



The Ultimate Wedding DJ Guide

*Guarantee a First Class Wedding
Professional for Your Event*

By Chris DiNardo

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Contents

<i>About the Author</i>	4-5
<i>Where to Begin</i>	6-7
<i>Meeting Your DJ</i>	8-9
<i>Experience</i>	10-12
<i>Presentation</i>	13-14
<i>Venue</i>	15-17
<i>Equipment</i>	18-21
<i>Music and Volume</i>	22-24
<i>Communication</i>	25-26
<i>Price</i>	27-28
<i>Conclusion</i>	29
<i>Endorsements</i>	20-32
<i>DJ Scorecard</i>	33-52

About the Author

Chris DiNardo is currently the owner of SEK Productions. He has 20 plus years of experience in the wedding industry and has performed at over 500 weddings. With hundreds of five star reviews from past clients, along with several awards in his profession, Chris is one of the most sought after wedding professionals in the Tri-State area. Clients will book with him up to 2 years in advance to ensure the ultimate wedding reception. His journey to be the ultimate wedding DJ started at age 16, performing at weddings from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to San Juan, Puerto Rico. He remains a student of his profession, constantly striving to be the best.

After meeting with hundreds of couples, Chris has composed the ultimate wedding DJ interview that will give you the insight and knowledge to guarantee you will hire a top notch Wedding Professional for your BIG DAY! SEK Productions LLC specializes in weddings and corporate events and serves all of the Delaware Valley, South Jersey, Central Jersey, Delaware, Center City Philadelphia and Philadelphia's five surrounding counties. The company has received Wedding Wire's Bride's Choice Award and Couples Choice Award several times over and has been involved with TV shows such as "My Fair Wedding with David Tutera". With an innovative business model

that includes the combination of an elite lighting division as well as the highest caliber of entertainment, SEK Productions is an industry leader among mobile entertainment companies.

Where to Begin

The DJ interview process should be one of the most exciting meetings for you and your fiancé. It's an upbeat meeting or at least should be that you get to share your vision with the DJ to make for the perfect reception. In order to not waste too much time finding the perfect DJ to meet your needs, you want to think about the kind of personality you want your DJ to have. Do you want them to participate with the guests? Do you want them to energetic or conservative? Are there any cultural traditions the DJ should know about? By thinking about these things in advance, you'll be able to narrow down the DJs you would like to speak with.

There are hundreds of ways to find a DJ but some of the most effective are the following: I suggest you start asking newly married couples for their recommendations. Word of mouth is huge in the wedding industry and you can learn so much from first hand experiences. You can also use specific Internet sites designed solely for the purpose of obtaining information on wedding professionals. The venue of your choice normally has a select list of vendors that they prefer in their establishment as well, take the time and ask for it. Other wedding professionals that you secured for your date, such as the photographer will always go out of their way for you to suggest a great wedding DJ. Photographers know if they are working with a

professional wedding DJ, they will not miss anything because the DJ will always inform them before it happens, such as special dances or traditional ceremonies.

Ok, you did your research and have your list of qualified DJs you want to meet, now on to the interview!

Meeting Your DJ

In this section you will learn some very simple qualifying tactics that will shed light on your DJ selection process. The first tip I recommend is to always meet the DJ in person that you may hire. I have found that clients who meet their DJs have a far better experience than those who don't. You will be able to see first hand if the DJ is truly excited and passionate about their profession, or if they are looking for extra side money. You will also be able to get to know the DJ up close and personal, and this should give you the information you need to make a much more informed decision. If logistics are an issue in meeting with the DJ, I suggest using programs like SKYPE, Face Time or GoToMeeting to have an informative interview.

Here are seven key characteristics you should look for in a professional DJ:

- Articulate: A DJ who has a problem speaking in front of two people in a private meeting, will definitely have an issue speaking in front of 200 people at a wedding.*
- Self-Confident: A great DJ has a strong command presence and is able to captivate any audience at anytime.*

•Organized: A DJ is usually set up in a location that everyone can see, so you don't want someone who is slovenly.

•Prompt: If a DJ is late to your scheduled appointment, then chances are they will be late in the future, hopefully not to your wedding.

•Enthusiastic: A DJ needs to be excited about his profession and have the ability to inspire others.

•Ethical: The DJ should live by and run his business with sound moral principles.

•Listener: A DJ needs to be able to suspend his own agenda to ensure your needs are met.

Experience

It is imperative that you discover how much experience the DJ has in the wedding industry. A Wedding DJ is very different than a nightclub DJ or radio DJ for several reasons, but the main reason is a wedding professional understands the layout of the wedding reception and can maximize the time allotted for the event. Each venue will have a different structure of how the night is planned but a great wedding DJ understands the overall flow and can manage it effectively to deliver an awesome reception.

Here are some essential questions to ask about the DJs experience.

Q. Is this your career?

A. Does the professional provide for themselves or their family by the income earned from being a professional DJ. This is not to say there aren't good DJs that have other professions, but most likely they will not have the same level of commitment than someone who only DJs for a living. A professional shouldn't be disqualified if they have another job/career but you want keep a mental note of the information, especially when other topics are discussed such as availability, equipment and communication.

Q. How many weddings have you performed?

A. A wedding is such an important occasion, and you don't want your DJ's first wedding to be your own. The number of years someone has been a DJ will give you some indication of his experience level, but you need to know if weddings are the DJ's top priority.

Q. How many weddings do you do each year?

A. Just like any other profession, performing for weddings requires one's skills to be in top form. If a DJ performs for only a few weddings each year, they may not be "at the top of their game" by the time your wedding date arrives. Asking how many weddings they do per year will give you an indication of their level of commitment to your type of event.

Q. Do you have insurance?

A. If the DJ does not have insurance, than they obviously don't take it seriously enough to call it a business; they are very naïve to think it is not needed. In fact, many venues will require the insurance from a vendor prior to playing in their establishment. If they have never come across this scenario, this is key in telling how much experience they really have.

Q. Do you provide a written contract?

A. A written contract that is executed by both parties is absolutely mandatory. It should clearly state what services are being rendered and the amount required. Be sure to read over the entire contract to ensure you understand the terms. If a DJ doesn't provide a written agreement, you should look at other options or companies.

Q. Can you provide testimonials from your past clients?

A. It is always wise to read reviews or testimonials of the DJ you are interviewing. Look for consistency in the amount of reviews and the overall context. A good technique to see how much of a presence the DJ has in the wedding industry is to Google their name. This will give you a good sense of how much experience the DJ has performing at weddings.

Presentation

In this section we will discuss how to discover what kind of presentation the professional DJ will bring to the table from his own personal attire to the setup of his equipment. Anyone in the entertainment industry understands that first impressions go a long way.

Take note of how professional the DJ appears to be at your interview; listen carefully to ensure that they conduct themselves appropriately. Your guests will have their first impression of the DJ; we want them to have a great one!

Here are two key questions to ask to learn about the DJs personal and professional presentation

Q. What kind of attire do you wear to a wedding?

A. Unless told otherwise, the DJ should always wear a suit. Some DJs even wear tuxedos. The DJ should take enough pride in his attire to ensure he is ultra presentable for your event.

Q. What steps do you take in order to have the cleanest setup possible for your equipment?

A. There are several. The DJs setup should be as clean as possible, with all wires hidden and taped where necessary for safety purposes. Some DJs

go as far as placing facades in front of their table for an extra clean look. Although it is not necessary, it is definitely a nice touch. Any extra bags or equipment not mandatory to the success of the wedding should be either well hidden or taken out of the reception space. This will eliminate any chance of seeing clutter in the background of your wedding pictures. Equipment should be well maintained and presentable for the event; no excuses and no exceptions are acceptable.

Venue

The venue is a great place to get information about the vendors they prefer, especially DJs. The venue wants great vendors at their establishment. They have too many other things to worry about. If the food and drinks are great but the DJ couldn't get anyone to dance, then how great of a night was it? All the pieces of the puzzle must fit for the picture to be perfect!

Here are five key questions to ask the DJ regarding the Venue:

Q. Are you familiar with the venue our wedding will be held?

A. This is a simple yes or no. If the answer is no, then the DJ should always try to coordinate a meeting with you and the person you are working with at the venue to see the space. If that is not an option, then a floor plan should be given to the DJ so they are at least familiar with the layout. The DJ will be able to learn the venues loading and unloading practices, house rules, and will see first hand how they can maximize the space for the event.

Q. How early do you arrive on site for my wedding?

A. Each venue has an allotted time for setup and breakdown. You want to be sure the DJ is familiar with these times, especially if you are having an enhanced setup. The DJ needs to ensure they have the proper staff available to setup. Most venues will allow a two-hour window for setup and one hour for breakdown. The idea is for the DJ to arrive early enough that everything is completed by the time your first guest arrives.

Q. Are you recommended at our venue?

A. If the venue recommends, the DJ based on his talent and work ethic, this should be looked at as a key factor in your decision making process. If the venue has a book with 50 recommended vendors, then you will know the recommendation is based off of the vendor paying to be on their list. Vendor books are great to explore several different vendors that the venue has worked with and approve of, but if a DJ has to pay to be on a list then you want to ask yourself how true is the recommendation.

Q. Do you require a vendor meal?

A. Every company is different in what they require, but all this information should be in the contract they provide you.

Q. What will you require for setup at the venue?

A. Be sure to find out what the DJ requires for his setup. The terms should be spelled out in the contract. Usually a six-foot table, a standard outlet within 30 to 50 feet if the event is indoors, and proper shelter and power will be needed for an outdoor event

Equipment

The DJs equipment is the equivalent to a surgeon's scalpel. It is absolutely vital that his equipment is in top-notch shape. You are not expected to know what type of equipment is better than others or should you concern yourself with specs of the equipment that the DJ will bring to your event. Most DJs understand that you are very unlikely to have a working knowledge of professional DJ equipment, but they should be able to describe their sound system to you. Your main concern is that the equipment will work properly, and if not, they will have a backup. I can remember one evening I was playing a wedding, everything was going great until one of the staff members from the other room ran in our room and told me that the DJ in the other room had a problem with his equipment. I told my assistant to take over while I try to help in any way I could. When I walked into the ballroom I discovered the sound had been off for 20 minutes, the crowd was restless and the bride was extremely upset. I noticed the DJ didn't have any back up equipment, so I immediately spoke to him about the DJ program he used and lucky for him I used the same. I immediately went back in my room and packed up my back up equipment and brought it to him. We restored the sound and the party continued. The bride and groom saw what I had done and were extremely thankful and the DJ

learned a very valuable lesson that night. Bring back up equipment!

Here are some great questions regarding the equipment of the professional you are interviewing

Q. Is your equipment up to date?

A. Every aspect of the DJ's equipment should be modern and up to date. An example of this is a "professional wedding DJ" should be using a computer with a virtual interface as his or her main setup. I still see from time to time a backup system that has CD capability, but anything beyond that is ancient technology.

Q. Is your equipment capable of handling our event space?

A. The DJ should have a sound system that can fill the reception venue with great sound. Both low and high-end speakers should never strain to fill the space. If the equipment is not meant to play for the particular size venue, and is used anyway, the sound will be loud and distorted. The DJ will know the limitations of his sound system and so pay close attention to the explanation.

Q. Do you bring backup equipment?

A. Even the best maintained equipment could malfunction at some point. If the DJ has never experienced such as situation, he are either too inexperienced or too naïve to think that it can't happen. Not only should your DJ have his system completely backed up, but it should also be setup and ready to go. This is extremely important! God forbid something does happen at the reception; the DJ can make the necessary adjustments without loosing any momentum.

Q. Will you have all the necessary equipment needed for my event?

A. This is pertaining to when you have an on-site ceremony or a cocktail hour that is not in the main reception space. Additional equipment will be needed and you want to ensure that it is there and ready to go. If the DJ needs to use his equipment for both the ceremony and reception, be sure that they are familiar with the venue so they can transfer it without walking through the guest area. Some venues offer a space for ceremonies or cocktail hour where power outlets are not an option, be sure the DJ will have the correct equipment necessary the day of your event to avoid any problems.

Q. What kind of equipment do you use?

A. DJs should strive to have unmatched sound by using the best equipment at your event. Pioneer, Denon, Virtual DJ, Serato, Shure Digital, Allen & Heath, RCF, EV, Monster, QSC, JBL, and Mogami are some of the top of the line professional grade mobile products that will ensure the clarity and full sound that you deserve for your event.

Q. Do you have a wireless microphone?

A. Every professional wedding DJ should offer a wireless microphone to be used for your guests' toasts, blessing, and any other speeches that need to be made. The industry standard for wireless microphones is Shure, and most professionals will use this product. The DJ should always have a back up microphone setup and ready to go as well.

Music and Volume

Musical knowledge is a key factor that will determine the success or failure of your DJ's performance. The DJ either has it or they don't. More importantly great DJs know what to play and when to play it to maximize the party. Great DJs are extremely knowledgeable in all types of music genres and will be able to adapt to any crowd they have in front of them. The volume of the music is as just as important to the event as the music that is being played. If the music is too loud then the night will not be enjoyable for most of your guests, especially during dinner. If it is too low, the energy of the event will suffer and will not reach it's maximum potential.

Here are some key questions to ask your DJ regarding Music and Volume.

Q. How do you determine the perfect volume for our music during the course of the evening?

A. The volume at your event will vary throughout the reception but it should coincide with the flow of the evening. For example, the volume of the music during dinner should always be at a level where your guests can enjoy their conversations and dinner without screaming across the table from one another. During the dancing portion of the reception the volume should be at a higher

lever to create and capture the energy of the dance floor. Great DJs will be extremely conscious of the volume levels and make the necessary adjustments accordingly.

Q. If needed, will you help us with song selections?

A. Your DJ should be happy to assist you with finding great songs for your event. The key is for them to know you and your fiancé's personality so they can really personalize your event.

Q. How do you handle requests from our guests?

A. The DJ should honor your wishes regarding requests for the event. If you allow requests to be made during the evening from your guests, then the DJ needs to use their professional judgment as to what should be played.

Q. Do we have the ability to create a Playlist and Do Not Playlist?

A. Many professional DJs have tools on their website to help you plan your event. Most programs will allow the DJ to follow along with you while updates are being made to the forms. This will give the DJ a great understanding of the limitations you want to set for music at your event. If the DJ does not have these cutting edge tools,

then be sure to know and understand how your information will be handled leading up to the event.

Q. How do you keep your music database up to date?

A. Professional DJs understand the need to be sharp when it comes to their music database. In order to maintain a current selection of music, most will subscribe to at least one of the major music update services. These services provide the DJ with new, radio-edited music, often before it is even heard on the radio. Ask the DJ what subscriptions they have to ensure current music will not be a problem

Communication

Communication is an essential ingredient to the success of your reception, especially when it comes to your DJ. Professional DJs know how important it is and should have tools in place that allow you to communicate with them freely leading up to your event.

Here are the three key questions to ask your DJ regarding communication.

Q. How many times will we meet before our reception?

A. In order to make sure everything goes as planned, it is best if the DJ has a final go over meeting with you within four weeks of your wedding. A quick phone appointment from the DJ the week of your wedding for any last minute touches will set you at ease.

Q. What is the best way to reach you?

A. Establish the best form to communicate with the professional when you hire them and establish their response times up front. Some companies use a third party call center, which are great for the company, but horrible for the client. Calls are logged by the call center and then sent to the company, when the company finally gets to the

information it could be days before a return call. Optimal communication with your DJ is to obtain their direct number.

Q. Do you have online planning tools available to help me plan?

A. Professional DJs will have several different planning forms online to help you plan your event. Online forms are extremely convenient for both the DJ and client. The online systems today allow the DJ to follow along with the client as they update their information. These vital forms are the blue print to the success of your wedding reception. Keep in mind that the more information you provide, the better the DJ will understand your vision.

Price

Professional DJs have a variety of factors that will determine the price of your event. Some legitimate factors are, season, length of event, venue location (trip fee may be required) and the amount and type of equipment needed. This is not an area where you want to cut corners. The DJ will make or break your reception so keep this in mind when budgeting for your event. Gauge the value of the product and service being offered. For example, DJ A charges \$1,300 dollars for your event, and brings \$15,000 in equipment and has 10 years of experience performing at weddings. DJ B charges \$800 but brings \$2000 in equipment and has been performing for the same amount of time. There is obviously more value provided by DJ A and although more of an investment is required the difference will be astronomical the night of your event.

Here are some key questions to ask your DJ about their pricing.

Q. How much of a deposit is required to secure your date?

A. Every professional DJ will require some sort of deposit or retainer in order to secure your date. This is for their protection and yours. The industry standard for deposits is 25%. Be sure to know

when your deposit is due and any details pertaining to the deposit are written clearly in the contract

Q. What is included in the cost?

A. Every DJ will use a different system when pricing their services. Many will price their services a la carte, adding charges for any additional equipment or services needed. Some will use a flat-rate pricing system to make their packages all-inclusive. Be sure to know if the price quoted includes any tax as well.

Q. How much do you charge for overtime?

A. Every DJ is different in regards to overtime. Be sure that the DJ's contract outlines a specific rate for additional time at the end of the night. It is usually a set price but some companies will pro-rate the amount based on the original price of your event.

Q. When is the remaining balance due for my event?

A. Once again this will vary. Some DJs will require the balance be paid 30 days prior to your event; some will only require 7 days. The contract should be very clear on when final payment is due.

Conclusion

Don't forget that choosing your DJ should be one of the most enjoyable meetings you will have in planning your wedding reception. With these questions and answers, as well as having a good sense of character you will now be able to ensure a top notch wedding DJ for your event.

Endorsements

SEK Productions is a fantastic, professional, high-energy DJ and lighting company. I absolutely love to work with them - Chris is extremely personable and genuine - you cannot go wrong if you hire them for your wedding!

Adrienne Ingram, Owner, Element Photography

SEK Productions is a phenomenal company to work with! We had the pleasure of working with SEK at a wedding in March, and their lighting of the entire room, and the lighting on our stage for the "Kenny I Band" were superb! They were professional and easy to work with, and they made the room look fantastic for their clients! We highly recommend their services for any special event.

Kenny I and Marie-McMenamy, Kenny I Entertainment

Chris of SEK is very professional and does a superior job, delivering the Wow factor to any event.

Sharon Schomber, Director of Special Events, Trump National Philadelphia

The only way for a couple to have fun, stress free wedding day, is to surround themselves with professionals who are dedicated to their craft and to the clients they serve. This is exactly what SEK Productions is about. SEK transforms any room into a magical world that couples and their guests absolutely love! You couldn't ask for a better product to make your reception perfect and you couldn't hope for nicer guys to work with. I've had the pleasure of working with them for many years and I'm happy to recommend them for your special event.

Doug Trace, Owner, Douglas Photographics

I had the opportunity of working with Chris and his team this past November at a beautiful wedding at the Le Meridian in Philadelphia. First off, I just want to say that we had an absolute blast working together. Chris and his team were fun, energetic, creative, and very professional. The lighting was spectacular and unique, changing shades throughout the evening and set the perfect mood for the wedding. I know how pleased the bride and groom were by the effort that was put into this. Also, the sound was awesome and you could tell the crowd was pleased because the dance floor was NEVER empty. I highly recommend Chris and his team for your next event. If you want fabulous,

you want Chris! I look forward to working with him again, again, again.... did I mention again? 5 star professional!

Jolene M. Russell, Owner, In Your Shoes Event Design

SEK Productions has been awesome to work with. I highly recommend them for all of your DJ and lighting needs. I was amazed at how Chris and the team made the Ballroom look at Valleybrook Country Club. You can't go wrong with SEK Productions!

Tracey Mullin, Director of Sales, Ron Jaworski's Vallybrook Country Club

DJ Scorecards

Name of Company:

Name of DJ:

1. Was the DJ prompt in returning your calls?

Yes No

2. Was the DJ on time to your scheduled appointment?

Yes No

3. Did the DJ exude confidence in their ability to perform at your wedding?

Yes No

4. Did the DJ give examples of situations that they overcame during a performance?

Yes No

5. Did the DJ explain the equipment they would need and use for your event?

Yes No

6. Did the DJ offer any references of his past clients for you to speak with about their experience?

Yes No

7. Did the DJ seemed suited to perform for the crowd attending your event? Too Old? Too Young?

Yes No

8. Did the DJ clearly explain the services that will be provided the night of your event?

Yes No

9. Did the DJ clearly cover the costs of the service provided?

Yes No

10. Did the DJ clearly explain the best form of communication to use leading up to your event?

Yes No

11. Did the DJ explain their dress code for the night of your event?

Yes No

12. Does the DJ have online tools to help assist you in planning your event?

Yes No

13. Did the DJ explain how they handle requests the night of your event?

Yes No

14. Is the DJ recommend at your venue?

Yes No

15. Was the DJ referred to you by someone who is familiar with his or her service?

Yes No

16. Is the DJ properly insured?

Yes No

17. Will the DJ provide a written contract?

Yes No

18. Will the DJ have backup equipment setup at your event?

Yes No

19. Will the DJ you interviewed be the actually DJ for your event?

Yes No If no, will you be able to meet with the suggested DJ?

20. Was the DJ attentive to your concerns?

Yes No

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