AN EMBRACING EXCELLENCE FIELD GUIDE

Which One Are You?

THE AMATEUR · THE ARROGANT · THE APATHETIC · THE ACCOMPLISHED

Four ways to officiate a wedding. Only one of them is remembered.

WAYNE & ROSANNE PREVETT
Executive Life Celebration Coaches
7,000+ life celebrations · 2,000+ officiants and celebrants certified · @the3kofficiant

PREFACE

A Note From the Authors

We've spent the better part of the past thirty years training and certifying wedding officiants, first through our own practice and later through Life Celebrations Academy, where we have now worked alongside over 2,000 officiants and celebrants across Canada and the United States. Between us we have had the honour of officiating more than 7,000 ceremonies, establishing life-celebration businesses and ministries, and leading a team that officiated thousands more.

In recent years, we have noticed a disturbing trend in wedding ceremonies: the role of the officiant is being devalued, trivialized, and minimized to a mere formality, and ceremonies are suffering as a result. When the officiant is treated as an interchangeable add-on instead of a skilled guide, couples end up with shallow, poorly crafted ceremonies that don't truly honour their commitment or their community. Ceremonies become something to tolerate rather than celebrate.

That's where these four types came from. Not from a textbook or ChatGPT, but from thirty years of a front-and-center view at thousands of weddings, both as officiants and as trainers. We have watched officiants of every stripe try to hold a room. Some hadn't prepared. Some had prepared for themselves rather than the couple. Some had done it so many times that the meaning had quietly leaked out of the words. And some — the ones this book is ultimately written toward — did the quiet, unglamorous work of getting it right, over and over, for every couple they served. They are Master-Class officiants who stand head and shoulders above all the rest.

We wrote this book because we believe in marriage, and because officiating is a craft worth taking seriously, whether you've been ordained for a weekend or for twenty years. If you're an officiant, our hope is that you'll recognize a little of yourself in more than one of these chapters — we certainly do — and that you'll close this book with a clearer sense of the officiant you want to become. If you're a couple trying to choose the right person to stand at the front of your ceremony, our hope is that these pages help you ask better questions and spot the difference before the day arrives, not after.

Either way, thank you for spending this time with us. It's a subject we care about deeply, and we're glad to share it with you. Where a personal story appears in these pages, it is Wayne's unless we say otherwise.

— Wayne & Rosanne

Founders, Life Celebrations Academy

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INTRODUCTION

Why Officiants Aren’t All the Same

Every wedding has an officiant. Far fewer weddings have a good one. The person standing at the front of the room holds more influence over the day than almost anyone realizes — more than the florist, more than the band, arguably more than the venue itself. A skilled officiant can turn a twenty-minute ceremony into the emotional center of gravity for the entire event. An unskilled one can turn it into something the couple spends the reception trying to forget.

Over years of training, certifying, and observing officiants across North America, four recurring archetypes emerge. They are not rigid boxes — most officiants drift between them at different points in their career, and some carry traces of more than one at once. But naming them matters, because you cannot fix what you refuse to see in yourself, and you cannot hire well if you don’t know what you’re looking at.

This short guide walks through each type: how to recognize it, what causes it, and what it costs the couple standing at the front of the room. It is written for two audiences at once — the officiant who wants to grow, and the couple who wants to choose well. Both will find themselves somewhere in these pages.

> A ceremony is not the warm-up act before the party. It is the reason the party is happening at all.

Four types. One question running underneath all of them: not whether this person can legally marry a couple, but whether they should be trusted to hold the most important twenty minutes of someone’s life?

CHAPTER ONE

The Amateur

Willing, but unready. Under-prepared, and hoping the room carries them. Amateurism is about craft, not about years.

The obvious Amateur is someone the couple loves. A favourite uncle, a college roommate, a coworker who got ordained online three weeks ago because somebody had to. There is nothing cynical about them — in fact, that is exactly the problem. They said yes out of affection, not readiness, and affection alone does not fill twenty minutes of silence in front of one hundred and fifty people. But that one is easy to spot and easy to forgive. The harder Amateur — the one worth looking at in the mirror — is the officiant who has been doing this for years and never built the craft underneath it. Paid, booked, and still winging it. Experience alone has never taught anybody to hold a room; practice did. Amateurism is a posture, not a stage, and you do not automatically grow out of it.

How to Spot the Amateur

- Reads the script for the first time at the rehearsal — or at the ceremony itself.
- Relies almost entirely on a downloaded template, with the couple's names dropped in.
- Fumbles the microphone, the pacing, or the cue for the kiss.
- Is visibly more nervous than the couple, which the couple then has to manage.
- Means every word, but the delivery undercuts the meaning.

What Causes It

The Amateur isn't lazy or careless. Usually, they simply don't know what they don't know. Officiating looks simple from the pews — stand up front, say some nice words, pronounce the couple married. The couple asked because they trust this person, not because they evaluated their public speaking, pacing, or ability to hold a room in an unscripted moment. Nobody sat the Amateur down beforehand and explained that a wedding ceremony is a performance, a legal act, and a piece of pastoral care, all compressed into a few minutes.

The Cost

The cost of the Amateur is rarely disaster — it's dilution. The vows land a little flat. The transitions are awkward. The couple laughs it off afterward ("classic Uncle Dave"), but somewhere underneath the laughter is a small, real disappointment: the ceremony they'd imagined for months didn't quite arrive. The photos are fine, but the feeling is muted. There are no do-overs because the ceremony is one-and-done. This chapter in their love story can never be repeated, replayed or rewritten.

> Good intentions have never once steadied a shaking microphone.

An Example

There is no shortage of examples of Amateur officiants. I once, reluctantly, agreed to “share” officiating the ceremony with a family member of the couple. They were convinced that the only

way to “get” a personal feel was to include a family member. We stood at the front side by side. I had officiated hundreds; they had never officiated one. I spent the entire twenty minutes guiding him, pointing to where he was to read and then ultimately taking over when they ‘lost’ it emotionally. The bride was left trying to console her family member rather than enjoying the moment’s power and significance.

The Way Forward

The Amateur is the easiest of the four to fix, because the raw material is already there: sincerity, care, and a personal connection to the couple. What’s missing is craft — rehearsal, structure, and the humility to treat the role as a skill worth practicing rather than a favour worth winging. Given training, an Amateur often becomes one of the most moving officiants a couple could ask for, precisely because the love was never in question. Only the preparation was.

CHAPTER TWO

The Arrogant

Skilled, but self-serving. Polished enough to be dangerous.

The Arrogant officiant is, in some ways, more troubling than the Amateur, because the skill is real. This is someone who has done dozens, maybe hundreds of weddings. They know the room, they know the rhythm, they can command attention without effort. And somewhere along the way, the ceremony stopped being about the couple in front of them and started being about the officiant on display.

How to Spot the Arrogant

- Recycles the same jokes, stories, or signature lines at every wedding, regardless of the couple.
- Spends more ceremony time on personal anecdotes than on the significance and importance of the ceremony.
- Resists the couple's input on the script, treating their own style as non-negotiable.
- Wants to be remembered as much as — or more than — the couple wants to be.
- Performs confidence in a way that reads as showmanship rather than warmth.

What Causes It

Arrogance in this role is usually earned confidence that curdled. Early success — genuine compliments, repeat referrals, a signature style that worked — can quietly convince an officiant that their formula is the point, rather than a vehicle for whatever this particular couple needs. Once an officiant starts believing couples are lucky to have them, rather than the reverse, the ceremony has already been hijacked, even if no one has said so out loud.

The Cost

This is the officiant who leaves the couple feeling like extras at their own wedding. The ceremony might look flawless on video — polished, funny, well-paced — and still feel hollow to the two people and their loving community who lived it. Guests remember the officiant's punchline. They don't experience a powerful, significant ritual in which a faithful, loving community comes together around the couple at this threshold moment.

> The room should leave celebrating the significance and power of love. If they leave remembering you, something has gone quietly wrong.

An Example

A local officiant in our city was so determined to be seen that he refused to step aside for the couple's kiss. Instead, he deliberately placed his head between them as they kissed, ensuring he

appeared in the photo. Thankfully, he did not last long.

The Way Forward

The fix for arrogance isn't less skill — it's redirected skill. The same command of the room that built the Arrogant officiant's confidence can, with a deliberate check on ego, become the very thing that makes a couple feel seen rather than upstaged. It starts with a simple discipline: before writing a single line, shift your mindset away from yourself; resist reaching for what worked last time, and strive to work with the couple to put their love and relationship on display. It is never about you, the officiant. If you spend more time thinking about yourself than the couple, you are an arrogant officiant.

CHAPTER THREE

The Apathetic

Present, but absent. Technically there. Emotionally checked out.

The Apathetic officiant has usually done this so many times that the ceremony has become procedure rather than occasion. Nothing about their delivery is wrong, exactly — the words come out in the right order, the legal requirements are met, the couple is pronounced married. But the room can feel it: nobody up front is actually moved by what's happening.

How to Spot the Apathetic

- Treats every couple's ceremony as a template with names swapped in, with little real customization.
- Shows minimal emotional engagement — flat tone, autopilot delivery, checked-out eye contact.
- Rushes through the pre-ceremony conversation, gathering only the bare minimum of detail.
- Is difficult to reach, slow to respond, or visibly transactional in follow-up communication.
- Treats the wedding as a booking to fulfill rather than a couple to serve.

What Causes It

Apathy is usually a symptom of volume without renewal. An officiant who has performed the same ceremony hundreds of times, without deliberately reconnecting to why it matters, will inevitably start running on autopilot. It can also come from burnout, from taking on more bookings than can be honoured with full attention, or simply from never having built a system for genuinely getting to know each new couple. The skill hasn't necessarily eroded — the investment has. The Apathetic officiant sees little to no value in marriage or loving relationships. They are indifferent to intimacy.

The Cost

This is the quietest damage of the four, because nothing overtly goes wrong. But couples who hire the Apathetic officiant often describe their own ceremony months later with a strange flatness — as though they're recalling someone else's wedding. The words were correct, but the feeling never showed up. And unlike a flower arrangement or a wrong-colored napkin, there is no reshoot for a ceremony that failed to move anyone, including the person delivering it.

> Competence without care is just a very well-rehearsed absence.

An Example

I'll never be able to forget the time one of our officiants chose to miss a wedding he was booked to officiate for a couple who were part of the who's who in the theatre industry in a major North

American city. There were over 1,000 guests ready and waiting, and no officiant to make it legal. Our leadership team tried to reach him to no avail. About 11 pm later that night, we received an email that read, “Oops, I forgot!” It was two days later that he finally admitted that he had another ‘opportunity’ come up that he couldn’t refuse. We fired him!

The Way Forward

Apathy is reversible, but it requires the officiant to rebuild a genuine practice of curiosity — a real consultation process, real questions about how the couple met, what they’re afraid of, and what they hope this day means, asked early enough that the answers can actually shape the ceremony. Volume is not the enemy. Volume without motivation to stay present with each new couple is.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Accomplished

Prepared, present, and proven. The standard the other three are measured against.

The Accomplished officiant is what happens when the Amateur's sincerity, the Arrogant's command of the room, and the Apathetic's experience are all present — minus the flaws that undermine each of them. They've done the reps, but they still prepare as if it's their first wedding. They can hold a room, but they use that ability in service of the couple rather than themselves. They've done this hundreds of times, and every couple still gets their full attention.

How to Spot the Accomplished

- Runs a genuine consultation process well before the wedding day, asking real questions and listens to the answers.
- Crafts a ceremony that could only belong to this couple — not a template with names inserted.
- Communicates clearly, promptly, and warmly from first inquiry through final thank-you.
- Rehearses the ceremony as seriously as any performer rehearses a show.
- Reads the room in real time and adapts — slowing down, pausing, adjusting — without losing the thread.
- Leaves the couple and the room more connected than before the ceremony began.

What Makes It Possible

Accomplishment in this work tends to rest on four habits, practiced consistently rather than occasionally:

- Connection Building real rapport with the couple so the ceremony reflects who they actually are.
- Consultation Asking the questions that surface the couple's real story, not just the logistics.
- Communication Being reliable, responsive, and clear from the first inquiry to the final rehearsal.
- Ceremony Delivering the day itself with preparation, presence, power, and the command of the room.

The Payoff

None of this is mysterious, and none of it requires natural charisma the Amateur lacks or the confidence the Arrogant has in excess. It requires treating officiating as a craft: something studied, rehearsed, and refined over time, in service of someone else's most important day rather than the officiant's own comfort or ego. The couples who hire an Accomplished officiant don't just get through their ceremony — they remember it as the emotional heart of the entire wedding, exactly as it should be.

Accomplished isn't a personality. It's a practice — repeated on purpose, for every single couple.

A LETTER FROM A COUPLE

Hey Wayne, I just wanted to send you a quick e-mail to thank you and let you know that you were AMAZING on Saturday! EVERYONE absolutely LOVED you!! People were coming up to me all night, asking if Andre and I knew you because it seemed like you knew us forever, the way you spoke during the ceremony.

You were given so many compliments throughout the day and night, I just had to let you know. We watched the ceremony back, and honestly you made us laugh, tear up, and actively listen to your words....we were so honoured to have you be such a special part of our wedding. We couldn't have asked for anything better.

You are truly a kind, gentle, warm man. We can tell you find joy and have so much passion for what you do! When my Maid of Honour and sister-in-law and I were at the Bridal show in September, we met you at your booth... within the first 30 seconds of speaking with you, I knew you were the one I wanted to perform my ceremony. We will definitely be recommending you to others; that's for sure! I was so upset that I didn't get a chance to say bye to you on Saturday. I know that you had to go and marry another Vanessa though

Thank you

— A & V

CONCLUSION

Which One Will You Be?

Most officiants don't choose to be the Amateur, the Arrogant, or the Apathetic. They arrive there by default — through inexperience, through unchecked ego, through simple fatigue. The Accomplished officiant is the only one of the four who got there on purpose.

For the officiant reading this: the good news is that none of these types are permanent identities. The Amateur can train. The Arrogant can redirect. The Apathetic can rebuild the habit of curiosity. What separates the Accomplished officiant from the other three isn't talent — it's the decision to treat every ceremony as though it's the only one that matters, because for the couple standing in front of you, it is.

For the couple reading this: choose carefully. Ask how the officiant prepares. Ask how they get to know couples before the day. Observe how they interact with you at consultations. Are they engaged, curious? The person you choose will hold one of the most important few minutes of your life in their hands. Make sure they've earned it.

> Anyone can be ordained in a weekend. Very few become accomplished. That difference is the entire point of this book.

> Book Two — The Accomplished Wedding Officiant is a whole book about becoming the fourth one.

NOW WHAT?

There is a next step.

Over thirty years we have trained and certified more than 2,000 officiants and celebrants. We are more than a 'get ordained online' organization — we care deeply about the people we invest in. Wherever you are in your journey, there is a next step, and we would like to walk it with you.

Keep reading, free. The whole Embracing Excellence library, all 365 Pro Tips and every field guide — open to everyone, no membership needed.

Go deeper — the books. This guide named the thing. The books teach it. **Book One — I'm Ordained, Now What?** for your first ninety days. **Book Two — The Accomplished Wedding Officiant** for the craft and the business. **Book Three — Making the Most of the Moment** for the three minutes a couple never forgets.

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