

# Down the Aisle WITH A PRO

A Wedding Planner Shares What She Learned From Being a Bride Herself

Text by *Kathryn Bechen*  
Photography by *Bauman Photographers*

Is it really possible for a self-described “ultra-organized creative” wedding planner who coordinates many weddings a year for a living to relax and enjoy her own wedding day? Rachel Welland confidently answers with a resounding “yes!” after marrying Adam Welland on August 30, 2008.

RACHEL BURGER &  
ADAM WELLAND  
August 30, 2008





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"I worked for months on preparing myself to let go and have a good time on my own wedding day," says Welland. How? "I visualized myself being both stressed out and worried and then I visualized the day being joyous and fun. I knew the choice was mine, and I chose to let go and let my own 'day of' wedding planner handle the details so I could focus on the joy."

Welland says she loved her experience of being a bride and that she learned a lot during the process of planning her own wedding and being on the other side of the aisle, so to speak. "For instance, one of the first things couples do when planning their wedding is make a guest list and since the wedding planner is not involved in that task, that project was a new experience for me," she says. "We had to narrow our own guest list way down and that was the most stressful part of the process."

Welland also became more aware of what her brides go through with budget constraints. "Spending our own hard-earned money was a personal spending decision, so now I can relate even more when I work with my clients that it's their hard-earned money too, and I help them plan accordingly."

Welland is glad that she planned the big picture of her own wedding because it's what she loves to do, yet she also chose to utilize three assistants and to hire a "day of" wedding coordinator, Jenny Bauman, whose wedding planning business she had earlier purchased, because she trusted Jenny to take care of the details. She's glad she made that choice. "At the end of that one day you've spent a lot of time and money for an event



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that will last five or six hours and it's smart to hire one person to manage everything because things can so easily go awry," Welland notes. She said having Bauman there enabled her to "completely let go" because, for example, all the vendors were

asked to direct any questions to Bauman instead of her.

Welland also feels her interior design career background helped her effectively plan her own wedding. "Just like a house, layout and flow of the event is important because you need to take into account things like clearance, i.e. why you need a certain distance between two tables," she says. In addition to the glamorous side of color and design, her interior design background enabled her to handle her own wedding timelines and manage individual projects, as well as easily keep track of everything on the computer.

In hindsight, Welland has now considered what she will do the same with her own wedding clients and what she will do differently now that she's walked down the aisle herself. She says she now talks to her clients right at the beginning of working with them about ways they can prepare to "let go" so they have the same incredible experience that she had on her wedding day. "And I now address budget issues with my clients tactfully right up front too," she says. In addition, she is ever more adamant that it's best to point vendors in a general direction and then give them free creative rein. "I give them a little guidance and a lot of creative freedom," she says.

Welland says she is now also more sensitive to the issue that many of her couples do not live in the same city as their families when planning their weddings. Since about half of her clients are destination brides they communicate by e-mail and phone. She and her fiancé lived in San Diego during her own wedding planning, with her parents in the Midwest and his on the East Coast, and her parents liked the fact that she sent them vendor website links and status updates about her wedding plans via e-mail. She thinks it's a nice touch for the couple to give their parents some

tasks they can help with from afar so that they feel included.

Probably most importantly of all, Welland says she now has a better understanding of what an emotional day a wedding is. "I really have a much better feel for the fact that the most emotional moment is usually right as the bride is ready to walk down the aisle because it's a little overwhelming that you're about to take a very big step." She is also more poignantly aware that the mixing of the couple's families and friends together on that one day may likely never happen again, so it's very special that they can all be together. "It's so exciting and joyful," she says.

Now that this wedding pro has walked down her own wedded bliss aisle, what's the one best tip she has to offer couples? "Relax and let go." Just as Welland was able to do on her own big day. ❖

### Wedding Planner Rachel Welland's of Bliss Events Do's and Don'ts for a Fabulous Wedding Day!

#### DO'S

1. Hire a wedding coordinator so you can relax and enjoy your day.
2. Involve both the bride and the groom in the planning.
3. At the beginning of the planning, prioritize your budget by vendors and book them in order of priority.
4. Ask friends and family to help.
5. Choose entertainment that sets the mood for fun.

#### DON'TS

1. Don't get so wrapped up in the planning that you don't enjoy your engagement.
2. Don't let any family drama interfere with your happiness.
3. Don't choose vendors you don't feel comfortable with.
4. Don't try and get ready in too short of a time frame on your wedding day.
5. Don't risk injury by doing extreme sports the day before your wedding.

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