

Ask the Expert

Meet two of the area's top wedding planners, get their best advice and steal their top-secret ideas!



Steven Moore, owner of Steven Moore Designs

Bellingham-based Steven Moore (above) is more than an event planner. Not only does he organize each day down to the last detail, but crafts custom gowns, decorates cakes, arranges flowers and drapes each event with a chic design scheme. *Seattle Bride* editorial assistant Alexis Constantine snagged him for her own July 2008 nuptials, and shortly thereafter they sat down to chat about the story behind Steven Moore Designs.

SEATTLE BRIDE: *You have more than 16 years of wedding experience and you're only 29 years old! How did you get started so young?*

STEVEN MOORE: My mom was a cake decorator and when I was 13 I baked and decorated my first wedding cake. I was also playing the piano at malls, and people would hire me for their wedding. When I was 15 my

sister got engaged and I told her I wanted to make her dress. I had never sewn before, so I bought some books, fabrics and a sewing machine and taught myself how to do it.

When did you realize you wanted to do this professionally?

My first client was an incredible designer, and she taught me that an event should be a work of art. I think most of the flowers I used for her wedding came from Costco, but I also gathered greens from the side of the road and put it all together and she loved it. That was when I realized I could do this for a living.

You must have a great eye to be able to pick things from the side of the road and make them beautiful. Do you still do this?

That was years ago! Now I have multiple vendors that I use for every category. That is one of the biggest advantages to hiring a wedding coordinator: A bride doesn't have to interview 10 photographers, because I already know who is the best of the best. But I still love hunting down natural resources to use in arrangements. I love the rustic, raw textures of the Northwest, and I like to mix those elements into the design. It is an inexpensive technique that everyone can do to help make their wedding more beautiful.

Where should couples planning their own wedding look for inspiration?

Couples should look around their home and notice what they love.

Look around us right now. Your curtains, paintings and furniture are all the same color scheme that you picked for your wedding. I've had people bring in movies, pictures and, once, even a cat, and we use that to guide the initial design. We figure out what about that object inspires them and find a way to use that for the concept and design of the couple's event.


Are wedding planners a must?

I don't think a wedding planner is for everyone. There are detail-oriented couples who might benefit from a day-of-the-event planner. If a bride chooses to do everything herself she wants to make sure she is prepared and excited for the time commitment and tasks involved with putting a wedding together. Some brides really like to do some of the smaller tasks, like making the favors or their own veil. There is also the option of taking a cake baking or decorating class, to help you learn to do these things yourself. This can be a fun thing for couples to do together, and they can save money by making their own cake.

What advice would you give brides who are planning their own wedding?

Put aside any preconceived notions of what a wedding should be. This is your day, so make it whatever you want it to be. Also, pick your priorities. Choose what is most important to you and then plan your budget accordingly.

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Planner Jacky
Grotle of
Woodinville's
Event Success

Jacky Grotle of Event Success

After graduating from Washington State University in business and hospitality and studying hotel management in Switzerland, Jacky Grotle was sure she was on the road to be a general manager of a hotel. Instead, she was bitten by the wedding-planning bug, and after 11 years of designing unique, boutique-style events, launched Woodinville-based Event Success in 2000. Now she offers do-it-yourself brides her expertise and one-of-a-kind ideas so they can craft their own customized events.

SEATTLE BRIDE: *Do you have any do's and don'ts for couples who are thinking of hiring a wedding planner?*

JACKY GROTLE: You definitely want to meet the planner in person and feel comfortable with them from the start. Your planner is the person you are going to be counting on for your special day, so you also want to make sure that they have enough experience to carry out that responsibility. I think it is better to have nobody planning your wedding than somebody who won't do a good job.

Your wedding day shouldn't be a training ground for a planner who doesn't have experience. There is too much invested, both financially and emotionally, to risk on a planner that you are not confident in.

Once you have met your clients, where do you begin planning?

We always start with budget. Once that is settled we begin working on style. I have a huge resource of books and magazines that showcase a range of design ideas. A couple can get inspiration for their wedding style from places such as nature, interior design and fashion, among other things. There are so many ideas out there that I need to get to know my clients quickly to be able to start determining what suits them best and be able to pinpoint exactly what kind of wedding they are envisioning. I have couples go through my collection and pull out things they are attracted to, and then I help them see the patterns within their sense of style and we find ways to incorporate that into their event. Then there are the obvious elements like lining up vendors and finding a dress.