

Wedding Planner MAGAZINE

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Inspired by the Association of Bridal Consultants (ABC)

DIVERSITY COUNCIL
IN ABC

CUSTOMER SERVICE

ARE YOUR CLIENTS CHANGING
THEIR MARRIED NAMES?





Melania Joy Murphy is the founder of Married Name Choices, a platform exploring married name history, options and the concept of 50/50 married name gender equality by 2050. She is a Chicago-based speaker, coach and freelance writer. Read her insight on page 25.



Veronica Foster MWP™ began her love story with ABC in 2002 when she started learning about Bridal Consultants with Penn Foster. Veronica became a Master Wedding Planner at the ABC Annual Conference

in Mexico in 2017 and began as Director of Outreach for the Association in January of 2020. In 2022 Veronica took the position of Vice President & Head of ABC USA to lead ABC into the future. Her article on Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) is on page 29



Wendie Bass, MWP™, is a Master Wedding Planner with over 23 years of experience in the wedding industry. Her passion for creating unforgettable weddings and events has earned her a reputation as one of the top wedding planners in the region. With a degree in Economics from Ripon College and 27 years of experience in retail management, Wendie possesses a unique skill set that allows her to handle all aspects of event production easily. She writes about the importance of customer service on page 24



Lois Pearce, MWP™, President of Lois Pearce and Associates, serves as the Director of Ethnic Diversity and Inclusion. A recipient of the Miss Dorothy Heart Award for passion and excellence in the wedding industry, she now serves on the panel for future selections. For many years she served as the Connecticut State Manager. A recognized authority in the wedding industry she has authored several books including "Wedding Customs and Traditions: Historical Traditions to Incorporate into Modern Weddings", Her favorite topics relate to: cultural etiquette, cultural competence, intercultural communications and the business of wedding planning. On Page 8 she describes the goals of the ABC Diversity Council.



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Couples Who Avoid the “Married Name” Discussion Could Doom Their Wedded Bliss

With peak wedding season upon us, wedding planners along with their soon-to-be newlyweds are in the final phases of planning. But if the blissful couples overlook the important topic of who is taking which name — and why — they could be headed for troubled waters.

Like Jennifer Lopez who took Ben Affleck’s name when they wed last summer, roughly 80% of women, compared to 3% of men, alter their birth names at marriage. Surprisingly, very few lovebirds include “discuss married name options” on their checklist alongside choosing a venue and honeymoon destination. But overlooking this important pre-wedding decision could set the stage for trouble.

Cindy, 27, who got married in 2021, said, “I took my husband’s last name without even considering any other options. We never discussed it because we both just assumed I would take his last name. But I never felt comfortable with the new name, and it started causing tension, so after 9 months, I changed it back and am much happier.”

Jason dove headfirst into the trap of letting his wife choose, only to be blindsided with her why-do-I-have-to-do-this-all-by-myself frustration. “I thought I was being supportive by telling her I was okay with any decision she made,” said Jason who married Tracy in 2022. “I was thinking it was her choice if she wanted to keep her name or take mine. It never occurred to

me that I could also hyphenate my name with hers or we could make a new name.”

As with all evolving traditions, wedding planners know they need to keep an open mind to new ideas and respect their matrimonial client’s wishes.

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-Carissa Kruse, Carissa Kruse Weddings

“Whatever it is they are choosing to do, you need to understand what it is so that you can avoid mistakes,” said Dustin Sitar, CEO of The Groom Club explaining it’s more than knowing what their married name is for signs, cards and other decorations. “You need to fully understand how, or if, they want to incorporate their married name in the wedding. I had a couple who were both hyphenating, and their families didn’t want them to, so they chose not to publicize their decision at the wedding.”

Elizabeth Wexler, founder of Emlan Events agrees married

name choices may be a sensitive topic. Wedding planners should bring up the topic early on in case couples still need time to think it through.

“I’m very sensitive in bringing up the topic because it may be a discussion, they’re in the midst of having, or in my case (personally) it was something my husband and I disagreed on at first,” Wexler cautions. “I bring it up lightly to first gauge where the couple is, and if they answer confidently and right away, then I know it is not something I need to dance around.”

Wexler knows wedding planning is about hiring vendors and the beautiful flowers and dresses, but heavy topics such as name changes, finances, and family dynamics come up too. She feels she can use her personal experience to help others.

“There are social norms we’re raised with,” Wexler explains of her own situation. “When I said I wasn’t planning on changing my name, my fiancé was disappointed because he had a certain social norm/expectation. Once we talked about it, he understood my decision wasn’t a reflection of him or us, but in fact an empowering decision I had made. Now I feel he is proud of me and even empowered just the same. I love that I didn’t change my name and I also love being married.”

Carissa Kruse of Carissa Kruse Weddings also feels her

role is to provide guidance and support to couples, and she strives to help them make an informed decision that feels right for both of them, even if it means deviating from traditional norms.

"In cases where one partner has a name that may be deemed 'unfortunate' or has negative connotations and the other partner is planning to adopt it due to tradition, I take the opportunity to have an open and sensitive conversation with the couple," says Kruse who feels her perspective in the wedding field provides an opening to discuss the implications and potential impact of adopting a name with negative connotations.

"I also highlight the importance of both partners feeling

comfortable and proud of their chosen name, as it will be part of their identity for the rest of their lives. I make sure they're aware of alternative options, such as hyphenating, creating a new last name, or even keeping their original names, if it aligns with their preferences and values. Newlyweds should start their lives together with a name they love."

The sooner the married name decision is made, the sooner the fun of revealing the name can begin.

"Many couples opt for a surprise," says Kruse. "It's always fun to see how creative couples can be. Whether it's including their new name in the wedding program or having a special announcement at the reception,

couples often enjoy coming up with creative ways to reveal their new name."

"We've incorporated married names in creative ways, such as on wedding favors, ceremony programs, and hand-made signs," said Katherine Brown, owner of Clover Events. "We've had couples come up with unique married names, like combining their last names (e.g., Chen/Benjamin to Chenjamin), or even having grooms take their bride's last name. What makes planning modern weddings so much fun is that every couple is unique, and we delight in helping them personalize their special day down to the smallest details."

-Melania Joy Murphy



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