

Using 'Uncle Joe' to photograph your wedding:

It is not worth the savings



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So here is your dilemma, you have a very tight budget, and someone (friend or family member) has offered to photograph your wedding for free or for a very small

fee. Your first thought is, "Great! I just saved all this money." As a professional photographers with over 15 years of wedding photography experience, I have seen this trend develop over the past few years, often souring the wedding photography market for both brides and photographers. It can have huge repercussions if you are not aware.

Uncle Joe is the name I affectionately give to the family member or friend who either offers or is asked to photograph the wedding for free or at a severely reduced cost. But while Uncle Joe has good intentions, he is just not equipped or experienced enough to capture a wedding—which you will only discover when it is too late.

Photography is one place in your wedding budget where you really get what you pay for. Yes, professional photography will be more expensive, and budgets are tight in these turbulent economic times. However, your wedding photos are the only items (next to your rings) that remain after the wedding. The food is eaten; the flowers thrown out; the music stops; and the dress is put in a box never to be worn again. Therefore, you will want photos that you can cherish into the future!

Even many professional photographers do not photograph weddings—it is too difficult, too stressful, and the risk of having something go wrong is too overwhelming. It requires a high level of technical proficiency. Placing a camera on the 'Portrait setting' cannot duplicate the kind of experience needed to make great images. Just as knowing how to cook does not make you a professional caterer, there's more to photography than pressing a button!

The wedding experience is as important as the

images of wedding. At the wedding, problems need to be fixed *immediately!* What will Uncle Joe do if his camera dies or just isn't working right; does he have a back up plan? What will he do if he realizes that he has bitten off more than he can chew after the day begins? How will his stress level affect his ability to take photos and affect you? Will the day be consumed with Uncle Joe trying to figure out his camera, or will the day be about you and your wedding? Do you want your wedding to turn into a 6-8 hour photo shoot because Uncle Joe insisted on getting all the photos he wanted or thought he needed instead of just enjoying the day?

If you want an album from Uncle Joe he might not be willing or able to build one. Wholesale album suppliers do not sell to the general public meaning you or Uncle Joe won't be able to get access to the same products as professional photographers. He said he was only going to take the photos, remember?

When you pay for a professional you are paying for someone who realizes that the day is about your wedding and not a giant photo opportunity. Look for someone with experience, a creative vision, the ability to capture those iconic shots that will live on forever as a history of your wedding day, and deliver a finished album or book. If you even think that there is a possibility that you won't get exactly what you want from your relative or friend, why would you take the risk of using them? I doubt you will remember or care how much money you saved years after the wedding but you will remember the experience every time you see Uncle Joe's photos. You have one chance to shape your wedding photographic experience and it is decided months before the wedding.

Here is the question that should guide your decision, "How much is it worth to me to hire a professional for one of the most important days in my life?" Choose Wisely.