

# CALLING ALL BRIDES

## 18 things you should know to have a great wedding reception.

by "The Michigan Wedding DJ" Dan Nichols



Are you or is someone you know having a wedding reception?

Here are 18 things you probably never even thought of that professional mobile deejay, Dan Nichols of Michigan Wedding DJ in Michigan, suggests make for better parties. I first want to point out that it is rare that all these items are/or can be followed in any given event but the more you can adhere to them, the more likely your party will be at full steam come closing time. This comes from being an active part of over 1000 weddings.

- 1) **Don't put the older guests next to the dance floor/speakers.** If you have to ask why, then you may want to hire a harpist all night.
- 2) **Don't cram your entertainment out of the way** -- your entertainer should be seen. Powerful entertainers will work to get people on the dance floor but they must be seen as part of the action, not just some side show.
- 3) **A party should end when it seems like it shouldn't end.** Ending a party before it dies down leaves everyone with the impression the floor was packed all night. It just feels better when people are left "wanting more" versus being completely burned out.
- 4) **A "too small" dance floor is better than one that is too big.** The answer is simple as it creates the illusion whether real or not that the floor is full. People are more likely to dance when the crowd on the floor is dense than when they feel like the only ones out there. Take it from the trade that knows about dancing and crowd psychology not from the banquet manager selling you on why a huge floor is so important. If people end up dancing on the carpet then great they end up dancing on the carpet and the story of your floor being so packed people couldn't even fit on the floor only further reinforces my point.
- 5) **Darker is better than lighter for dancing.** People feel less of a spectacle, less "on stage", when they think they're harder to see. That is why crime increases at night as well -- and yes, when some people dance it is a crime. This one works along the same lines of psychology as tip 4.
- 6) **Keep exit doors closed.** Doors are inviting and you don't want to invite people outside of the main room. Having them open allows more light into the room which again works against the psychodynamics of the dance floor. Open doors invite people to their cars in the parking lot. You want to keep their focus in the reception room for as long as possible.
- 6a) **Brides and Grooms should never stand by the exit door unless they want people to leave.** I have seen rooms drain guests one by one in a single file line. It is odd to explain but when the "guests of honor" stand by the exit door it draws people to them like a vacuum. Take my word for it keep away from the doors unless you want people to leave and don't make a habit of saying good bye to people while you're on the dance floor. This too gets people in exit mode.

7) This is a **very general statement** - Nicer places, (country clubs etc.) actually make it harder, especially in the summer and fall months to get people up and moving because they are so pre-occupied enjoying the scenery. Think about it... would you rather enjoy a cold beverage on a breezy deck outdoors amidst the trees or a sweaty dance indoors? It isn't that the night can't be great but all things being equal nicer venues pull from the floor potential. As a deejay I love playing nicer events and usually do as that's my target market but it can't change simple human nature. If you're having your party/reception at a really nice venue then you'll just want to pay closer attention to some of these other factors to tip the scales in your favor.

8) Bars should always be in the main room, preferably closer to the dance floor but not in the way of any lines to the bar. If a bar and/or desserts are put out of the main room then a huge percentage of potential dancers are unavailable. Bars are like kitchens and they draw people to them. **If you can help it, don't make your dj wrestle with the draw of a bar.**

9) **If you are going to shut the bar down for 30 minutes of say 6 hours, do it during dinner.** It's usually the slowest time for the bar anyhow as people are busy eating. If you do it at say 11:30 then the party will more likely die out as people will feel that it's time to go. Truthfully most parties I dj go well right to the end even if the bar closes a bit early but again... if you must close for 30 minutes it's better to do so at dinner. Plus it gives the wait staff more room to move around without bumping into guests.

10) **Happy music keeps things going.** Keep away from any negative vibes at all. Keep the mood up up up.

11) **Respect the musical opinions of your local professionals.** They do this for a living. Be careful not to cut out all the "cliche" wedding music as you'll find this will negatively impact the dance floor potential. People dance to what they know. A wedding reception is not the time and place to prove to your friends and family that you are into obscure music. You've got a lot of people from all over your family tree that want to have a good time so let your deejay exercise all his or her tools and really work his or her craft.

12) **Your wedding vendors should eat with the guests** and not be fed a soggy club sandwich in the janitors closet. From years of experience, the more brides and grooms treat their vendors as guests, the more likely their unpaid guests will respect us too. I find it rather ironic that the nicest venues have some sort of craptitude (made up word) toward the dj, bands, photographers and video crew and will encourage the bride and groom to shovel them off away from the action during dinner with a plate of moldy (I'm not kidding) cold cuts. Wouldn't it make sense that they be right near the action? Not to mention if you treat your vendors like second class citizens how do you think that affects their attitudes? Your pros will bend over backwards for you if you just treat them with the same respect you'd treat your guests with. Professional wedding vendors will go the extra mile for you when you treat them right.

13) **Consider NOT doing a dollar dance.** Why? The reason is that when the bride and groom are doing this the guests realize they won't be seen slipping out the door and it definitely stops the momentum of a rockin' party. If you must do one, do it early on after the main dances and limit it to 3 songs maximum.

14) **People tend to remember the beginning and the end of an event.** That's why your deejay should do a strong grand introduction and play while your guests are enjoying cocktails early on. This helps him (or her) to build rapport early on and if done right it puts your dj in a more powerful position to work your crowd all night.

15) **It is best for any traditional events or speeches to be done and out of the way before dancing begins.** In addition, it is important for pictures of the bridal party and bride and groom to be done, when at all possible, before the dancing begins. As a deejay I have seen more parties lose steam because the bridal party is having pictures taken after the bridal dance. Do all the pictures before. It may cost you an extra hour earlier in the day but it will save you from losing a good handful of guests early on.

16) **Do all you can to arrange your rehearsal dinner 2 nights before, NOT 1 night before the reception.** Why? I have seen many weddings where the bridal party was burnt out from the night before and this can (not always) play a big factor in building some inertia on the dance floor.

17) **If you have to cut corners don't compromise on the entertainment.** My clients never complain that they paid too much for my services. Also, know that experience is king -- I am a better dj after every event I do.

18) IPOD for a dj? Well, it is true that the music is important but the major oversight to “pre-programming” a wedding reception is that the missing item in an IPOD is the living breathing experienced human. This human recognizes that even if you can outguess him with your ipod on the song list, it is all for not if you don’t present the music at the right time. This timing is only done through a professional dj. **If it were a science, deejays would get \$300 dollars for the night** because their services would be basically providing amplification to music. When the music is played is as important as what is played. Oh, and lest I forget, an IPOD makes for a terrible emcee and they have no clue the champagne isn’t in the glass before announcing the toast or that dad is in the bathroom before a father daughter dance. Timing is important in all we do -- weddings are not an exception.

Dan Nichols owns a small independent personal deejay service out of Royal Oak, MI and has been in operation for 24 years. His website can be found at <http://www.michiganweddingdj.com> and he can be reached at **248-541-0250**. As an annual award winning wedding dj, Dan has also been a regular monthly columnist with the Disc Jockey News and a guest speaker at various dj expos/events.