



THE MAN'S GUIDE

To Wedding Planning

CREATED BY BESPOKE EDGE

Introduction

"It was just a really fun day," said the machine shop manager to me one day. He was reminiscing about his wedding and telling me that even though the planning was a big deal, by the time the big day arrived, he and his wife really enjoyed themselves. And the sincere smile that he was wearing when he told me this was the proof.

At the time, I was a young buck engineer and miles away from where I am today, the recovering engineer, bespoke suit provider. Over recent years, I have worked with many grooms to help them build out their perfect wedding suit. The one they feel great in. And just last October, my brother and business partner, Brett, had his own wedding in Durango. It was largely DIY, there were a lot of

moving pieces, and Brett and I both learned a lot about how to make this big day happen.

This guide is meant to help you out over the coming months. I've pulled together all the wedding planning wisdom inside Brett's head and a handful of former grooms, to give you a very practical look inside this elaborate, intimidating, and challenging process called planning a wedding.

I'm going to tell you what you need to know about vendors, contracts, cake, hiring a band, thank you cards, and yes, definitely men's style.

But before we get into all of that, it's worth acknowledging that there

is very much a cultural bias that has been beaten into us - a patterning that tells us that men shouldn't really get too involved in planning a wedding. That a wedding is really for the bride, that we're just supposed to show up. Worse yet, there's a stigma that if we show too much interest in helping to plan the wedding, that it's somehow emasculating.

Now, there's no denying that a lot of wedding planning is more suited towards the interests of your bride, generally speaking, that doesn't mean that you should distance yourself. Yes, some of the wedding planning may not be up your alley, but there's plenty of things coming up that you're going to really enjoy having a hand in.

Don't believe me? OK, I'll prove it you. Have you ever listened to music, ever? Well, now you have the opportunity to actually hire a live band or a DJ and they have to play whatever you want them to. Do you like cake? Well, now you get to taste all the best cakes in town and pick your favorite. Then you can hire a baker to make the biggest cake you've ever eaten. The kind that only fits in a cake truck!

Simply put, you're planning a big party. All of your close friends and family are coming, you'll get lots of gifts, there will dancing, drinking, and lots of smiles. It's a hell of a kick-off to your life together with your soon to be wife, don't you think?

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BESPOKE EDGE

MEN'S CUSTOM CLOTHING

A Little About Bespoke Edge

bespokeedge.com

Your wedding is an opportunity to wear the finest suit you have ever worn.

One that fits you like a glove and feels amazing. Helping you find that perfect suit or tuxedo is what we do best at Bespoke Edge.

Master Clothier Ron Wagner has been in the menswear business for almost 40 years now, and at this point, there's nothing he hasn't seen. His right hand man, Alvin Cooper, also has an extensive background in menswear. Together, they work to apply "the art form." That is, creating for you a perfect fitting suit that is as individual as your own signature.

In a nutshell, we work by appointment and come to you. We'll visit you in your home or office at your convenience.

An authentic bespoke experience, you will be able to choose from hundreds of shirt and suit fabrics. You can select buttons, collars, jacket linings, full canvas construction, and so on. Details like working button holes and custom

monogramming are the types of things that really make our suits special. Rest assured, we will guide you through this process as much or as little as you like.

After taking 21 measurements to ensure a perfect fit, your suit or tuxedo will be ready about 6 weeks later. We will personally deliver your clothing to ensure that everything looks and feels the way that you want it to. This is your wedding suit - it's a big deal. Simply put, it should be one that puts a smile on your face!

Building you a bespoke suit or tuxedo would be our pleasure.

Kindly,

Ron, Ryan and Brett Wagner

Owners, Bespoke Edge

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The Big Picture

First things first. You need to choose a venue. And venues tend to book far in advance of the actual ceremony. Once you have a general idea of when you want to have your wedding, then you can start shopping around for a location.

Choosing a date

This is definitely something that you need to be a part of. Don't just say "Yes dear, that's OK." This is exciting, and it is important. And it's especially important that you don't choose a date that falls on a serious holiday, an NFL playoff weekend, or during the Stanley Cup Finals.

Also, give some thought to the weather. Even if you're not planning an outdoor wedding, it's worth looking

into historical weather cycles. If there's a strong chance for big snowstorms every year during the first week of March, then even though your wedding ceremony and reception is going to be held inside, people still have to get there. Your caterers still have to drive their trucks to the venue, grandma still has to walk on the sidewalk, etc.

This is definitely something that you need to be part of. This is exciting, and it is important.



The venue

The other big item that you need to be on board with is the venue. It's going to eat up a huge amount of your budget and it will be paramount to your guests' experience. Once you start narrowing down your list, take a close look at the reviews for each of the venues. When it comes to something as important as your wedding, anything less than a four star rating should be crossed off the list. You want to find a venue that knows exactly what they're doing and executes flawlessly, time after time.

And not all venues have to be expensive. My brother Brett and his fiancée opted for an open field, more or less, at a mountain camp that they both worked at as counselors one

summer. Because the camp owners were friends of the family, this meant that there was no cost, but also that there wasn't really any help for things like setting up and logistics.

"Location was the biggest challenge and also the most enjoyable. The setting was beautiful and meant a lot to us, but that was all we had to work with. An open horse field with no power, water, shelter, bathrooms, unpredictable weather and a rough road proved to be challenging," Brett told me. Nevertheless, they pulled it off.





02 Dial It In

With the long lead items taken care of, now you can start looking into vendors and thinking more about your guestlist.

Finding the right vendors

There are a lot of vendors involved in any wedding. Even if you're doing a lot yourself, I think you will still be surprised at the amount of help that you need to hire to make everything go smoothly.

There are a handful of big aggregate websites out there that can provide you with, well, everyone in your area. It can be a little overwhelming. I think this is why a lot of recently engaged couples like to ask their married friends for which vendors they used. Regardless of how you find the right vendors, you're going to sit down with them at some point and interview them.

Here are three questions that I think are really key in finding the right people:

1. *Can you give me an example of a wedding you worked where something went wrong out of your control.*
 2. *How did your experience save the day?*
 3. *How did you get into this business?*
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These three questions will help you to get a picture of who your vendor really is. Can they work under pressure? Are they passionate about what they do, do they still enjoy it?

And when you have found the right vendor, remember that it's completely OK to be assertive with them. If there's something in particular that you want, you need to make your voice heard. Remember, you are their customer.

Assemble your team

Think of a heist movie. Really, any will do. Because there's always that scene when somebody somewhere says those three awesome words that resonates with every guy: Assemble your team.

The suggestion is that something is about to go down. And indeed something is, you're getting married. So, when you choose your Best Man and the rest of your band of pirates, you'll want to do so knowing that they are the ones that will help to make the day special for you and yours. Choose unwisely, however, and you may be stuck with groomsmen who don't respect the photos you're taking, maybe don't take their job as a groomsman seriously, or worse.

I say this because sometimes there's pressure to match the number of bridesmaids on the other side of the aisle. There's no rule that says you need to do this. If you're having a

traditional wedding and pairs of the wedding party are walking down the aisle at its conclusion, no worries, bridesmaids can do double duty and make a second lap. But when you invite more guys into the ranks of your groomsmen outfit than you really need or want, you can get yourself into trouble.

Go with your gut. Pick your closest friends, your bride's brother if she has one, and call it good.

The guestlist

This can be a polarizing topic. Everyone wants to get involved with the guestlist. Your parents will show biases you never knew they harbored and some of your friends may just automatically assume that they are invited.

When you're debating about inviting someone, ask yourself if that person will add to the experience. If the answer is no, then there's your answer.

You can save yourself more than a few headaches by making two things abundantly clear to all the family and decision makers involved:

Stick to your guns on these two items and you'll be in good shape.

Here's a clever tip when it comes to actually deciding on the seating chart. Go buy some construction paper, tape, markers, and maybe some paperclips. Cut out little tables with one color of paper and little squares for the guests, in another color. Now you can mix and match and make decisions on the fly. Yes, there are digital versions for this, but here's an opportunity to fix a cocktail, sit down next to your bride on the couch, and do some arts and crafts with purpose.

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1. *What the maximum headcount is and why it can't increase (i.e. the venue's fire code)*
 2. *When the guest list will be finalized.*
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Create a smart registry

If you ignore the registry, you're very likely to end up with a bunch of useless items from the usual suspects like Pottery Barn and Crate and Barrel. And while you'll also get some great things, many of your guests who show up late to the registry scene will end up giving you all the clichés: The tea pots, the napkin holders, and the salt and pepper shakers that aren't (and never will be) your style.

Instead, build out a registry on Amazon.com or Target. This way you can get anything you want. Another good option is to start paying for the honeymoon, where there's no such thing as a useless gift (three massages on the beach with chilled champagne? Sure!).

Check out **TravelersJoy.com** and **HoneyFund.com**.

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Relax & Enjoy

At this point, you've done much of the heaving lifting. Congratulations!

You have a date planned, venue selected, you have a working guestlist. You have your shortlist of vendors. You're in good shape with this whole wedding planning endeavor.

Now, you can take a deep breath and realize that you have maybe six months until all of this is supposed to come together. Now is the perfect time to start thinking about some of the lower priority items that aren't necessarily long lead - that is, if you had to decide on them three months out, you could, but why wait?

Your outfit

Whether you are going full-out black tie or barnyard chic in a vest and bow tie, your wedding is an opportunity to wear the best looking and best fitting clothes you've ever worn. If you've never put on a tailored suit, now is your chance. It's time to dress like James Bond and absolutely own it.

No matter where you shop or what you wear, at least follow these guidelines on fit.





Pants

Have them tailored so that there is little to no break at the cuff. Anything more is out of style and will make you look shorter than you really are.





Shirt

Tailor your shirt so that it isn't real "blousy" with lots of excess fabric. Even if you're a bigger guy, there's a good chance your shirt is still too large for you. And if you're wearing French cuffs, practice a few times at home folding the cuff back on itself and putting in the cufflinks. This can be tricky the first couple of times you do it, but it's worth it!



Jacket

If you're wearing a suit or tuxedo, it's very important that the jacket fits properly. There's nothing worse than a jacket that looks too big on you.

Specifically, here's what you want to pay attention to:

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- *The jacket length shouldn't extend past the first knuckle of your thumb when you have your hands at your sides.*
 - *The sleeves should show just about a quarter inch, or maybe a little more, of shirt sleeve. This is what helps you to create "the framing effect" with your shirt and pocket square all matching and peeking out from inside your jacket.*
 - *Make sure that when you button the top button of your jacket that the lapel doesn't "peak" or "tent" outwards under strain. It should lay nice and flat against your chest.*
 - *Standing in front of a mirror, with your hands at your sides, you should be able to see a little gap between your sleeves and the sides of your jacket. This is what helps to create that V-shape in a men's suit or tuxedo.*
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Tie or bow-tie

First of all, think long and hard about whether or not you want to wear a bow tie. Yes, there's that perception that either (1) bow ties are standard black tie attire and (2) that they are trendy at the moment. The truth is, so long as your bow tie or neck tie is black, it's considered black tie. And as far as being trendy or not, who

cares? You're better off being true to yourself and your own style.

Whatever you end up going with, make sure you tie the knot properly. Give yourself some practice beforehand. And if you don't normally wear bow ties, starting with your wedding probably isn't smart.



Pocket square

If you want to go very formal, then a crisp (ironed) white pocket square is what you want. Hands down, it can't get any better than this. But if you wear a patterned pocket square, it can still look very dressed up. The key thing is to never use one of those pocket squares that is of exactly the same fabric as your tie or bow tie. This

is boring! Instead, choose a pocket square that refers to the colors or patterns in your tie.







The band

How many times in life do you get to go shopping around for a band?! This is fun.

The first decision you'll need to make with your bride is if you want a live band or a DJ. This can make a big difference. Live bands only know so many songs and they will have their own distinct style. While it's possible to request that your live band learn something new, it's going to cost you. Whereas, a DJ will have everything at their fingertips.

It's smart to come up with a playlist, or at the very least, a handful of songs that you definitely want played. Provide this to your band or DJ and then check in with them again, just prior to your wedding, to ensure that everyone is on the same page.

Although finding and interviewing the right band can be labor intensive, it's also a lot of fun.

My brother Brett told me that when

choosing his band, he looked for a band that could fill the dance floor with guests from every generation. He ended up finding a great funk band that played everything from Stevie Wonder to Pharrell Williams.

Don't forget to provide them with the following:

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1. *A list of songs you want them to play (and when), including upbeat songs to get everyone on the dance floor—classics that will get even grandma out of her seat, like Stevie Wonder - Superstition.*
 2. *A list of songs you don't want them to play like "Alabama - I'm In A Hurry"*
 3. *A list of songs that no matter what anyone bribes them with, they can't play: Queen - Another One Bites the Dust*
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Writing your vows

But before you do, have a conversation with your bride and make sure that this is something that you both want to do. For instance, if she really does, and you're so-so on the whole idea, you need to voice this. But remember, you're not going line for line here. A very sincere two or three sentences can be just fine.

*Take a deep breath,
you can do this.*



Yes, your ring can be cool

With the ring, and we're talking about your ring here, you have two options. One, you can pick up a generic gold ring that's pretty standard. Or two, you can hunt down something that you really identify with. Your grandfather didn't have very many options in his day, but you certainly do. You can find tungsten, platinum, silver, even titanium. Some of the custom jewelers out there are doing some really cool things. They are blending metal, playing with different textures, varying levels of shine, etc.

It's easier than you think it is to geek out over a cool ring. And why shouldn't you? You want to be proud wearing it, don't you?

Remember, men have been wearing rings for centuries. A piece of metal that's been forged in a 2,000 deg F furnace and you wear it on your finger for all to see? That's pretty cool.

Dancing

Here's the thing: Dancing can be fun. Even though you're going to be dancing in front of lots of people - and I know this can cause a lot of anxiety in some of us - that's what lessons are for. Practice, practice, practice.

I don't care how clumsy you think you are, if you get serious and carve out the time, and take three dance lessons a week for three months, you're going to be pretty damn good.

Find a dance instructor in your area, pick a style, and get into a routine.

*Here's the thing:
Dancing can be fun.*

Plan the honeymoon

Adopt the honeymoon as your personal planning project. While your bride is down in the weeds of deciding what colors will be in your wedding or in a heated debate with her closest friend over which letterpress invitation to go with, you can work on finding the best airfare and most interesting boutique hotel four time zones away.



Groomsmen gifts

Please, no flasks. Seriously. I have three flasks somewhere in my cabinet that I never use. And they weren't even gifted to me for my groomsmen services! The point being, your guys already have an assortment of cliché gifts and they don't need more.

Here's a little guidance on cost: If the majority of your guys flew in from afar and spent a considerable amount of their own money to attend your wedding, and you can afford it, around \$100 is appropriate. This could be a real nice double sided razor. Or spend a little less and find a great dopp kit (toiletry bag).

It's your call if your Best Man deserves something a little above and beyond what your groomsmen are gifted. Could be a nice weekend bag or even a watch.

The point here is to gift your crew something that's thoughtful and practical. It will be great to spy them using your gift years down the road, wouldn't it?



Her dress

By the time you read this, your bride probably already has her gown picked out. Consider this task handled. However, I do think that you should at least be aware of the style of dress that she's leaning towards. For instance, if she picks something elegant and you're wearing a tweed suit next to her, that's a little odd.

Also, if she asks for your opinion on her gown, you need to have one. This is true for every aspect of wedding planning. No matter how trivial a detail it may seem to you. This is your wedding too!

The flowers

Between your bride's sister, her mother, aunt, and inner circle of friends, they have this task under control. The flowers are going to look great and if you pay attention to the varieties that make the cut, you'll surely learn something new. But getting involved in the heated debate between, say, a delphinium and a blue tweedia is a battle you should probably avoid.

But to reiterate, have an opinion if asked.



The cake

When it comes to the cake, you're about to learn just how expensive flour and sugar can be.

However, when you see it, you'll realize that buying a really big cake and serving it to all of your friends is pretty cool. You'll also gain a new appreciation for baking and understand that it really is an art form when in the hands of a professional.

That being said, your most important job when it comes to the cake is not so

much in the deciding, but the tasting. For as much money as you're about to drop on a bakery item, it should taste damn good. You may never find yourself in this position again: Driving around town and tasting cakes. Have some fun here.

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Good things to know

Build your support group

For when things get a little crazy and all you want to do is say "whatever, just do whatever makes you happy, honey," stop yourself right there, and turn to your support group. Succumbing to sarcasm is like throwing gasoline on a fire. And unfortunately, being sarcastic in the context of wedding planning is just what a lot of people expect us guys to do. There's a better way.

Your support group, or if the "S" word makes you squirm, call it your Delta Force Team, is a small group of friends that you can turn to - ideally guys who have been married and gone through all of this before. They may or may not be your groomsmen. Maybe your Best Man is part of this group and maybe he's not.

The thing to understand is that no matter how well you plan or how zen-like you are, planning a wedding can test your patience and elevate your stress levels to new highs. And having some close friends available to talk to when things get crazy is a smart move.

If you'd prefer to talk to dudes outside of your immediate circle, shoot me an email [ryan@bespokeedge.com] and I'll wrangle my brother and good friend Shawn into a happy hour to swap wedding planning stories. These two married guys have not only survived their own wedding planning, but in my opinion, are even better men for going through it.

Remeber, you can't make everyone happy

If you run your own business, you probably know this already.

You really can't make everyone happy. Some friends won't be invited to the ceremony because they didn't make the guestlist cut, you may not get the band that your brother really wanted, or those artisan invitations that your bride's mother really loved because they were just too expensive.

It's important to remember that all of this planning is for one day and that if you and your bride are happy, everyone else will be too.

Know when to log out of Pinterest

Odds are, that when you first met your bride to be, and went on that very first date, she already had a Pinterest board titled "Wedding." And when things were beginning to get real serious between you and her, she was probably pinning daily.

The truth is, Pinterest is a great tool for anyone looking to create "a look." I even have one for "bar carts" because I have a bit of an obsession with curating the perfect bar and ensuring that it's mobile throughout my living room.

When it comes to designing a theme for your wedding, Pinterest can really help you and your bride to see how all the little pieces come into play. The flowers, the colors, the seating layout, all of these little things that we don't give much thought to until you find yourself standing in an empty venue, folding chairs in your hands, and you're wondering what you should do. So, Pinterest can help you to see the finished product and help you to define your vision.

This is all well and good. By all means, use Pinterest.

But it can be a double-edged sword.

What you don't want to have happen is to make all the decisions, hire all the vendors, get everything set up and ready to go, then continue to peek at the Pinterest boards and keep finding new ideas. Suddenly, your vendors are charging you change fees and you're feeling like you're starting all over from scratch again.

The smart move is to have a conversation with your fiancé and agree on a cut-off date. A time when you're effectively saying "Ok, we'll have everything figured out by this date, and then it's all about execution." This means no more Pinterest surfing for wedding inspiration, no more pinning, no more tweaks to the motif.

I should note that your bride's other boards (e.g. nursery room) are by no means off limits. Nor is your bar cart board.

An event planner is always worth it (so is a day-of planner)

Even if you're the type of person that's a natural planner, you don't want to be doing it during your wedding. While asking your Best Man or Maid of Honor to pitch in on tasks that randomly need doing is no problem (and it's their duty!), asking them to coordinate the arrival of multiple vendors and allocate payments is too much. Especially when they need to be on hand for photos and other important happenings.

This is where a hired planner really shines. Even a day-of or month-of planner can be extremely valuable. A day-of planner will only set you back a few hundred bucks - in the grand scheme of things and your life in general - it's not so much. You can't really put a price on your sanity, can you?

Read those contracts carefully

You're about to be dealing with a lot of vendors and that means a lot of contracts. So, it's smart to take your time and read the fine print. Sometimes there are certain conditions that may have a big impact on your planning and it's wise to understand all the moving pieces. That being said, if you find the right planner, this is something they can handle. But at the end of the day, you're the one signing on the dotted line and paying for everything so it's wise to understand what's going on.

Remember my discussion on Pinterest and vendor change fees?



Mission Accomplished

When the folding chairs have been packed up and the venue now eerily quiet once again, you have two more things to do.

Get savvy with your Thank You's

Remember when you were young and you had to write Thank You's to all of your relatives for the birthday presents? Well, similar idea here. Some of your guests will no doubt be flying in from all over, paying for lodging, and on top of everything, buying you and yours a gift. The least you can do is send them a personal thank you.

But before you stress about a stack of envelopes three feet high, it's important to realize that you can take different approaches. For some of your family members, and certainly your bride's parents, you need to write a very nice thank you note. Same goes for some of your grandparents and anyone that you know that really values stationary and the traditional thank you card concept. For your close friends, on the other hand, giving them a big hug

and a sincere in-person thank you can be appropriate and sincere. Some of your tech-savvy friends may enjoy a fun Snapchat video that you and your bride send.

The idea here is that so long as your thank you message is thoughtful, it's meaningful. What you don't want to do is write a boilerplate "Thanks for coming to our wedding!" note scribbled on a card. We can all tell when something wasn't created sincerely.

Just remember that all the fun you're about to have at your wedding is in part because of the friends and family that will help you to celebrate.



Share the photos

When you get your wedding photos, please, don't forget to share them. Share them on Facebook, Instagram, email them to your grandmother, mail some select prints to VIPs, etc.

And pay special attention to your wedding party. The select few who were lucky enough to be called groomsmen and bridesmaids deserve a little special attention, because after all, they are in some of those photos, and they helped to make them look as good as they do. So, go out of your way to make sure that they have had a chance to see them.

Bespoke Edge