



*E. Bingo Wyer*

*As* you prepare for your upcoming marriage, you'll have dozens of deadlines to meet, perhaps a few pesky relatives to calm and lots of details to communicate. Also, managing seamless communication is increasingly taxed by today's more intricate weddings. Plus, action packed schedules often hinder newer relationships from developing at their own more natural and leisurely pace. Without the luxury of more leisure time to permit us to understand others better, misunderstandings are likely to crop up.

Much is written about the monetary cost of weddings. Yet communication itself is another form of a valuable currency. Exactly like money, if communication is well managed, it can produce fantastic results. Poor communication however, may sadly have you paying in more ways than you ever imagined.

Here are some pointers on how to sail through the wedding planning stages with fewer mis-steps so that your special day is breezy and beautifully memorable.

### *Face Time*

Once you have chosen each of the vendors, make sure you have at least one meeting in person early on with every supplier. During that important **Face Time**, informally let all of the key players know who else will be contributing to the wedding's success. **Deborah Falvey**, of *Jack Falvey and Associates*, a lighting and production expert, actually recommends that brides distribute a contact sheet with vendors' names and telephone numbers to each supplier; she encourages the brides to make sure the vendors feel free to speak with

Intricate planning, packed schedules, and a long wedding "to-do" list – how couples can communicate with the pros and make their day the best it can be.

each other. What's the power behind this simple gesture? Deborah explains, "There's a pointless disconnect when vendors go off and work by themselves. The couple's vision is never as cohesive and perfect as it can be. Letting everyone know who the other players are, creates a synergy money can't buy. Instantly you'll have the muscle of a united team pulling on your behalf. There's a speed and harmony that propels a team working together." Having that face to face meeting when you award the job, delivers the best environment to express your desires and ask for their support and best effort.

### *The 24 Hour Rule*

Respond to all emails and phone calls within 24 hours.

It may seem impossible to do, especially when the boss moves your marketing presentation up by a week, but the **24 Hour Rule** still prevails. Event pro **Christine Clark**, owner of *Planned to Perfection*, offers this insight, "If you ignore emails and think, 'I'll get to them this weekend,' that really signals you have other things to do and that you're not on top of things." In some small way, your not responding immediately gives others permission to do the same thing. Invariably something will get dropped along the way.

Weddings are a series of important chain reactions. Maybe your floral designer deals with a company in Holland. And that Dutch company must place an order with an auction house. Clark adds, "Even if you don't have a decision, call back and let them know you don't have the information yet, and then tell them when you will." Keep the momentum moving forward by responding as quickly as you can.

Additionally, keep the logistics manageable. Clark also recommends that every bride keep a separate notebook dedicated to important wedding details: a daily-to-do list, snippets of fabric samples, tear sheets of images and color swatches, telephone numbers of purveyors, notes on meetings. Jot down all verbal estimates and costs. "It's amazing how people forget numbers," says Clark who also advises brides to write down details for what was decided and when. Make sure the notebook fits into your handbag and carry it all the time. Have a separate folder for signed contracts.

One final tip from the pros? Never leave a planning meeting (or end a phone conversation) without first reiterating to all participants what was decided, what work remains to be done, by whom and when. Clark adds, "With cell calls today, lots of meetings get interrupted. People sometimes talk over one another. A lot of wonderful people simply don't listen. It's just wise to remind everyone what was agreed to."



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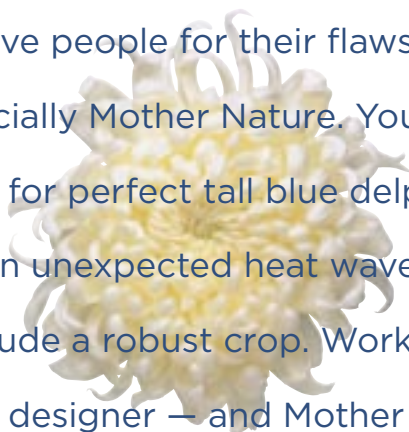
## *the Art of Giving*

It's the old reciprocity idea: If you treat me well, I'll treat you well. Still, there are times that the simplest conversations get off track because there's a strong need "to be right." According to a number of wedding experts, this outlook tends to derail the creative process, the very thing designed to make weddings all the more beautiful and unique. How to overcome this pitfall? Stay open-minded. Let others make suggestions by listening first and reacting later, and avoid the impossible expectation that everything "must be absolutely perfect."

Forgive people their flaws. Even Mother Nature has limitations, as **Lisa Moreta** owner of *Paisley* explains, "You can hope for the biggest pink peonies imaginable or perfect tall blue delphinium, but an unexpected heat wave or a draught may preclude a robust crop. There's no point in melting into a puddle of tears. Work with the designer — and Mother Nature — to come up with the best possible solution." Indeed, several floral designers interviewed did hint that flowers often are a good measure of the bride's philosophy. Moreta explains, "If she arrives with a long list of do nots, generally she'll have a tough time enjoying the process. She's not focused on the positive."

Designer **Debbie Pelosi** of *Cote Fleurie Studio* also recalls one happy bride who took the time to speak and make a personal connection with dozens of people that most people tend to ignore— assistants, coat check girl, waiters, lobby doormen. "It was an exceedingly large and intricate reception at New York City's Mandarin Hotel. "One could see she was a genuine people person. She was having fun, even when things didn't appear to match what she expected. Magically, she would turn a difficult challenge around. Everyone seemed to be rooting for her success." By the time her wedding day arrived, the large staff felt invested in making the day a triumph for her and her family. Debbie added, "Why wouldn't they pull out all of the stops during her wedding? Yes, she knew their names. But equally important: They felt they really knew her." That doesn't mean your planning stage must be a popularity contest, but it may

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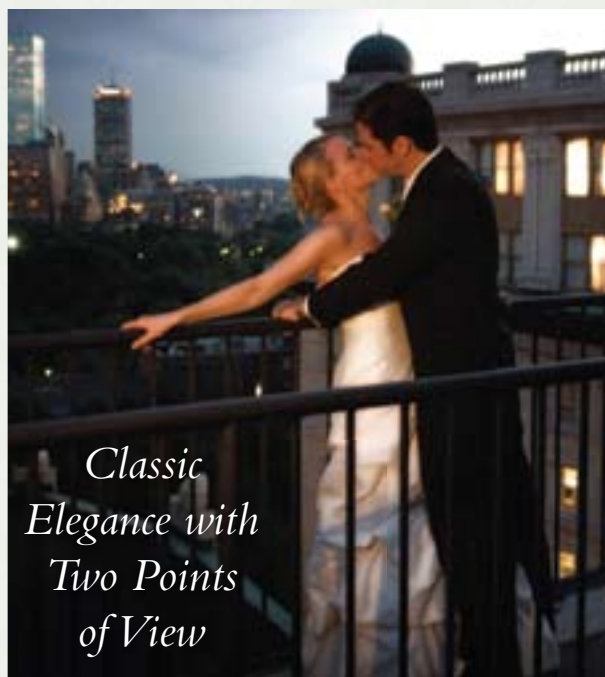
suggest that reciprocity can reap rewards if you don't stoop to diminishing others when things don't quite measure up. There are ways to turn things around, if you let others participate in the process.

### *Smoothing the Edges*

For some couples, money is no object. But for the majority of couples, money and budgets are an important consideration, and most major planning difficulties do relate to budgets that are being either exceeded or ignored. When at an emotional impasse appears (someone seems completely upset), the best thing to do is simply let that person express his or her concern. After you listen, it may help immeasurably to simply play back what you feel that person is saying or expressing. Never dismiss the claim — or the attending emotion — as silly. “The tendency is to use logic as a way to calm the person down,” says Nohmie B. Myers, a New York City couples counselor, “but logic fuels the emotional fire. Logic only escalates the hurt, anger or disappointment. Try to reasonably reiterate what the person is saying. It has a cathartic effect.”

Incidentally, calmly replaying what the person is upset about does not mean you agree with them. It simply suggests you understand their concern. The reason people often calm down as you replay back what is upsetting to them is this: They feel they have broken through the communication hurdle. It's the old adage: We all need to be heard.

When we don't feel others listen, our emotional bank account is “in the red.” Empathetic communication — and seeking to really understand what your future spouse and others say — is an effective means to keep everyone's emotional bank account in the black. And if we recognize that communication is indeed another form of currency, investing our words wisely and sharpening our listening skills can make us all very rich indeed! **LB**



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