



Two's Company

Why do it all yourself? Here's how to get your groom more involved in your wedding planning

By **Catherine Roscoe Barr**

Illustration by **Lucia Emanuela Curzi**

"We have always approached decision-making as a team — whether it be a choice in wedding venue, or if we should switch to almond milk," says Vancouver marketing executive, stylist and recent groom Roberto Sousa, of his partnership with bride Erin Gerlach, a marketing and PR specialist.

While not all grooms may possess Sousa's creative flair, there are many ways for guys to roll up their sleeves and get involved with — and even excited about — planning their own wedding.

TAP HIS CREATIVITY

"I recently sat down with a couple where I met the groom for the first time and asked them what song they'd selected for their recessional," recalls Stephanie Reitsma, owner and principal planner at Vancouver's Sweetheart Events. She suggested her clients add something fun, like a kiss and a dip halfway down the aisle to surprise their guests. The groom had been assuming he'd have to make the same old walk down the aisle he'd seen at previous weddings. Instead, he "got super excited about picking the music" and the freedom to be creative after hearing Reitsma's suggestions.

"He came to life — it was incredible," says Reitsma. "When grooms get the opportunity to speak their mind they'll surprise you."

But surprises are best served at the start, when ideas are first set on the table. "Get us [grooms] in at the ground floor; it will serve everyone better in the long run," says Sousa.

Adds Reitsma to future grooms, "When you first get engaged, ask what's important for the wedding day. Be upfront with your bride and fully communicate what you want to be involved in. What excites you? What family traditions or elements of your love story do you want to share with your guests? Think past the traditional groom responsibilities [honeymoon, transportation, vows and attire] and outside the box — perhaps it's a surprise toast to your wife or a signature drink for cocktail hour."

FIND HIS STRENGTHS

How can your guy help? "Men like to show our love with service, so make it easy for us to help and play up our strengths," advises Sousa. "It's been my experience that the groom is more of a 'do-er.' Let's face it, I could not

tell the difference between a ranunculus and a peony, but I can lift heavy things, give support, take direction, make phone calls, send emails, pick up licenses and, most importantly, I can listen.”

Reitsma agrees that it’s wise to capitalize on your groom’s ‘do-er’ nature. “There are many times that grooms don’t know what is involved, where to begin, what you are visualizing or if he is even allowed to participate in the planning,” she says. “Ask him if he wants to be involved. Communicate fully and don’t assume that he is not interested.”

Communicate, then let go. “If he wants to be involved, trust him with that task and don’t micro-manage,” adds Reitsma.

HEAR HIM OUT


“In reality, we’re a lot more well versed than you give us credit for,” says Sousa. “We know our families and workmates will be there, so we too want to put our best foot forward.”

Taking charge of their side of the guest list is a place where grooms can excel, he notes. “Coordinate your own family and friends because you probably know them best. A bride has a lot on her plate and probably isn’t going to remember that your Aunt Grace had a falling out with your Uncle Victor, or that Cousin Michael is no longer a vegetarian, but is now a vegan.”

JUST KEEP TALKING

Of course, creating and sticking to a budget is also critical for both bride and groom. “From my professional experience, most couples are paying for their own weddings and grooms want to know where the money is going,” says Reitsma. “Be ready to compromise and take each other’s ideas and interests into consideration. This day is about the bride *and* groom, so create it together and make sure it is true to you as a couple.”

Compromise, however, sometimes means saying no. But grooms who resist an idea should have a backup plan, advises Sousa: “Make sure that you can offer an option or solution. If you don’t like the band she’s chosen, offer up some bands that you enjoy. Who knows, she may actually agree with you. As long as you keep communicating about what you both want and don’t want on the big day, you’ll probably see that you are on the same page on a lot of things.”

Sounds like good advice. And clearly, it worked for Sousa and Gerlach. The pair made the walk down the aisle one sunny day this past August, on their way to happily ever after. (Check out their sweet engagement photo on page 17.) 



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