



Pop the Questions

Planning for your big day doesn't have to be all tears and tantrums. **Andrea Lo** puts some tricky questions to three wedding planning experts to help you get a handle on any potential issues.

Meet the Experts

Sonya Yeung, creative director, Bliss Creations

With tons of experience in planning exotic destination weddings—be it Hong Kong, Cambodia or New Zealand—Bliss Creations can help with everything from decorations to entertainment.

www.blissweddings.asia



Michele Li, founder, The Wedding Company

The Wedding Company specializes in planning luxury weddings across Asia, working on the minutiae to create your perfect big day.

www.theweddingco.hk



Photo: Jonathan Wong/SCMP

Rani Moriani, founder, Revel Events

Revel Events specializes in destination Indian weddings, with a team of experts on hand to manage every aspect of your dream day.

reveventshk.com



“Keep smiling—your candid shots are being taken, which is what you will remember 20 years down memory lane... Not the cherry or blush-pink drapes!”

— Rani Moriani

♥ **Problem:**

“Our budget can’t stretch to cover plus-ones. What’s the best way to deal with this?”

♥ **Solution:**

Sonya Yeung: Bliss always suggests that clients start by making an “A-list” of those they must invite, and then creating B- and C-lists for those they would like to invite, pending replies and capacity. An early save the date invitation can provide a preliminary yes or no from guests to give you a better sense of how many can attend. If guests are requesting to bring a long-term partner then you must include, but if it is a new acquaintance and space is limited, you can politely let your guest know in advance.

Rani Moriani: If [the plus-one] doesn’t know your fiancé, you could easily say that he wants a very intimate wedding with only the nearest and dearest for this special day. No one would argue with that. However, if it’s a mutual friend, then it gets tricky. Then too, you could state the same reason and hope they understand. After all, this day is all about you and your significant other.



“Stressing out over small details can put a damper on the day. If you can’t afford a planner throughout, engage one to take care of the day itself! It will be the best money spent.”

—Sonya Yeung

♥ **Problem:**

“Weddings are so expensive. How can I keep costs down but still have all the fancy trimmings that make a day special?”

♥ **Solution:**

ML: Consider having a wedding on a week day, or a lunch or cocktail reception instead of a formal sit-down banquet. Minimize the number of guests and spend time on the small details of the wedding to add personalized touches— from calligraphy place cards to unique napkin treatments, perhaps wrapping a ribbon or tucking a small flower into each place setting.

RM: When you plan well in advance, it saves a lot of unnecessary expenses last-minute—so book your vendors earlier, as they will give a cheaper price. You can omit traditional invites and set up a website with all the necessary information and details leading up to the day. Opt for a buffet dinner—a larger spread makes it more value for money and it’s much cheaper than having a five- or seven-course meal served to each guest.

SY: Reducing your guest list and managing the alcohol consumption can help to save costs. If you have time, you can make special items such as invitations, place cards and seating plans that make the day special while saving you money.

♥ **Problem:**

“We’re short on space and want to invite guests just to the evening party, rather than to the ceremony and meal. How do we do this?”

♥ **Solution:**

Michele Li: We would suggest printing two separate invitations: one for the ceremony, one for the evening.

SY: The best etiquette is to create different invitation cards with the correct information for each group of guests. Ensuring the events flow smoothly and that the couple has time to mingle with guests at each part of the day is important, so everyone gets to help celebrate.



♥ **Problem:**
“Can we exclude children?”

♥ **Solution:**

SY: If you are having a destination wedding, you will need to decide whether people might not attend if you exclude their kids. If you are having your wedding at home then it is more acceptable to exclude kids from your event.

RM: As always, the emphasis is that it's the couple's special day and how do they view having little guests at their wedding? It certainly does add the cute factor many times. They need not necessarily invite all children, just the important children from the immediate families, nieces and nephews.

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“The day passes so quickly so relax and really enjoy every second of it!”

– Michele Li

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♥ **Problem:**
“Planning a top table is a nightmare! How do we do this?”

♥ **Solution:**

RM: The top table is necessary, because it's where all the key people from the wedding will be seated. It's usually in the middle so it is easier to watch the speeches. I would recommend keeping it to immediate family members from both sides, best man and head bridesmaid.

SY: For smaller weddings, we suggest mixing your guests around to create more of an inclusive feel, while for larger weddings you may want to keep certain groups together, for example work friends vs aunts and uncles.

ML: In traditional weddings this is the bride and groom, their parents and closest family. For a younger, more fun wedding it's the bride and groom, bridesmaids and groomsmen. The parents can then each “host” their own table.

♥ **Problem:**
“I'm planning to lose a lot more weight before the wedding but I have to choose my dress so early. How will I be sure it fits on the day?”

♥ **Solution:**

RM: For fittings, have a deal with the store so that you will have two to three sessions. The last fitting would be a month before the wedding and any last-minute alterations will have to be urgently handled.

SY: The biggest thing to remember when gown-fitting is to be realistic about how much time you have and how motivated you will be if aiming to lose weight for the wedding. Making a dress smaller is easier than making it bigger so we suggest brides do a fitting approximately four weeks before the wedding date for final alterations, bearing in mind there should be no drastic changes from then on. Most importantly, make sure it is comfortable and has a little room for give. You want to enjoy those desserts on the day!

♥ **Problem:**
“Some of my guests haven't sent their RSVPs yet. What should I do?”

♥ **Solution:**

ML: Follow up with a phone call or an email. We suggest to do this twice—around one- to two months prior to the wedding, and the second time one week prior to ensure that their plans have not changed.



Wedding Checklist

Take the worry out of wedding preparations with our prenuptial planner

NINE TO 12 MONTHS BEFORE

He finally popped the question and now you're engaged. Congrats! But now what?

- Select wedding date
- Hire a wedding planner
- Choose and book your reception venue
- Decide on the type of wedding you want. Formal or relaxed? Romantic or contemporary?
- Lay out your budget and decide who's paying for what
- Create a rough guest list. Are you inviting children? What's your ideal wedding size?
- Pick your wedding gown
- Paperwork: Find out what you need to apply for a marriage license

SIX TO NINE MONTHS BEFORE

It's time to book your vendors and choose the friends who are going to stand next to you on your big day. **Choose your...**

- Photographer
- Videographer
- Caterer
- Musicians
- Florist
- Organize your wedding party
- Select the best man and ushers
- Select the maid of honor, bridesmaids and flower girls and organize their outfits
- Assign the wedding party their responsibilities
- Set up a gift registry

FOUR TO SIX MONTHS BEFORE

Time's ticking, so finalize your guest list and start planning the honeymoon.

- Book a venue decorator
- Have fittings for bridesmaids' dresses
- Finalize your guest list
- Pick invitations and wedding stationery
- Book wedding day hotel room

- If people are coming from overseas, arrange accommodation for them
- Buy bridesmaids accessories and shoes
- Buy lingerie
- Choose wedding bands
- Start planning honeymoon

TWO TO FOUR MONTHS BEFORE

Now's when you need to sort out the fiddly bits that can't be done any sooner.

- Order your wedding cake
- Book a car for on-the-day transportation
- Order party favors
- Start addressing invitations
- Start doing makeup and hair trials
- Send out invitations
- Pick your ushers and MC and give them a rundown of what they need to do

SIX TO EIGHT WEEKS BEFORE

People will be starting to RSVP, so make a note of who's coming, and stay calm!

- As RSVPs start coming back, keep a record of who's coming and who's not. If not provided by the venue, buy accessories for the ceremony and reception, including guest book, ring pillow and signing pen
- Make sure the groom, best men, and fathers of the bride and the groom all have suits

TWO TO SIX WEEKS BEFORE

Get your vendors to confirm. Detect any problems? There's still time for a Plan B.

- Make final call on F&B
- Final confirmation of rundown with officiant
- Finalize all details with vendors
- Give your photographer a list of any particular shots you want
- Final fitting for wedding gown and bridesmaids' dresses
- Make an on-the-day itinerary and give a

copy to vendors and the wedding party

- Get a floor plan for the reception venue and create a tentative seating plan
- Follow up with guests who haven't sent their RSVP yet
- Pick up wedding rings
- Pick up tickets and travel itinerary for the honeymoon

THE WEEK BEFORE

Everything should be sorted now, but chances are there's tons left to do.

Delegate!

- Give the caterer/venue a final headcount
- Pack for the honeymoon
- Collect and wrap party favors
- Get all your waxing and tweezing sorted
- Finalize seating plan for reception

THE DAY BEFORE

The calm before the storm. Get a good night's sleep and try not to fret about minor details.

- Drop all accessories, decorations and signage at the venue
- Pack vendor fees into envelopes, so they're ready to give out at the end of the night
- Make sure men all have black socks
- Get a manicure

THE DAY ITSELF

DAH DA-DA DAAAHN... DAH DA-DA DAAAHN...

- Be sure to eat a big breakfast
- If you need to bring anything else to the venue, make sure it's packed
- Move your engagement ring to your right hand
- Hand a wedding day itinerary to someone responsible
- And above all, remember to relax and enjoy yourself!