

How To Choose The Professional Wedding Videographer That's Right For You!

By Ken Ehrhart

A PROFESSIONALLY PRODUCED WEDDING VIDEO IS RAPIDLY BECOMING *THE* MOST IMPORTANT PART OF EVERY COUPLE'S WEDDING PLANS.

WHY? IT'S SIMPLE REALLY... ONLY A HIGH-QUALITY, PROFESSIONALLY-PRODUCED, VIDEO ALLOWS YOU TO TRULY PRESERVE ALL THE SIGHTS, SOUNDS AND *FEELINGS* OF YOUR SPECIAL DAY.

ONLY A PROFESSIONALLY PRODUCED VIDEO OFFERS YOU, YOUR CHILDREN AND YOUR FAMILY, THE OPPORTUNITY TO RELIVE EVERY UNFORGETTABLE MOMENT EXACTLY AS IT HAPPENED... AGAIN AND AGAIN.

AS WITH ANY OTHER CONTRACTED WEDDING SERVICE, YOU ARE GOING TO WANT TO COMPARE NOT ONLY PRICE, BUT QUALITY FROM SEVERAL DIFFERENT VIDEO COMPANIES IN YOUR AREA.

HERE ARE A FEW POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND IN YOUR SEARCH FOR THE PROFESSIONAL WEDDING VIDEOGRAPHER THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU.

Getting Started

For months, even years, you've planned every detail of your wedding day... and then suddenly, it's over in the blink of an eye. You've only got one chance to capture all the excitement and emotion that's a part of your special day.

Don't trust that chance to an amateur. Be sure to hire an expert, a professional videographer who knows how to document the occasion.

As you begin your search, you're going to find that the most popular wedding videographers are in heavy demand, especially for afternoon and evening weddings from April through October. You'll want to start your search for a video service as soon as you've picked a wedding date.

Most videographers are booked anywhere from eight to twelve months in advance (even more in major metropolitan areas), so the earlier you start looking *and* booking, the better chance you've got of getting the best.

What To Look For

Shopping for a "bargain" in wedding videography can be a dangerous road to travel. Why? Because **QUALITY *does has a price***. You'll want to compare video companies in all price ranges. Be prepared to investigate *and* educate yourself on what makes one company better than another.

The easiest way to really separate a low-quality weekend video hobbyist from a professional wedding videographer is to watch some samples of their work. You should watch them carefully.

Pay especially close attention to the quality of the video and the audio. The sound should be clear and the pictures sharp and steady. The cuts and/or dissolves between cameras should be clean, without glitches or dropouts. Remember, if their demo video looks choppy or doesn't sound or look good, there's a good chance that your video probably won't either.

Be sure to check the background and credentials of the videographers you talk with. Is wedding videography their full-time job, or is it just a weekend hobby? Find out if they are members of any professional video organizations that set standards of conduct and expertise. Have they won any awards for their work? Do they have experience producing other "non-wedding" videos?

That "other" experience is very important for a wedding videographer have. A wide-range of knowledge is critical when it comes to covering LIVE wedding events, where there are *no retakes*. Any related degrees or accomplishments in fields like broadcasting and/or journalism are also a valuable asset for your videographer to have.

Another thing to factor into your selection should be the videographer's personality. It's very important that you feel comfortable and have confidence in the person who will be recording all of the priceless memories from your wedding day.

How Many Cameras?

This is one of the most frequently asked questions in Wedding Videography. The answer is simple really... *as many as you can get!*

This is possibly the most important section in this entire article. The number of cameras that any videographer uses to record your wedding *will* have a direct effect on the final quality and watchability of your video. The decisions you make now concerning the type and amount of coverage will definitely pay dividends in the long term.

It can not be stressed too heavily that when it comes to quality wedding videography...

YOU'RE GOING TO GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR!

The number of cameras that are needed to adequately cover all the things that occur during a wedding ceremony depends on the amount of *quality* you desire and the *value* you place on that quality.

Wedding videos can range in price from a low of perhaps a thousand dollars for a simple one, to thousands of dollars for a multi-camera, highly-edited *professional* productions.

Lower-end (*meaning lower-cost*) videographers will often use just one camera with one operator. For most, this type of coverage almost always produces a "one-dimensional" video. You can get an overall feel for what happened on your wedding day, but it could be very disjointed, and in most cases, difficult to watch.

Two-camera coverage is becoming fairly standard in the industry. You should be aware however, that some videographers will not hire a person to operate that second camera. They'll simply set it on a tripod in the back of the church and let it roll, unmonitored.

If the camera isn't properly aligned or if someone sits or stands in front of it, you may not have useful or viewable images.

High-end video producers can offer you the option of three or even four-camera coverage of your ceremony. That may sound like a lot at first glance, but the additional cameras can come in very handy.

They give the videographer a great deal of freedom when it comes to covering the ceremony completely and unobtrusively, something you should expect and that many churches will insist on.

Multiple cameras, combined with multiple operators, who have the ability to communicate with each other over two-way radios, make it much easier to get those emotional close-ups that can really make your video come to life.

They also provide your videographer with a greater variety of images to choose from in the final editing process.

If you want a really great, high-quality, video that you will cherish forever, you may want to insist that the videographer you choose use a multiple camera, multiple operator setup.

Editing

Editing is simply the process of electronically piecing together different video and audio clips from your wedding day. A highly accomplished and skilled editor should make you *unaware* of the entire editing process. When you watch the video, you should get caught up in the romance of the moment and the remembrance of your wedding day.

One way to help you understand editing is to give you a simple assignment. The next time you're talking to a friend, think about what you are looking at while you're in the middle of the conversation.

Are your eyes always focused directly your friend's face, or do they constantly move around taking in different parts of the overall scene?

That eye movement is what a really talented editor is reproducing when they cut your video together. The different camera angles and the timing of the edits are what allow you to *comfortably* watch the finished product. Rather than staring at only one

thing, from one angle, the multiple shots let you see it all. Watch any television program or Hollywood movie, and you'll see that the process is the same.

What you're paying for in a good editor is that person's uniquely artistic ability to craft together a watchable video. Anyone can put the pieces of a video together; it can be just like putting together a jigsaw puzzle. But it *really does* take a highly skilled artist to edit a production you can watch hundreds, if not thousands, of times without becoming bored or inattentive.

A good way to determine if your videographer has that ability is to watch how their demo video was put together. Remember, that video should reflect the best of the best of what they do.

If it seems as though they're just stringing together a bunch of shots with no rhyme or reason to them, they will probably do just as unprofessional a job on your wedding video.

Never be afraid to ask your videographer questions.

You will be spending a lot of money for their services and you have a right to know what you'll be getting for your investment.

The Setting

Be sure and take a few minutes to talk with your videographer about the setting for your wedding. Make sure they understand what you need and what you desire.

Let the church (or other venue) know that you're planning to have your ceremony professionally videotaped and find out if they have any restrictions on video cameras that could interfere with your plans.

Some videographers may even provide you with diagrams of a typical video set-up they use at weddings. You can use this to show the officials exactly what your videographer needs in order to produce a high-quality product.

The diagram can also be handy when it comes to mapping out the location of your bridal party during the ceremony.

Lighting

Lighting, or the lack of it, can have an adverse affect on the overall quality of your wedding video. The current generation of professional video cameras are very sensitive and they will allow videotaping in extremely low-light conditions.

But even with the best cameras, the video may look dark and could be grainy or lack color. Most locations do have enough light to produce excellent results without the use of auxiliary lighting.

If your ceremony site is unusually dark, or if you're planning a candlelight or evening wedding, check to see if your videographer can provide the necessary on-camera lighting to cover your needs.

A word of caution about extra lighting. If it's not done correctly, it may be bright, distracting, and it might even cost extra.

Audio

Nothing can be more frustrating than having a beautifully shot video and yet, you can't hear a single word that's being said on it. Suffice it to say, the quality of a video company's audio recording should play a major role in your decision making process.

Make sure the company you choose uses only professional, high-quality wireless microphones and make sure they use enough of them to clearly capture everything that's being said during the ceremony. Such microphones are worn by the groom and even the person performing the ceremony.

It's rare, unnecessary and often times even impossible for the bride to wear one, so not to worry if you are not in the "mic mix". It's okay.

Be firm, however, on one point. For real unobtrusiveness and great sound recording of the actual ceremony, vows and rings, high-quality wireless microphones should always be used.

For any other sound recordings, like any readings, musicians or singers, it's quite acceptable to use "hardwire" mics. Make sure your videographer doesn't scrimp on those either. Remember, *quality is as quality does*.

Types of Coverage

Most average videographers will offer the usual FULL pre-ceremony, ceremony and reception coverage. The length of such a final edited video can be as much as two or even three hours.

Let's consider program length. How many times do you, and most importantly your family and friends, want to sit through a two or three hour video?

Advanced and highly innovative video producers are beginning to present a much more creative and, as it turns out, romantic option to their clients.

It's called the "documentary style" and is also known as ***Wedding Cinematography***.

If you're looking for something different and exciting in your video, this might be the ticket.

You see, instead of just hiring a "recording technician" to record literally *everything* from your day, many couples are choosing to hire a skilled "artist" who reproduces the emotion of their once in a lifetime wedding event.

This documentary video may be called many different things, but it's basically a beautifully edited version of the events from your magical wedding day.

Producing such a video, that includes all the important moments from the ceremony and reception, without missing anything... is not an easy task.

If you do enough research, you can find a videographer that produces "personal portraits" (also called **STORYteller** or **Retrospectives**). These productions allow the bride and groom to become directly involved in the telling of their own unique wedding story.

The couple is "interviewed" before and after their wedding day. They're asked to talk not only about each other and how they met, but what they remember from the wedding day itself and even what their hopes are for the future.

It's an intimate approach that couples around the country and around the world are starting to demand.

Making The Final Decision That's Right For You

There unquestionably has been a lot to digest in this article. Technology aside, it's really very important that you feel comfortable with the video service you choose, and with the videographer.

Remember... you're not only buying the videographer's talent and skill, you're also buying their personality. Find the person and the company that "feels right" to you, someone you believe you can work closely with, who will understand your individual needs and desires.

It was mentioned earlier that you're going to get what you pay for in terms of quality wedding videography. Operating and maintaining a first rate professional video production company is not cheap.

A good, broadcast-quality professional video camera can cost \$4,000, even \$9,000 or more. Some can go as high as \$15,000.

And remember, your videographer should have at least two, if not three or four of these cameras to cover your wedding day.

The cost of editing and post-production equipment can run over 20 thousand dollars. It can take 30, 40 or even 50 hours to fully edit a single wedding.

Then you have to add in the cost of keeping up with today's ever-changing video and audio technology, not to mention the cost of hiring skilled production personnel.

What does all this money talk mean to you? It means that professional wedding video production is definitely not a vocation for the amateurish "weekend entrepreneur", someone who's got a home video camera and wants to make some extra money.

High-end, quality-minded, wedding video professionals have made a total commitment to their craft *and* to serving you.

Although a professionally produced wedding video will almost definitely cost you more than a well intentioned but woefully under equipped friend or relative, keep the following in mind...

How you remember your wedding day will depend, to a large extent, on your choice of a wedding videographer. It's the one service you will purchase that will provide you with your most lasting and cherished memories.

Your wedding video will not only refresh your memory with the passing of time, it will also allow you to introduce your children to a wonderful segment of your family's history.

***You and YOUR family will
treasure it forever!***

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