. Once that was taken care of, I started looking for a caterer, florist and DJ. Those were necessities, while other components like the cake and officiant I handled last." That said, Alvarez stated that when a budget is established, especially for the venue and design, a couple needs to stick to it. Getting a second opinion from vendors and designers and reading the fine print of contracts, while boring and tedious, is important. Decorating within a budget can actually be exciting, according to Kelly. As a DIY bride, Kelly designed all the decor for the venue to incorporate into her home after the wedding, repurposing the decorations and saving money in the long run. Alvarez noted that choosing a venue with or without certain accommodations can be budget-friendly. For example, a wedding held at a conservatory means less floral costs, while a loft requires more of a decorating budget due to high ceilings and the attempt to fill a large space in order to make it feel cozy and comfortable. After all, while it is the newlyweds' day, investing in the guest experience creates a memorable experience for everyone—the couple included. Alvarez noted that while anyone can plan a wedding without a wedding planner, as Kelly can certainly attest to, it's necessary for some couples to have someone who can advocate for them when the going gets tough. Both Kelly and Alvarez stated that throughout the wedding planning process, it's critical to have somebody, be it a friend, parent or planner to remind the couple it is their wedding day. "Walking a family through this incredibly important event in their life as an advocate and partner is deeply rewarding and crucial to help minimize stress for the couple," said Alvarez. "Couples need someone to remind them when the planning gets tough that you can't please everybody, as some people will always have grievances. Remember that smiles show it all. When you, as a couple, are happy and enjoying the wedding and reception, and most of the guests are happy and excited by dancing, engaging with others and heartily eating the food, you'll know it's a successful wedding." Kelly agreed, expressing that if guests are well-fed, well-imbibed and if the vibe of the reception matches the vibe of the guests, it will make for a happy newlywed couple, regardless of how big the budget is. "I don't think giving someone a party favor at the end of the night has any impact on whether or not they had a good time at the reception," said Kelly. Similarly, Alvarez and Kelly noted that the reason guests sometimes walk away from a wedding saying they "didn't enjoy it" is because of a lack of accommodations. According to Alvarez, not having well-thought-out accommodations and not being considerate of travelers is a critical mark against the couple. She expressed that a lot of couples often underestimate the transportation situation for where the venue is located. While it's quite a bit of money to set aside, a travelers' budget ensures that guests feel wanted. Kelly elaborated, saying, "Our guests' decision to show up and support us is incredibly powerful,

especially in my case where my guests will be traveling about 1,400 miles for the wedding. I want them to feel like we did everything we could to give them a night they'll remember for years to come, not just for my fiancé and I. Guests feel appreciated when they can tell you put effort into whether or not they have a good time." The same can be said for the couple at the end of their big day. When guests support the couple, it makes for a more successful and memorable gathering. For Alvarez, the most rewarding moment she has is with the bride before she walks down the aisle. "It's an incredible moment," said Alvarez. "I always ask, 'Are you ready?'" and when I see the bride look to the individual who's walking them down the aisle with such support and affection, that is the highlight of my day, and the reason why I do what I do." At the end of the planning experience, Alvarez and Kelly agree that there is nothing like the process itself that makes the couple more excited for their wedding day. Despite all the stress of finding vendors, ensuring that family and friends have a good time can only be measured by what is put into the process. According to Alvarez, if the environment is comfortable for guests, everything that could be taken care of is finished, and the couple has done the best they can, then the rest doesn't matter. Even if relatives are paying for components of the event, it's necessary for couples to weigh opinions, respecting all of them but also identifying which perspectives don't have a stake in the outcome. Staying true to themselves throughout the process, whether that's picking the venue they wanted or implementing elements of themselves into the decor with homemade pieces, are simple ways for the couple to remind themselves that this is their wedding. "Trust that you know your guests better than anybody else," said Kelly. "Even if you hired a planner, they'll be going off of what you told them as far as who your guests are as people. You know them and you can do this. At the end of the day, you won't be able to please everyone, but if you make an honest effort and remain true to yourselves as a couple, you will be just fine."