

Choosing your Celebrant

by Melanie Kerr

The question has been popped and now comes the fun (some might say hard work!) of arranging your wedding day.

Somewhere in between securing your dream venue, the perfect shoes and a photographer to capture you at your glowing best, you need to consider your wedding ceremony, or more specifically the celebrant to conduct it.

If you're having a religious service, the choice is probably made for you inasmuch as the church will provide the priest or minister. However, if you decide on a secular or non-religious service, you'll need an independent celebrant to officiate.

For a wedding to be recognised legally in New Zealand it must be conducted by a celebrant registered with the Department of Internal Affairs, Births Deaths and Marriages, or a Registrar of Marriages. All independent celebrants go through a rigorous selection process before being registered, and are therefore legally able to conduct weddings. There is no specific requirement in this process for the applicant to have completed any formal training.

Celebrants are selected on the basis of good character and the need for new celebrants in the geographic area in which they reside. Bearing this in mind, and considering that the role of celebrant is one which requires excellent communication skills, the way your prospective celebrant presents themselves, and their communication with you via emails, phone calls and meetings should give you some idea of how they are likely to conduct a wedding service.

The celebrant plays a huge part in your special day. They are right there beside you as you promise to love, honour and cherish, till death do you part! So, although the service makes up less than an hour of your wedding day, it is really important to have it conducted in a way that truly reflects the love you have for each other.

When choosing a celebrant, it's imperative to find someone you feel comfortable with, someone you relate to, and someone you believe will capture the spirit of you both as a couple. They need to instill in you a confidence that, under any circumstances, your service will be in safe hands. The show will go on, so to speak!

Your initial contact will usually be after seeing the celebrant in a magazine ad, or on the internet. If you're really lucky, you'll have had them referred to you or may have even seen them conducting a ceremony. There is truth in the whole, first impressions thing. You will know fairly soon after meeting or speaking with the celebrant if they are going to be 'the one'.

The celebrant's role is to oversee the service, ensuring you are both who you say you are. They must be seen to be the person conducting the service and must oversee the signing of



Image by Look Photography

the marriage licence. They are not responsible for obtaining the marriage licence, this is your responsibility. Most celebrants will help you with the order of your service. They should guide you through the vows and share ideas on how to tailor the service to suit your individual style and make it unique to you as a couple.

When it comes to price, obviously this needs to be taken into consideration but, if at all possible, don't let this be the only influence on your decision. Price does not necessarily guarantee the perfect fit for you or your ceremony. Celebrant's fees range between \$300 to \$800. Most will require a deposit of some sort to secure the date. Coming up with an extra couple of hundred dollars may seem difficult at a time when everything seems to be costing an arm and a leg, but you will not regret spending the extra dollars to have the celebrant of your choice. They will make your service all the more magical.

Spring and Summer are a crazy, busy time for most people in the wedding industry. If you are planning a wedding in this period, it would pay to get cracking with the selection of your celebrant. Better to have them booked for a year than to miss out on the person you really want.

Choosing a great celebrant should make the process of preparing for the service, and the day itself, as stress-free as possible, enabling you both to savour the moment when you say, "I do!"

Your wedding ceremony is just that ... Yours! It's your chance to express the love you have for your fiancé. The vows you exchange will take you from being partners to being husband and wife. This is your special day, and the people who stand alongside you to witness your vows, celebrant included, should be there because they believe in you both and wish you only the best ... on your wedding day and forever. ♥

For more information on celebrants or to obtain your marriage licence, visit www.bdm.govt.nz

BELINDA DE LAUTOUR



In 2001, when Belinda was planning her son and daughter-in-law's wedding, she had a team of helpers who became known as her 'angels'. These helpers were indispensable, and so when Belinda started her own wedding planning business, her mind immediately went back to that time, and she thought that she would like to be an 'angel' for others – with a band of enthusiastic 'angels' at the ready.

Belinda is a born organiser and has been planning weddings for years.

She is a practicing Registered

Celebrant and is uniquely placed to meet the requests and wishes of couples wishing to be married.

She is now resident in Taupo, so has the inside running and the contacts necessary to liaise with all the best services that Taupo has to offer. She will work with you, doing as much or as little as you want in order to make your special day run like clockwork with everything you ever wanted and perhaps even just a little bit more.

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