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# MINNESOTA

# BRIDE

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Wedding planners with a design focus ask brides to bring in magazine clippings and describe their dream wedding—then it's up to the firm to pull it off. "We have a design presentation six months prior to the wedding," Zaroff says. "Once it's approved, we go into production." Some wedding planners will go a step further, designing floral arrangements or stationery.

## Well-Connected

One of the biggest perks a wedding planner can offer comes with any package: her Rolodex. Last January, a bride from New York panicked when she realized four days before her Minnesota wedding that local shops wouldn't press a dress she had bought out of town. Fuerstenberg simply called up a vendor with whom she had a good relationship and they offered to press it for free.

"Within a half-hour I had a relieved bride," says Fuerstenberg. Planners do so much business in the industry, she says, vendors are willing to help them out in a pinch.

Experienced wedding planners also have all the right resources at their fingertips, says Mazumdar, and that's a crucial part of the job. "It's not just making everything look pretty." She and other planners often use national vendors for products and services unavailable in the Twin Cities area, like personalized monograms for the dance floor, or inflatable outdoor seating. Mazumdar also attends national conferences to brush up on topics like contract review. "Room rental rates are definitely negotiable," she advises. "People don't know that. Even food and beverage minimums are all negotiable."

## Bearing the Burden

A planner's organization helps avoid disasters, well in advance. "The biggest horror stories are usually before the day of [the wedding]," says Mazumdar. "During follow-ups with vendors, you can find huge holes, because the bride or the couple didn't know what to ask."

One error Mazumdar caught involved a wedding on a ship. The boat was scheduled to drop off guests at 10 p.m., when the couple expected the reception to last until midnight. The party would have ended early if Mazumdar hadn't double-checked the plans.

Even with all those details to manage (and disasters to avoid), planners are unfazed. "I don't think planning is stressful," says Nilsen. "What's stressful is doing my taxes."

## Making the Pick

When choosing a planner, Mazumdar says brides should go with their gut and connect with a planner on a personal level.

"It's just like picking a photographer," says Zaroff. "You spend eight hours of a day with them. For a wedding planner, you're with them for an entire year. You know that this person has your back, and they will do anything to make it the day of your dreams." 8