

Customer Service Standards

What vendors should know - what brides should expect!

By Larry Williams

The wedding industry represents one of the most unique customer service models you will ever find. Here, you have dozens of businesses hired months in advance to complete an individual task that will be carried out on a particular day. What makes this more interesting is that there can be no do-overs on your wedding day. It is like a “live” stage play that will be orchestrated and presented in real time. Everything must be perfect and done right, the first time!

The trickiest part of all is the fact that the businesses you have hired offer various forms of customer service. Add to that the fact that many of these hired hands will be meeting each other for the very first time on the day of the event, and you have a condition that can only have you keeping your fingers crossed for a good outcome. Unless of course you have hired vendors based upon their ability to give great customer service.

Beauty is only skin deep

We have all heard this saying. It implies what you see on the surface is only part of the equation. The same is true in the wedding business. The pictorial you view from your photographer or the music you discuss with your DJ is important, but only represents one level of service expectation. The same is true of the menu you review or the location you are thinking of securing. The products and service provided is important – so too is the manner in which they are delivered!

Throw your vendors a curve ball

We have come to expect that most wedding vendors we talk with are considered experts in their field. When you are satisfied with the level of expertise exhibited by the vendor, then begin inquiring about customer service. Don't be afraid to ask them for an example of how well they work with other vendors. Ask them how involved they will be in the pre-event planning process. Ask them how quickly they will return your phone calls and respond to your inquiries. These are all important questions.

Romantic comedies on the big screen and reality T.V. wedding shows have conditioned us to think that weddings are this stressed-out event that tears people apart and reduces the strongest people to a fetal position. It doesn't have to be that way. Look carefully at training, qualifications and talent. Then look at how you will be treated as a customer. Follow your instincts and select vendors who care as passionately about you and the success of your event as they do about their own vocation.

(Editor's Note: Larry Williams is a customer service expert and has worked more than twenty years in the wedding industry. His new book *Customer Service A to Z* is a must read for wedding vendors and everyone interested in creating a spectacular customer service model. Buy this book on-line at www.CustomerServiceAtoZ.com.)