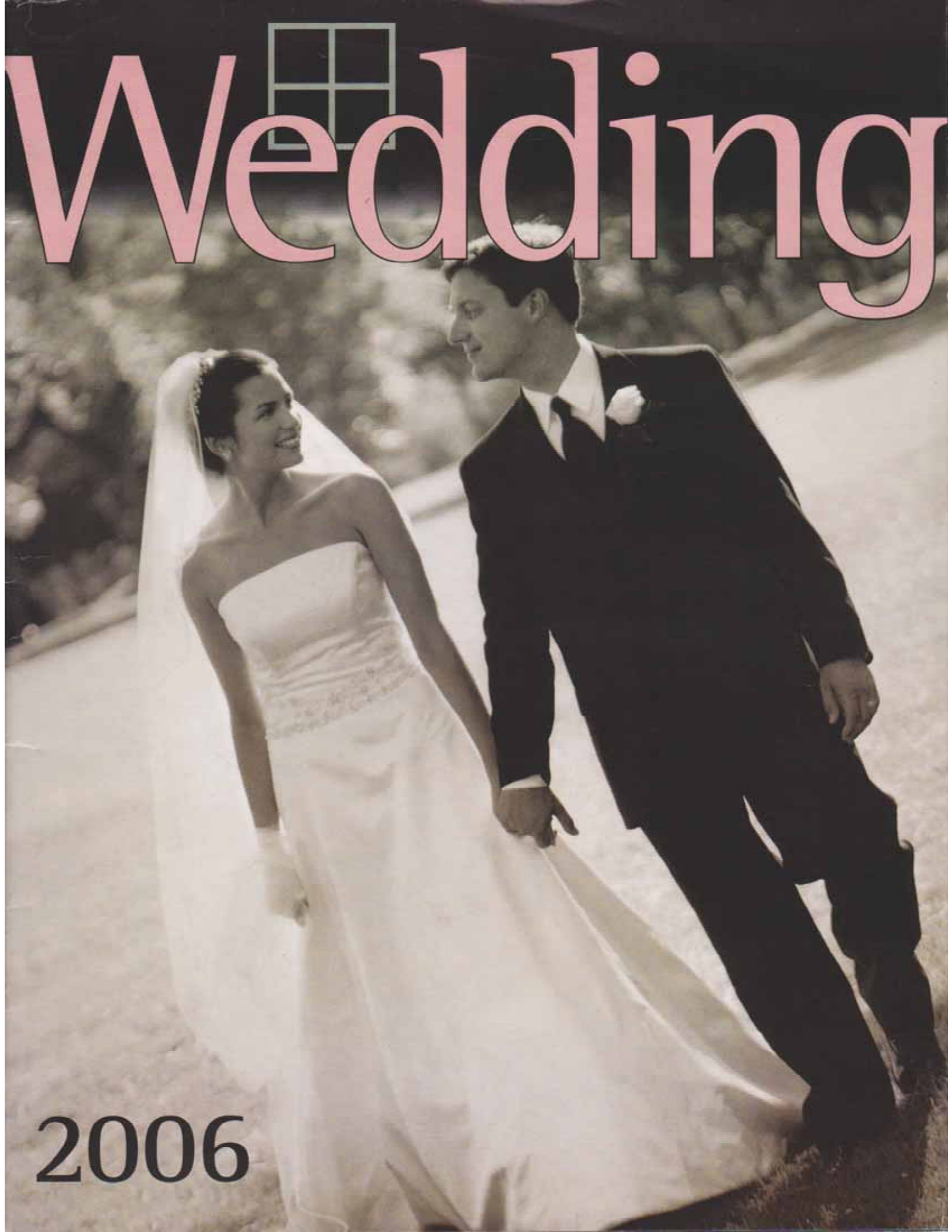


# Wedding



2006



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The process of planning a wedding can be full of details and take many months to perfect. And yet, many brides- and grooms-to-be still take the plunge, taking on the pleasure and sometimes pain of planning their own weddings. Many brides, grooms and mothers seem to dive in head-first, taking to the task with a real gung-ho, take-charge energy. However, in today's fast-paced world, many of us can be overcommitted with responsibilities such as full-time jobs, school, children and other activities even before starting to plan a wedding—which can easily be a full-time job in itself.

A truly experienced wedding planner can help you save hours of time and lots of frustration by easing you into the wedding waters slowly and feet-first! A wedding planner does not have to do everything for you. He or she may assist in any degree, depending on the specific help you want and/or need. These services could include providing a consultation to get you organized, choosing vendors and booking appointments, and actually doing all the planning for you.

Some of you may like the challenge and enjoy the research of planning your own wedding. To this I say, "Way to go! Stay strong and watch out for the big waves!" But, even though you may be fine being your own planner, you might want to consider hiring a coordinator to assist and guide you and your wedding participants on the big day. An experienced, professional on-site coordinator can be absolutely priceless to keeping the waves at bay on your wedding day.

## DIVING INTO THE WEDDING WATERS: HEAD-FIRST OR FEET-FIRST?

*By Sara McHatten*

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**1.** A coordinator can set your detailed itinerary. So, you took the planning plunge. Now it's crunch time and your details seem to be floating all around you. "Where did I put that catering contract?" "What time is the DJ supposed to show up?" "What time do I need to have the groomsmen arrive?" "Who will pin the boutonnieres and corsages?" There is no need to feel like you're drowning. An experienced coordinator can most assuredly come to your aid, gathering all the details that you have already planned and helping you put the pieces together. This means producing a wedding day itinerary or timeline (anywhere from three to 10 pages), detailing every piece of the wedding. Copies of this itinerary can then be distributed to each of your vendors, as well as every family and wedding party member. Stress levels among wedding participants greatly lower when everyone is literally "on the same page."

**2.** A coordinator can ensure every dollar invested is realized. An on-site coordinator can help ensure that each of your investment dollars is realized, as he or she knows what to look for and attend to. Remember, the bride already has a job the day of her wedding, as does the groom, mother of the bride, bridesmaids and maid of honor—as well as every guest. Through all of my years as a wedding professional, this is one piece of advice I've given over and over: Hire professionals to do the work. They do this work for a living! Relying on friends or family to "play vendor" and try to be a guest at the same time usually doesn't work as well as you'd hope, because many details will easily fall through the cracks. A professional "third-party" can be more than helpful in assisting you with the items—planned and unplanned—that may occur at your wedding and ensure that every dollar is well-spent. For instance, if your \$300 bridal bouquet shows up the wrong color, a wedding professional can usually, without a high emotional attachment, ensure a positive solution to the situation vs. a friend or family member who would probably become very stressed with added, unexpected burdens to resolve. A coordinator can ensure that your bouquet is the color you ordered.

**3.** A coordinator can understand your vendors' personalities and work styles. Maybe the DJ hasn't announced the toast yet, or the catering staff has not started pouring the champagne. An experienced local coordination professional will know each of your vendors' operating styles and ensure a fantastic flow throughout the day by knowing how to best assist each vendor.

So, will it be head-first or feet-first? Even if you decide to dive in and take the planning plunge yourself, consider a third-party on-site coordinator to ensure and confirm that every detail occurs with the utmost grace!

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