AN EMBRACING EXCELLENCE FIELD GUIDE

Setting Your Fees

RESEARCH · PRICE · VALUE

Research the market, price above the average, and never cheapen you.

WAYNE & ROSANNE PREVETT

Executive Life Celebration Coaches · Founders, Life Celebrations Academy

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PREFACE

A Note From the Authors

I get a lot of questions about setting fees. It seems to be a massive point of confusion for officiants — both new and existing officiants struggling with fees. The ones who've been at it for a while, the professionals, the accomplished officiants, they never lower their fees. And yet startups have a tendency to start at the bottom, or they start at the top and then they drop their fees.

I'm just going to give you some principles behind it, and tell you a little bit about our story as well. There's a lot to be said here, but there are some great principles that you should never ignore. Let's walk through them.

— Wayne & Rosanne

Founders, Life Celebrations Academy

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INTRODUCTION

Why Fees Confuse Almost Everyone

Setting fees trips up more officiants than almost anything else — and it trips up the experienced ones as much as the beginners. The professionals, the accomplished officiants, they never lower their fees. Startups do the opposite: they either start at the very bottom, or they start at the top and then quietly drop their fees the moment they feel nervous.

What follows isn't a formula pulled from thin air. It's the handful of principles my wife Rosanne and I actually used to build our own pricing, plus the same advice I give the officiants I coach. Six principles, one honest recap, and a couple of real stories along the way.

> The professionals never lower their fees. The startups either start too low, or drop the moment they get nervous.

PRINCIPLE ONE

Do the Research

When we started out, we simply did the research. You've got to look at what other people are charging. So you've got to take some time — look up the officiants, or call them, or talk to them, or have a meeting with them. Everything can be found online now. And if not, just simply email them pretending you're a couple, or whatever, and just ask what their fees are. You'll get the answer.

But you've got to know what the numbers are out there. You can't set any fees until you do your research. It's fair to start somewhere around what everyone else is charging — but only once you actually know what that is.

> You can't set your fees until you've done your research. Know the numbers that are out there.

PRINCIPLE TWO

Find the Average, Then Add 35%

Here's the wisdom I always give: find the average fee, and then add 35% to it. You should always be higher. Start higher.

Don't worry about the experience. Don't worry about not ever having done a wedding. You need to have a fee that reflects your level of confidence and your level of professionalism — not your nerves. But you have to research first. Find the average, then add 35%, and increase your value.

> Find the average fee, then add 35%. You should always be higher. Start higher.

PRINCIPLE THREE

Build Value Into Your Fee

The second thing you need to do is look at what it is you offer. What are your services? That could be anything from filing papers to meeting a couple.

Our fee breakdown was pretty simplistic. We did two consultations — and if we could, we preferred to do them face-to-face; if not, we did them by Zoom. But that's part of our fee. So if our fee was set at $425, then we built that consultation into it. Now, we didn't say we're charging for a consultation — our consultations were free. But at the end of the day, the fee we're collecting helps cover that time.

So you put that into your fee. You do two consultations. You officiate the ceremony. You build the script, or the ceremony, along with the couple, and you bring that with you. You file all of the necessary paperwork. You do all of that, and that's what your fee represents. You don't make up stories — you simply say, "That's what my fee covers," along with a professionally presented ceremony.

And the biggest reality is this: if you don't spell that out, people are going to guess what your fee covers. So lay it out clearly — on your social media, on your posts, on your website — and just make sure you're very clear.

> If you don't tell couples what your fee covers, they'll guess. So lay it out clearly.

PRINCIPLE FOUR

Raise Your Fees Every Year

The other thing we did, right from when we began, is every year we increased our price — and we increased it by $50.

Let me give you a story about a guy I've been coaching in the San Diego area. He decided he would use Thumbtack — which is a horrible place to start, because they take a percentage of the money. He was charging like $300 and wasn't getting anywhere. I said, "Do you look at what others are charging?" He looked around and went, "Well, people are over $600." And I said, "Well, then you're way under." I told him, "Go 825, 827." So he did — and his bookings increased. His confidence increased.

I've got to tell you: people really do believe that they get what they pay for.

> People really do believe that they get what they pay for.

PRINCIPLE FIVE

Never Cheapen You

Lowering your prices, or dropping your fees, is a horrible idea. Another horrible idea is packages. I don't like them — because you're not a package, you're a person. That's a principle so many officiants forget. They cheapen everything.

But if you're cheapening things — if you're lowering your price — what exactly are you cheapening? It's not like you're leaving out a flower, or leaving something off the menu, or leaving part of the dress off. You don't cheapen you. Every time you go to a ceremony, the couple should always get the best.

> You're not a package. You're a person. You don't cheapen you.

PRINCIPLE SIX

Keep Your Numbers In Your Head

Here's what you do instead of advertising a lower price: you base your pricing on the consults. Maybe I only do one consultation, so I'll lower my fee. Maybe they'll come to my home and get married — then I can lower my fee. But you don't advertise those. You have those figures in your mind.

So when you're having a conversation with a couple and they say, "Whoa, your fee is $1,800 — do you have other options?" you can say, "Yeah, I do. If you don't need a consult, if you'd like me to pick out your ceremony content, if you'd like to just come and get married at our office..." I have those fee numbers in mind — but you never advertise them.

> Have your lower numbers in mind for the conversation. Never advertise them.

CONCLUSION

What Fee Do I Set?

People always ask me, “What fee do I set?” So let me go over it again. You’ve got to do the research — you’ve got to know what’s going on out there. You need to add 35%. And you need to be clear about what it is you’re offering.

Keep in mind that the gift you bring, the product you bring, is professional communication. So you’d better be providing an incredible product, and you’d better communicate well. Make sure you’re answering emails, make sure you’re clear, make sure you’re concise. That’s value. Couples will pay for that — that’s confidence they’re paying for. And then you’d better present a ceremony, and you’d better be present at that ceremony. All of that is value.

Increasing your value is simply increasing how you handle couples, how you talk to couples, what time you show up at a ceremony. All of that is excellence — and that brings your value up. So keep increasing those prices. Don’t go the other way. Go up. But every time you increase that price, increase the value of who you are and what you have to offer.

> Every time you increase the price, increase the value of who you are and what you have to offer.

> Fees are one chapter of a much larger craft. Book Two — The Accomplished Wedding Officiant is the rest of it.

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.

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