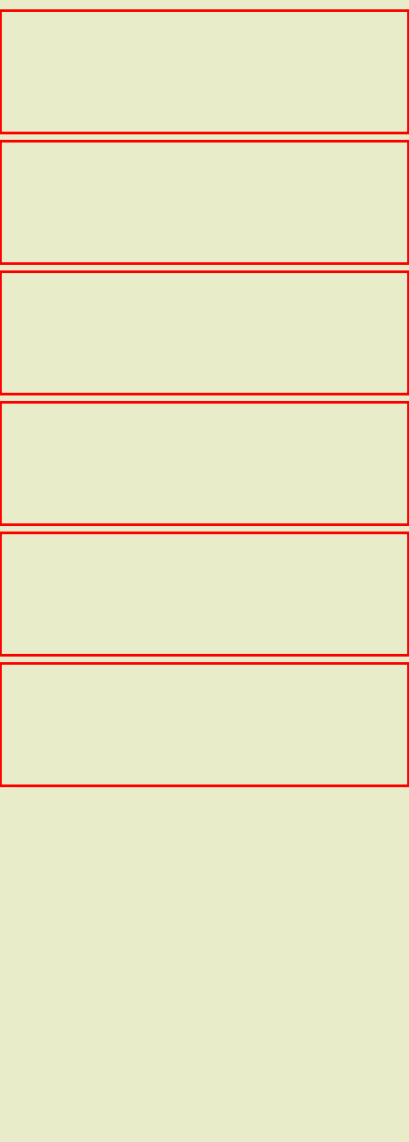




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Issue 104

16 Things A Bride Needs To Know - Advice For A Great Reception

Dan Nichols

Calling All Brides...

Are you or is someone you know having a wedding reception? Here are 16 things you've probably never even thought of, that as a professional mobile DJ, I suggest make for better parties. I first want to point out that it is rare that all these items are followed in any given event but the more you can adhere to them, the more likely your party will be at full steam come closing time.

1) Don't put the older guests next to the dancefloor/speakers. If you have to ask why, then you may want to hire a harpist for the night.

2) Don't cram your entertainment out of the way—your entertainer should be seen. Powerful entertainers will work to get people on the dance floor but they must be seen as part of the action, not just some side show.

3) A party should end when it shouldn't end, not when it should. Ending a party before it dies down leaves everyone with the impression the floor was packed all night. It just feels better when people are left wanting more versus being completely burned out.

4) A "too small" dance floor is better than one that is too big. Why? The answer is simple: It creates the impression, whether real or not, that the floor is full. People are more likely to dance when the crowd on the floor is dense than when they feel like the only ones out there. Take it from the pro who knows about dancing and crowd psychology, not from the banquet manager selling you on why a huge floor is so important. If people end up dancing on the carpet then great they end up dancing on the carpet and the story of your floor being so packed people couldn't even fit on the floor only further reinforces my point.

5) Darker is better than lighter for dancing. People feel like less of a spectacle, less "on-stage" when they think they're harder to see. That's why crime increases at night as well—and yes when some people dance it is a crime. This one works along the same lines of psychology as tip 4.

6) Keep exit doors closed. Doors are inviting and you don't want to invite people outside of the main room. Having them open allows more light into the room which again works against the psychodynamics of the dance floor. Open doors invite people to their cars in the parking lot. You want to keep their focus in the reception room for as long as possible.

7) This is a very general but valid statement: Nicer places, (country clubs, etc.) actually make it harder, especially in the summer and fall months to get people up and moving because they are so pre-occupied enjoying the scenery. Think about it... would you rather enjoy a cold beverage on a

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breezy deck outdoors amidst the trees or a sweaty dance indoors? It isn't that the night can't be great but all things being equal, nicer venues pull from the floor potential. As a DJ I love playing nicer events and usually do so, as that's my target market; but it can't change simple human nature. If you're having your party/reception at a really nice venue then you'll just want to pay closer attention to some of the other factors to tip the scales in your favor.

8) Bars should always be in the main room. Preferably closer to the dance floor but the floor shouldn't be in the way of any lines to the bar. If a bar and/or desserts are put outside the main room, then a huge percentage of potential dancers are unavailable. Bars are like kitchens—they draw people to them. If you can help it, don't make your DJ wrestle with the draw of a bar.

9) If you're going to shut the bar down for 30 minutes out of, say, 6 hours, do it during dinner. If you do it at 11:30 then the party will more likely die out, as people will feel that it's time to go.

10) Happy music keeps things going. Keep away from any negative vibes at all. Keep the mood up-up-up.

11) Respect the musical opinions of your local professionals. They do this for a living. Be careful not to cut out all the "cliché" wedding music as you'll find this will negatively impact the dance floor potential. People dance to what they know. A wedding reception is not the time and place to prove to your friends and family that you're into obscure music. You've got a lot of people from all over your family tree that want to have a good time, so let your DJ exercise all his or her tools and really work his or her craft.

12) The entertainment should eat with the guests and not be fed a soggy club sandwich in the janitors closet. From tons of experience, the more my brides and grooms treat me as a guest, the more likely their unpaid guests will respect me too. I find it rather ironic that the nicest venues often have some sort of crapitude (made up word) towards DJs, bands, photographers and video crew and will encourage the bride and groom to shovel them off away from the action during dinner with a plate of moldy (I'm not kidding) cold cuts. Wouldn't it make sense that they be right near the action? Not to mention, if you treat your vendors like second class citizens, how do you think that affects their attitudes? Your pros will bend over backwards for you if you just treat them with the same respect you'd treat your guests with. I can tell you now that professional wedding vendors will even do extra for you at no charge when you treat them right.

13) Don't do a dollar dance. The reason is that when the bride and groom are doing this the guests realize they won't be seen slipping out the door. If you must do one, do it early on after the main dances and limit it to 3 songs max.

14) People tend to remember the beginning and the end of an event. That's why your DJ should do a strong, grand introduction. It helps build rapport early on, and if done right and with energy and enthusiasm, it puts him or her in a more powerful position to work your crowd all night.

15) It is best for any traditional events or speeches to be done and out of the way before dancing begins. In addition, it is important for pictures of the bridal party and bride and groom to be done, when at all possible, before the dancing begins. As a DJ I have seen more parties lose steam because my bridal party is having pictures taken after the bridal dance. Do all the pictures before. It may cost you an extra hour earlier in the day but it will save you from losing a good handful of guests early on in the evening.

16) If you have to cut corners, don't compromise on the entertainment. My clients never complain that they paid too much for my services. Also, know that experience is king. I am a better DJ after every event I do.

Dan Nichols, a lay-psychologist and certified hypnotist, as well as a mobile entertainer, owns a small personal DJ service out of Royal Oak, MI and has been in operation for 16 years. Check him out at www.theboogiebros.com.

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