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DEAR CELEBRANT, HELP WEDDING VENDORS NOT HATE YOU

Posted by Josh Withers | Apr 28, 2023 | The Art of Celebrancy | 1 🗨️ | ★★★★★



The wedding industry is so weirdly unique. Every day at work two people who have likely never planned an event of this magnitude before, bring together both of their extended families, their closest friends, and the person they share a cubicle with at work, then they hire a group of creatives who likely haven't all worked together as a team before, and expect an epic event to take place. And it almost always does. But there's something really special expected of every wedding creative, including us, for this to be awesome: we need to work together really well.

Celebrants, it's time we sat down and had a bit of a chat about how our actions are affecting other wedding creators at weddings. For 15 years now I've been getting feedback from photographers, videographers, planners, and venues, but I've never sat down and written the list because, honestly, it feels a little bit obvious.

But apparently, it's not.

We're pissing off other vendors and we're making it hard for them to do their job. Much like if the photographer cleared their throat and started loudly talking to the guests about how good it is that these two are getting married today while you're in the middle of your ceremony, we're getting in the middle of their work and making it really hard.

I'm making the grand assumption that you're already aware of the legal aspects of being a marriage celebrant, and I'm not going to tell you how to make a ceremony, but here's a list of do's and do-not's at weddings that every celebrant needs to read, on behalf of the rest of the wedding industry:

TL;DR: *Be awesome at your job, only your job, not other people's job, and don't make it hard for them to do their job.*

- The photographer/videographer is a professional.** They know how to make their work, they don't need your suggestions, and they don't need you to set up shots. The closest I would suggest is that during the signing you would respectfully and politely ask if they have got everything they need.
- When you're 'on', that is, when you're doing the stuff, being the celebrant, **put your phone away.** Don't create content for social media. No photos, no videos, no Reels or TikToks. If an alien spacecraft arrives during the ceremony or if someone falls into a lake, this rule is excepted.
- Get out of the way** of everyone else doing their work. It's a high-pressure and intense moment when you arrive for the ceremony. When you strut in to make a ceremony everyone else is nearing a deadline, so make way for them to be them. And once guests arrive and the wedding is on, everyone is trying to do the work they were hired for, so stay out of their way and let them be the them they were paid to be.
- At the ceremony, you're in charge of the vibe. You're in control of how it feels, so make it feel good. Don't be overbearing, don't be a drill sergeant. **Don't boss around other vendors or tell them how to do their job.** In-kind, be ruthless about making the ceremony feel as good as possible. I'll often liaise with people necessary to move chairs or ceremony location – if possible – to be more in the shade, or more comfortable. An often-forgotten aspect of making a ceremony feel good is having a [really good PA system](#).
- I'm personally an advocate for the celebrant standing with the couple for the ceremony, but [this is a topic covered elsewhere on this blog](#). The thing is, **when they kiss, GTFO.** Get out of the way. Don't be weird about it. Don't run or be awkward, but – practice politely and calmly moving left or right of the couple so the creators can make a photo or video of the ceremony without your mug in it.
- Learn how to use your PA system**, and understand how it works, so that when it doesn't work – and someday it will not work – you can fix it. Don't blame the videographer, don't blame the DJ or the band, and especially don't blame them to the guests as if you're blameless and someone has screwed you over. The truth is you're probably using a MiPro, or you forgot to recharge the battery, or you [positioned the PA system poorly](#) and the radio reception between your microphone and the receiver is struggling.
- Share your PA system with the videographer and entertainment**, if they want. Learn how to tell the videographer about integrating with your PA system, so they can get clean and good audio from your PA system, and let DJ/entertainment/music playing people play audio through your PA system so you're actually blessing on the day, not a pain in the rear.
- Before you start the ceremony, politely **let the photographer/videographers know you're about to start.** They may need you to moment to prepare or set up, and they might even ask for you to push it back a few minutes. For one day all of you, including the planner/co-ordinator, venue staff, and entertainment, have been thrown together into a makeshift team – make it work. In fact, let me take this one step further, learn to be the person who makes this work at every single wedding, so that if your name is brought up amongst vendors – perhaps in a sales meeting they're having with a couple – they can comment on how you're the glue that holds every wedding together. You're the celebrant who just makes it easy for this misfit band of wedding creatives to work together every time you're on the squad. If you're MC'ing the reception, extend the same notice of "things about to happen" to the photo/video team there.
- In the interest of the photo/video squad being prepared to shoot the ceremony, **if there are any rituals, or perhaps things that aren't run-of-the-mill, let them know just before the ceremony.** This could include if the ceremony is a bit longer or shorter than normal.
- It's possible the photo/video team will want some help with family and group photos afterwards, but **don't assume and don't announce photos happening unless you've talked to them** and asked. Don't force them into taking photos you think they should take.
- Photographers and videographers don't owe you photos or videos from the wedding**, but many are kind enough to offer them to you. The absolute worst time to ask about this is after the ceremony, and the second worst time is just before the ceremony. Be polite, introduce yourself, ask for their details, and shoot them an email afterwards. If you're like me, a [budding photographer](#), then there's usually no issue with you taking some photos surrounding the wedding for your social/blog, and outside of anything the actual photographer is doing but I'd run it past the couple when meeting with them ahead of the wedding.

The long and the short of it is that regardless of how many good ideas you have, the other creatives there on the day are all desperately trying to create meaningful, important, and good work, and if you are not in a good relationship/friendship with that creative you probably don't have the ability to guide them to a "good shot" even if it is great. The other side of the coin is that it's highly likely, considering you're not a photographer and in particular, you're not that actual photographer, that your idea of a "good shot" is wildly different to theirs AND the couple's because the couple hired them to be the photographer, not you.

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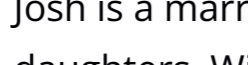
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Josh is a marriage celebrant since 2009, based on Australia's Gold Coast with his wife Britt and two daughters. With Sarah Aird he co-founded the Celebrant Institute and specialises in the business of celebrancy and the art of present and intimate ceremony.



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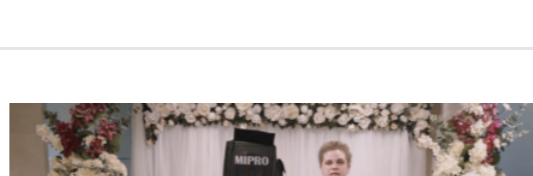
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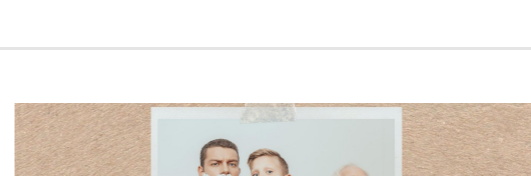
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Tania Marsh on April 28, 2023 at 8:22 am

Great article Josh.

I always make a point of introducing myself to the other professionals before the ceremony and ask if they have any requirements of me, after all, we have expectations of them! And yes, always let the photo team know about any rituals, or if there are any potential cute/heartwarming moments within the ceremony.

I also like to introduce photographer, videographer, music controller, MC, before the ceremony starts.

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