



Behind the Scenes: Lighting: Just As Important as the Dress

By *Jamal D. Lee*

This is the bride's day *not* mine, but as I am an expert in the area of event production and management, I need to know the bride's vision so I can take ownership and deliver a great product as if it were my own wedding reception. What matters to me is that the client gets what he or she wants. The fact of the matter is people want what they want, when they want it, and it is my job to deliver that. This article will focus on lighting for a spectacular wedding reception.

When I manage and install a wedding reception or any event, my focus is on clear audio, dazzling lighting, and HD quality video/streaming production. Keeping that in mind, I will discuss how to make lighting work superbly and still be cost-effective; it can happen.

You want to create the perfect lighting ambience that will make you and your guests say "Whoa!" Lighting is one of the primary components to creating the look you want for your special day. There are only a few things that will make or break a wedding reception, and lighting is one of them. A good wedding planner knows this and will make sure the client allocates budget for a solid lighting package. As long as you are thoughtful about lighting, it does not have to be expensive.

If you choose, you can place pin spots in particular areas such as the cake and the main table, and use LED splash lighting for the walls and maybe the ceiling. Remember there is alternative lighting like real candles or battery-operated lighting that can be used on each table to create a wonderful impact.

With lighting, the sky is the limit - literally. Lighting can paint a beautiful blue sky on the ceiling of the venue, while using a soft white pin spot on each table can bring out the lovely middle of the centerpiece. In addition, an illumi-

nating beam of light can gracefully shine down on the newly married couple. The only thing missing is the glass slipper. The options are endless—and that is why I am here to help you figure it out without ending up in the poor house!

If you like, you can have the lighting company hang lights from a truss. You may also drape the truss in white and place LED floor lamps in the center at the base of the truss, sending your choice of light through the center. This will create a beautiful effect and isolate the light. You can also use pipe & base, which would normally have drapes covering the base portion. Many lighting companies supply the pipe and base in white.

Most venues or tents offer rigging points in the ceiling which will allow you to hang pipes from one rigging point to another. This is typically less expensive when hanging pin spots, Lekos, (with or without a GOBO), or intelligent lighting.

One very important note: **check with the venue first** to see what lighting is already available and what they will or will not allow. It is possible that they may have a basic lighting set up that provides some of the lighting coverage you'd like. Most venues will work with a lighting company to get the job done.

Regardless of how you hang the lighting, it is important to have the *right Lighting Designer* that will give you your desired affect.

Here's the bottom line: lighting can have a wonderful effect or a horrible resolve. That is why it is important to have a good planner *and* lighting designer that understands what you want and can interpret YOUR vision. Remember, with proper planning, preparation, and a good team, you will be able to smile at the end of the night, knowing that you did everything necessary to make your day special.

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