
HIGH PROFILE & CELEBRITY WEDDINGS

INTRODUCTION

You need to be aware of what is going on in the world of celebrity weddings and love them or hate them, you will have to accept that some clients will want to replicate (or deliberately avoid) features of celebrity weddings. This chapter will look at how you can use the examples of celebrities and television to help design a fashionable wedding for any client whilst considering many of the extra issues you need to take into account when dealing with high profile clients.

INSPIRATION & CRITIQUE

An increasing number of clients are taking their wedding ideas from the celebrity weddings they see in the glossy magazines. As such, celebrities can set and perpetuate trends, and occasionally reduce the popularity of certain features.

When Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes married in Lazio just outside Rome in Italy, it was widely reported – incorrectly - that the marriage took place in Tuscany. The same year, bookings for European destination weddings went up considerably, especially in Lazio and Tuscany. Likewise, with Elizabeth Hurley's much publicised marriage to Indian businessman Arun Nayar the number of white British brides using an Indian influence in their wedding design briefly increased. Conversely, the number of bookings at Highclere Castle in Berkshire, where Katie Price married Peter Andre, were reported to have fallen

for a year or two afterwards as a direct result but fortunately the venue is now highly sought after since it has become the setting for ITV's respected TV drama '*Downton Abbey*'. Victoria and David Beckham's thrones resulted in many venues offering thrones or grander seats to their brides and grooms.

When you meet with clients, you may like to take along a scrapbook or iPad display of celebrity weddings so that if a client mentions how much they liked a particular feature from a celebrity wedding, you have a visual reference. Be careful not to criticise other people's weddings in front of clients or potential clients, in case they really like them – perhaps you could approach ugly pictures with an open question such as 'What do you think of this?' in the hope that they will give an honest appraisal before you embarrass yourself with a contrary opinion.

DEALING WITH THE PRESS

If a celebrity is currently very popular with the press then their wedding is likely to be one of the media must-haves of the year. Even low-interest celebs can get catapulted back into the spotlight just from the publicity of getting married. Depending on the objectives of the client, this could be a good or bad thing.

Good thing...

This is the opportunity to re-launch or boost the career of the bride or groom. If this is the case they may require you to liaise with their publicist if they have one and you should be aware that aspects of the wedding day will need to be tailored to make it newsworthy and photogenic. You may even be asked to contact all of the magazines and newspapers to get offers for magazine deals or to inform the paparazzi so that they know where to find the wedding. To see what media interest there can be type 'Anthea Turner wedding Cadbury flake' into Google and read some of the comment and criticism.

Bad thing...

The clients would prefer to keep the occasion private amongst friends and family and do not wish to have press in attendance, nor to have unauthorised pictures printed in magazines. If this is the case you will have to operate under very strict confidentiality agreements and will not be able to tell anyone whose wedding you are planning until after the event. You will have to work closely with a security firm, be strict with wedding guests about taking and disseminating photographs and what items they can bring with them.

WORKING WITH A MAGAZINE DEAL

Magazines may pay the couple for their pictures or more often, they send their own photographer. The pictures for glossy magazines such as *Hello!* and *OK!* tend to focus on the posed pictures of celebrity guests attending the wedding rather than the finer details, so while you will need to create a beautiful space for the guests to enjoy, the magazine will not normally have much input in the design. They will however require a large area indoors specifically for taking formal photographs of the bride and groom with their guests. This area may need to be set up according to the specifications of the photographer and magazine if they are paying for the wedding.

These pictures will take a great deal longer than standard wedding pictures as the pictures must be perfect if they are to be used for commercial publication. You will need to make allowances for this in order to stop guests getting bored. You will probably need a hair stylist and make-up artist on hand to retouch before the photographs are taken.

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

You will see from the glossy magazines that many weddings which take place outside of the UK are conducted outdoors. Therefore the designers give a great deal of thought to the aerial shots the media will be taking from a helicopter above the action. Assuming that they welcome the media attention, some wedding designers will arrange coloured seats in carefully designed patterns, have the gardens landscaped to look good from the air and position key items carefully so that cameras can get a clear view.

In Northern Europe we do not have the luxury of outdoor weddings for practical reasons, but still, if the celebrity is popular enough, then helicopters may be used to snap the happy couple and guests arriving.

SECURITY

Requirements for security vary from case to case, but generally if the wedding is being sponsored by a magazine, no guests or suppliers – even family of the bride and groom – will be allowed to take any recording equipment into the vicinity of the church or venue. The only person allowed will be the official photographer, and if the magazine has agreed to it, a videographer. Handbags and pockets will be searched and any mobile phones and cameras will be confiscated by security, who are making sure that no other magazine scoops the exclusive unofficial pictures before they do.

All suppliers and waiting staff will need to be checked and briefed carefully beforehand to make sure that they do not break any conditions set by the magazine, to ensure their confidentiality and test their competence. It is likely that they will need to sign a confidentiality agreement or 'non-disclosure agreement', as will you.

Security is also required to prevent gatecrashers and unruly fans from spoiling the occasion. If even more high-profile guests are in attendance; for example if the Prime Minister or David Beckham attends the wedding as a guest, it is likely that they would bring their own security and you will need to arrange catering for those personnel too.

Big-money weddings mean expensive wedding gifts and very high profile guests are less likely to order the gifts via a standard wedding gift list. This means they will be bringing gifts with them which need to be protected (as with any wedding, but more so) if the value of the goods is considerably greater than average. Other than the bag searches and metal detectors, the security presence should be very subtle and should not interrupt the enjoyment of the celebration. However to non-guests outside of the venue the security presence should be very overt, to put off opportunists and to keep suppliers in check.

ACQUIRING HIGH PROFILE CLIENTS

If you are new to wedding planning you need to practice and fine tune your planning and marketing skills on simpler weddings, but after a few years you may feel ready to take on higher profile contracts. Getting any client is difficult, but getting impressive clientele with big budgets is even harder. When you get to a point where you feel confident and experienced enough to attempt something grand, read the paragraphs below to guide your marketing activities:

USE YOUR CONTACTS

The chances are that you know somebody who knows somebody high profile. Ask everybody you know who they know and if they could pass some literature onto them. Even if those friends of friends are not public figures, they may be wealthy businesspeople, minor royals or aristocrats. The more people who know about you and are spreading the word for you, the better.

If any famous people attend your weddings as a guest, make sure you keep a note of their contact details if your clients will allow you to have them. Leave business cards in the bedrooms or on the reception desk or enclose one in the thank you cards if permitted, to ensure that they have access to your contact details and know your company name. Even if they do not use your services for their own wedding, they may have relatives, children and friends who could utilise your services and an endorsement from a celebrity can only improve the chances of the referral coming to fruition.

If you plan an event where a celebrity or VIP guest attends, write to them afterwards asking for feedback, to gain an endorsement from them that you can put in your marketing literature.

SCOUR THE PRESS

By the time the newspapers and glossy magazines tell you about a celebrity engagement, the plans may already be well underway, so look out for famous couples getting together. Celebrities often leave shorter gaps between starting a relationship and marrying than most non-celebs, so pre-empt any imminent engagements by sending literature to their agents or addresses if you can find them online. The internet and talking to paparazzi is the simplest way to obtain celebrity addresses. Also, unmarried celebrity couples who have been together for a while and fall pregnant are also more likely to marry so that it is a good time to strike, and remember whatever the situation of the celebrity, make sure that you send follow up literature after a couple of months.

OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

As you will have read in the Etiquette chapter, it is customary for engagements to be announced in the National Broadsheet newspapers. Today, only society weddings tend to be announced in this way, but these are usually greater-than-average-budget weddings, held in marquees or stately homes with many guests, and the sort of clients most Wedding Planners would dream of.

Telephone or send literature to every wedding announcement in your selected region. You may also like to send literature to those outside of your region, in case they live in one place and are planning to marry close to your territory.

Pay particular attention to the kind of literature you send out and the quality of its design and content. To get the best clients, you and your company need to fit in well with the aspirations of that potential client. If they are elegant people or they want to be, your literature must reflect that in every way. Your marketing literature acts as your shop window, as does your website, so anything less than perfect will result in missed opportunities.

ACTIVITY 16

Design a brief proposal for a client's event or wedding using a celebrity or high profile wedding or event as your inspiration. It does not necessarily need to be tasteful, from the country where you live, or recent, however you do need to sell the idea to the client. Do this by putting the bride and groom at the centre of the concept through careful use of language, rather than talking about the wedding as a separate entity:

“imagine yourself approaching a beautiful...”

“you will look radiant wearing....”

“your guests will feel...”

Use lots of adjectives to help paint a vivid picture and to excite your clients' imaginations. If you are good at art you may like to draw diagrams or pictures of your designs, or you can use computer programs to help. If you do not have computer access, see some of the glossy magazines featuring celebrity weddings.

The proposal should include:

- The format of the day's proceedings
- Visual designs (including a theme if appropriate)
- Dining table design with diagram
- Ideas for clothes – bride, groom and attendants
- Location
- You do NOT need to produce a mood board.

(Range 400-800 words OR a maximum of 4 A4 pages if you are using pictures, diagrams and writing).

Tip: This activity is looking for your ability to translate a celebrity wedding idea into designs for a real-life client or bride and groom and your ability to sell a concept through your use of expressive language, carefully displayed pictures or both.

You may use magazine cuttings of celebrity weddings if you wish, but remember to state which celebrity wedding you are using as your stimulus.