

It's All Been Done: Walking New Ideas Down the Aisle

As a wedding planner, it's challenging to create new ideas that you can pass along to your clients. Kelven Book, wedding planner and caterer at Canard, Inc. in New York, came to The Special Event Conference & Trade Show in January to inspire planners and provide innovative ideas.

Although most wedding planners feel it has all been done before - and it probably has, Kelven believes that the difference is to add a new twist on old ideas. His session focused on how to keep you inspired and gave guests techniques on how to add new twists.

The first bit of advice Kelven gave is to challenge yourself by exercising the creative part of your brain. When you hear an idea or attend an event, think of one or two things you would do differently to make it better. While this may seem like you are being critical, it is actually inspiring creativity.

So how do you incorporate this into your own wedding planning business? The first suggestion Kelven had was to actively listen to your client. The wedding couple is often the best source of ideas. Listen to what really excites them. It is very important to hear what they have envisioned for their dream wedding. Take notes. And while not all ideas will be good ones, by listening you can determine how to take their ideas and add a new twist. This is often hard for creative people to do. Ask your client open-ended questions to spark creative discussions and get the couple to talk more about their wants, needs and desires.

Kelven indicated that open-ended questions inspire creativity ("tell me what you envision") and closed-ended questions cease creativity ("what is your budget"). Encourage and direct their thoughts, but don't stop them until YOU are inspired. As the planner it is easy to start throwing out ideas, but then the couple stops focusing on their own ideas and begin listening to yours. While it may add an extra 15 minutes to your meeting to ask them open-ended questions, it may inspire a new twist for your planning. At the very least it will enable you to put together a proposal that really fits what they are looking for in their wedding.

Some areas for open-ended questions could be what are the memorable things from your parents wedding. Or break the ice by talking about food. Menus are a good place to start gathering ideas for new twists (most everyone likes to talk about food, their favorites, their likes and dislikes). Ask them about food from places they have traveled. If they have a favorite meal in China, make that the hors d'oeuvres served at their wedding. If they had a favorite meal as a child, recreate their childhood memories and serve Peanut Butter & Jelly sandwiches shaped like hearts as guests enter the reception.