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7 Top Tips From Her Wedding Planner

TIPS FROM A PRO

"The first thing I did," reveals Tamara Taggart, "I researched a wedding planner and hired one. It was the first thing and the best thing I did." She entrusted special-event planner Elana Lancit of Sweet Beginnings (www.asweetbeginning.com) with all the details. Having picked flowers, booked venues and averted disaster for nearly nine years, Lancit shares her advice here with couples negotiating their own day of matrimonial bliss.

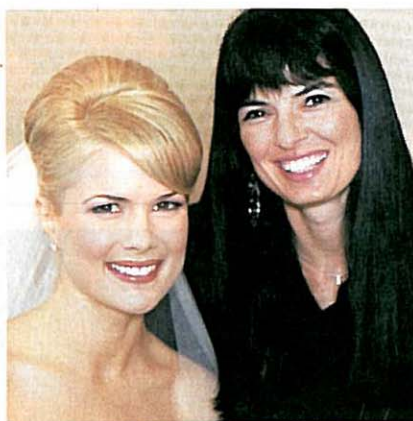
IF YOU HIRE A WEDDING PLANNER, MAKE SURE HE OR SHE HAS PLENTY OF EXPERIENCE. They will be helping to plan one of the most important days of your life. Make sure they're up to par.

GET EVERYTHING IN WRITING. While you might consider your verbal agreements with venue owners, caterers and DJs airtight, a written document will ensure their accountability.

DECIDE ON A BUDGET. Having a rough idea of how much you'd like to spend and how much you *can* spend will give you a better indication of the type of wedding you can afford. Make a list of what you envision for your wedding and narrow it down to the most important items. And yes, this might mean you'll be nixing the live band, the limousines or the chocolate fountain.

FIGURE OUT WHO'S PAYING FOR WHAT. This detail is paramount because of the way fees can fluctuate before, after and during a wedding. If the parents of the groom promise to pay for the alcohol but are expecting to pay \$1,000 instead of \$10,000, it's important they be made aware of the possible changes in price. Financial contributors should find a number they are comfortable with and agree to commit to that amount.

GO ON A DATE WITH YOUR FIANCÉ(E) ONCE A WEEK AND CREATE A WEDDING-FREE ZONE. It's important to make an effort to discuss your



Tamara Taggart and Elana Lancit

life beyond your wedding day, so as to avoid a marriage meltdown the moment the honeymoon is over.

HAVE A FOOD TASTING. You'll want to avoid the irony of commenting on how bad the food is only to realize you picked it yourself. And with the growing number of vegetarians, vegans and those with food allergies, it's wise to choose your menu carefully and be aware of its main ingredients.

CHECK OUT MAGAZINES FOR INSPIRATION, BUT STAY REALISTIC. Those glossy pages can serve as excellent guides to colour, flowers and décor, but are often created with a boundless budget. Rip out the pages that catch your eye and refer to them when renting your tux, choosing silverware or creating place settings — but don't forget you're working within a budget. □

— Allison Cross