**Is it really important for the officiant to be a part of the rehearsal?**

I recently encountered information from an officiant who said that it is not important for the officiant to be a part of a rehearsal. Let me say, before I continue with my response, I understand budgets are often tight, and even the small, additional fee for the officiant to be a part of the rehearsal may cause you to pause and consider whether to include it in your wedding budget.

As the father of two married daughters, I have been on the other side of the table, so to speak, and understand the feeling that there seems to be no end in sight when it comes to paying for a wedding.

Let me give you a few reasons, from my experience, both as a father of the bride and as an officiant.

From my perspective, it is extremely important that you consider the consequences of not having a rehearsal.

When you are standing before your family and friends, and the intimacy of your ceremony is not being carried out as you wish, it's too late to consider "maybe we should have had a rehearsal".

When I initially meet with couples, I hear a variety of their concerns as they recount experiences from attending weddings of family and friends, or as they realize they have no experience to base their decisions.  Although weddings typically have a similar format and process, each individual wedding has its own ‘logistics and flow’ fingerprint, which makes it different from others.

As an example, upon arriving for a rehearsal at a beautiful home location, I immediately appreciated the attention to detail in the ceremonial area with seating for about a hundred guests, nestled in a manicured, lower meadow prepared specifically for the wedding. Because the ceremony area was located at the bottom of a long hillside, where there was no easy access except down the steep slope for approximately 80 yards, my immediate thought was of the bride and bridesmaids with their high heels, and how difficult it was going to be for them to walk down the grassy slope, not to mention the parents and groomsmen who would need to do the same without falling. From the upper level it seemed there was no way around the problem, so I walked down the slope to get another perspective from the ceremony area. I realized that just beyond the reception tents, there was a gentler slope that could be the answer to the problem. After discussing the challenge with the bride and groom, and father of the bride, all of who had (understandably) focused on the larger issues of landscape preparation, chair and arch set up, as well as preparing the area for the tents, they simple didn't consider the problem the steep slope presented. In an effort to offer a resolution to the problem, during the rehearsal, we all walked to the end of the main reception tent, I pulled apart the corner Velcro fastener and suggested this would be a better route for the procession of the wedding party. It also provided a better photography background. Everyone agreed with a sigh of relief.

I realize that not all officiants would care about this detail, but I do. If there had been no rehearsal, the result could have been embarrassing, or resulted in injury.

Another challenge is often an issue with audio reinforcement.  Often a professional DJ will be providing the mics for the officiant and possible readers, along with music for the ceremony. If this is the case, usually their experience will be enough to handle any challenges via a sound check within the set-up time before the wedding. However, if you are depending upon a non-professional venue sound person, or the 'I have a friend who can do it', it can be problematic on the day of the wedding. Although I'm not a professional sound tech, I have a background and sensitivity to the issues and understand the basic principles. Some time ago, if I had not been involved in the rehearsal management for a wedding at a very high-end hotel for an outdoor ceremony, in cooperation with a 'Day of' coordinator, the result would have been an audio disaster, to put it lightly, and no less than a major distraction and disappointment for the bride and groom.

If there are those who will be reading a meaningful verse other than the officiant during the ceremony, one of my roles during the rehearsal is to assist them in the best approach for microphone use, as well as speaking so everyone can hear them. Readers will approach me following a wedding ceremony and say, "I'm so glad you told me at the rehearsal, when I hear my amplified voice coming from the speakers, to not back away from the microphone, let the DJ handle the volume.”. I remind them that their purpose is for the audience to hear the meaningful reading the bride and groom have selected.

When a rehearsal goes extremely well, without any challenges, it reduces stress for everyone, especially the bride and groom. I once said to a coordinator just before she cued the beginning of the processional, "if heart rates were measured right now, I wonder what they would look like". Processing and standing in front of everyone is stressful.

In some cases, couples opt to have only their coordinator involved in the ceremony rehearsal. Although skilled professional coordinators can manage the overall wedding ceremony and most of the details of the rehearsal, the connection between the bride and groom, and the officiant are something the coordinator can't do. When the officiant is not part of the rehearsal, the ceremonial portion of the wedding can be static, lacking connection, and performed with a "just getting the job done" attitude. In many cases, it has been as much a year or at least many months since the first meeting where there was a definite emotional connection. When the officiant is a part of the rehearsal, it re-engages meaningful connection and depth to the ceremony, as well as managing the ceremony process as seamlessly as possible, and keeping the attention on the bride and groom.