



The Event Planning Business

Other people's biggest days, run on your checklists. Day-of coordination at \$800-2,000 is the entry door; full planning at 15-20% of budget is the prize.

\$400-1,000

START LEAN

21-45 days

FIRST DOLLAR

70-85%

TYPICAL MARGIN

Who pays, and why now.

Every wedding, corporate retreat, fundraiser, and fiftieth birthday is a one-shot project run by an amateur, unless someone like you takes it over. The average American wedding now runs well past \$30,000, and the couple planning it has never produced an event in their lives. Companies are worse: the office manager assigned to the holiday party has a real job she is neglecting to do yours badly. The market is anyone spending serious money on a day they cannot afford to get wrong.

The smart entry product is day-of coordination at \$800-2,000, and here is the insider truth: 'day-of' is a polite fiction. Real coordinators take over four to six weeks out, confirming vendors, building the timeline, and catching the problems the couple created in month three. Price it as month-of management, deliver it that way, and you will outperform every coordinator who literally shows up on the day holding a clipboard and a prayer.

Full planning is where the margins climb: flat packages of \$1,500-5,000 for partial planning, and 15-20% of total budget for full service, which on a \$40,000 wedding is \$6,000-8,000. Corporate work pays similar rates with less emotion and more repeat business: the company that liked your product launch books a holiday party, a retreat, and next year's launch. Nonprofit galas add a third lane with built-in annual recurrence.

Your real product is your vendor network. Venues refer planners who make their venue look good and run on time. Caterers, florists, photographers, and DJs send you clients because you send them clients. After ten events, you are not selling hours: you are selling a pre-assembled team that already works together, and nobody can comparison-shop that on Google.

WHO BUYS	WHAT THEY PAY	WHAT THEY ACTUALLY WANT
Engaged couples	\$800-2,000 day-of; \$1,500-5,000 partial; 15-20% of budget full	A perfect day where nobody hands grandma a problem
Companies	\$2,000-10,000 per event	Holiday parties, launches, and retreats that run themselves while staff stay on their jobs
Nonprofits	\$2,500-7,500 per gala	A fundraiser that raises more than it costs, repeating annually
Milestone hosts	\$800-3,000 per event	Quinceaneras, anniversaries, and big birthdays without the host working the room

WHAT 'DAY-OF' REALLY MEANS

4-6 weeks

Professional day-of coordination starts a month or more before the event: vendor confirmations, timeline builds, and final walkthroughs. Pricing it as month-of management, because that is what it is, justifies the \$1,200-2,000 fee and buries the clipboard-only competition.

Every dollar, before you spend it.

This is a low-capital, high-credibility launch. Your money goes to contracts, insurance, and the portfolio proof that gets you hired, not to equipment. The emergency kit is famous for a reason: it is the cheapest marketing you will ever own, because every bridesmaid who borrows the fashion tape remembers you.

THE LEAN BUILD · START HERE	WHY IT EARNS ITS PLACE	COST
LLC + city business license	Your liability wall; venues will ask for your business details	\$50-500
General liability insurance (first month)	\$1-2M policy; most venues require a certificate before you can work their floor	\$40-80/mo
Attorney-reviewed contract template	Scope, payment schedule, cancellation terms. The most important purchase on this page	\$150-400
CRM + proposal software	Planner-specific tools handle contracts, invoices, and timelines; free tiers to start	\$0-40/mo
Event-day emergency kit	Sewing kit, fashion tape, stain pen, chargers, painkillers, snacks, steamer	\$100-200
Professional attire + comfortable black shoes	You are on your feet 12 hours looking composed	\$80-200
Portfolio website	Your three best galleries, services, and an inquiry form	\$0-150
Lean total		\$420-1,530 all-in

THE STANDARD BUILD · ADD AFTER FIRST REVENUE	WHAT IT UNLOCKS	COST
Styled shoot investment	Split costs with a photographer, florist, and venue to build portfolio before clients exist	\$300-800
Two-way radios + printed signage kit	The difference between texting your assistant and running a show	\$150-350
Professional association membership	Industry credibility, education, and directory listings	\$200-450/yr
Better camera or content help	Your portfolio is your storefront; every event must feed it	\$300-800

THE RULE

Spend on the contract and the insurance before anything pretty. New planners buy branding, fancy proposals, and conference tickets; veterans know the business is won with a venue's trust and a contract that protects your deposit when a wedding moves twice. Paper first, polish later.

Clean from day one.

Event planning is unlicensed almost everywhere, which means your contract is your entire legal infrastructure. The trade's real exposures are vendor failures you get blamed for, liability on someone else's property, and deposits when events cancel or move. All three are solved on paper, in advance.

- Form your LLC:** File in your home state, get the EIN free at irs.gov, open the business bank account. THE LAUNCHPAD Module Three walks every step.
- Airtight client contract:** Scope by named deliverables, payment schedule (50% non-refundable booking fee, balance due 14 days before the event), force majeure and date-change terms, a limitation of liability clause, and exactly what happens if a vendor you referred fails. Attorney-reviewed once, used forever.
- General liability insurance, \$1-2M:** Venues require a certificate of insurance naming them additionally insured before you work. Get a broker who can issue COIs same-day; slow paperwork has cost planners real bookings.
- Collect vendor COIs, every event:** Every vendor on your timeline sends you their certificate of insurance and signs your vendor agreement. When the caterer's burner scorches the venue floor, the difference between their problem and your problem is the paperwork you collected in advance.
- Deposit and refund hygiene:** Call it a booking fee, make it non-refundable in exchange for reserving the date, and keep client money in your business account with clean books. Several states have specific rules about deposits for cancelled services: know yours.
- Alcohol, permits, and venue rules:** You coordinate, licensed vendors pour. Never handle alcohol service yourself; verify the caterer or bartender carries liquor liability. Public spaces and tents above certain sizes need permits and sometimes fire marshal sign-off: know who is pulling them, in writing.
- Event-day staff classification:** Day-of assistants hired per event can be legitimate contractors, but if they work your schedule, your way, every weekend, the employee line approaches. Pay properly and document the arrangement.

INSURANCE, SPECIFICALLY

General liability is the floor and the venue's requirement. Add professional liability (errors and omissions) once budgets pass \$20,000: it covers the planning mistake itself, like a double-booked videographer, not just the physical mishap. If you carry client funds for vendor payments, talk to your broker; many planners avoid the whole issue by having clients pay vendors directly.

WATCH FOR

Becoming the bank. New planners let clients route vendor payments through them, which turns you into an unlicensed escrow service with tax confusion and refund liability sprinkled on top. Clients contract and pay vendors directly; you negotiate, schedule, and manage. You hold your fee, never their florist's.

Requirements vary by state and city. Verify with your state, city clerk, and a licensed professional. Education, not legal advice.

Three doors. Real numbers.

Sell packages with named deliverables, never hours: a couple cannot evaluate '40 hours of planning' but they instantly understand 'we take over six weeks out and run your day.' Anchor on the middle door, and quote full planning as a percentage once budgets pass \$30,000.

	RECOMMEND	
<p>DOOR ONE</p> <p>The Day-Of (Month-Of) Coordination</p> <p>\$1,200-2,000 <small>entry</small></p> <p>product</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Takeover 4-6 weeks before the event ◆ Vendor confirmations and final timeline build ◆ Venue walkthrough and layout sign-off ◆ 10-12 hours of event-day management with an assistant ◆ Emergency kit on site 	<p>DOOR TWO</p> <p>The Partial Plan</p> <p>\$2,800-4,500 <small>most-booked</small></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Everything in Coordination ◆ Vendor sourcing for 3-5 open categories ◆ Budget build and tracking ◆ Monthly planning calls from booking ◆ Design direction with mood board and floor plan 	<p>DOOR THREE</p> <p>The Full Production</p> <p>15-20% of budget (\$5,000 min) <small>premium</small></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Every vendor sourced, negotiated, and managed ◆ Complete design concept through execution ◆ Unlimited planning communication ◆ RSVP and guest logistics management ◆ Two coordinators on event day

PRICING NOTES FOR THIS BUSINESS

- Corporate events price by scope, not emotion: \$2,000-10,000 flat depending on headcount and production. Less negotiation, faster decisions, repeat annual business.
- Hold a floor of \$800 on any coordination booking; below that you are paying to work weekends.
- Peak-season Saturdays (May, June, September, October) deserve premium pricing; offer Friday and Sunday rates 10-15% lower to fill the calendar.
- Charge for the consultation beyond the first one. The free 'pick your brain' coffee is how planners give away their fee an hour at a time.
- Travel beyond 50 miles bills at cost plus a day rate. Destination inquiries are flattering and frequently unprofitable: price them like the work they are.

THE UPSELL THAT PAYS THE RENT

The planning-to-coordination bridge, run in both directions. Every coordination client gets offered a partial-planning upgrade at booking ('most couples add vendor sourcing for the three categories stressing them most'), and every full-planning inquiry that balks at price gets the coordination door instead of a goodbye. Nobody leaves with nothing.

Names, not strategies.

Your first ten events are proof-of-composure exercises, and the fastest path runs through people whose events are already happening: friends' weddings, nonprofit galas hungry for free competence, and venues who need a coordinator to recommend.

1 The weddings already in your orbit

Someone you know is engaged right now. Offer founding-rate coordination, run it flawlessly, and leave with a gallery, a review, and a timeline template. Your first three clients are probably in your phone.

2 Venue coordinators (five of them)

Tour venues as the professional you are, leave a one-pager, and ask what their least favorite planner behavior is. Venues recommend planners who protect their floors, respect their staff, and end on time. Becoming three venues' safe answer fills a calendar.

3 A styled shoot

Partner with a photographer, florist, and venue who also need portfolio. Split costs, produce one gorgeous fake wedding, and everyone leaves with professional galleries. It is the industry's standard cold-start move because it works.

4 Nonprofit galas

Volunteer to co-produce one fundraiser with the development director. Nonprofits are drowning in event logistics, their boards are full of business owners, and the room at a gala is one giant referral network in cocktail attire.

5 Wedding vendor networking

Photographers and DJs see disorganized weddings every weekend and get asked 'do you know a coordinator?' constantly. Take five vendors to coffee. Send them clients; the favor returns multiplied.

6 Local Facebook groups + The Knot basics

Claim the free directory listings, then answer the 'do I really need a coordinator?' threads in local wedding groups with genuinely useful answers. Helpful beats promotional every time.

THE EXACT ASK

"Hi [name], I'm [name], I run an event planning studio here in [city]. I heard congratulations are in order. I'm building my founding portfolio this season and taking three more weddings at my founding coordination rate: I take over about six weeks out, lock your vendors and timeline, and run the whole day so your people just get to be guests. Want me to walk you through what that would look like for your date?"

THE FOUNDING-CUSTOMER DEAL

First five events: \$300-500 off coordination or partial planning, in exchange for a detailed review, full gallery access from their photographer, and permission to use the event in your portfolio. Retire it publicly after five. The portfolio and reviews are the real payment; the discount is just the price of acquiring them fast.

Owned, earned, then paid.

Couples buy from portfolios and reviews; corporates buy from referrals and proof of process. Your engine is a gallery that grows every event, venue relationships that recommend you in the room where decisions happen, and content that shows the calm behind the pretty.

CHANNEL, RANKED	WHY IT WORKS HERE	THE FIRST MOVE
Instagram + short-form video	Weddings are a visual category and couples vet planners by feed before they ever inquire	Post every event: one polished gallery post, one behind-the-scenes timeline-and-radios reel. The reel converts harder
Venue relationships	The venue's 'we recommend' list is the highest-converting referral in the industry	Quarterly check-ins with five venues; send them content of their space; never run over time
Google Business Profile	'Wedding coordinator [city]' searches are late-stage buyers with dates and budgets	Claim it day one; reviews mentioning venue names boost local relevance
Vendor referral web	Photographers, florists, caterers, and DJs are asked for planner recommendations weekly	A real referral relationship with two vendors per category; send work first
The Knot / Zola directories	Couples in planning mode live there; free tiers exist	Complete profiles with real galleries; reviews synced from day one

FIVE CONTENT PIECES THAT WIN THIS NICHE

- The 6-week takeover: what a real day-of coordinator does before your day
- What I fixed at Saturday's wedding that the couple never knew about
- Your wedding-day timeline is lying to you: the 5 paddings every schedule needs
- What's in my emergency kit after 20 events (and what actually gets used)
- Coordinator vs venue host: who actually does what on your day

THE REVIEW MACHINE

Ask 48 hours after the event, when the gratitude is overflowing and the thank-you texts are arriving anyway: 'It was an honor to run your day. If you have five minutes, a review telling the story helps the next couple find me: here's the link.' Reviews that name the venue and a saved-the-day moment are gold; gently prompt for specifics. One detailed review per event compounds into market dominance within two seasons.

One unit, one month, no fog.

Two honest snapshots: what one coordination booking actually nets, and what a working month with three events looks like. Coordination is the volume product; one partial or full plan per month moves every number up sharply.

ONE UNIT: ONE DAY-OF COORDINATION (\$1,200)	AMOUNT
Revenue	\$1,200
Event-day assistant (10 hrs)	-\$150
Kit restock, printing, travel	-\$60
Payment processing (2.9%)	-\$35
Software + insurance share	-\$30
Gross profit (35-40 total hours)	\$925
Tax reserve (27%)	-\$250
Yours, per event	\$675

A WORKING MONTH: SOLO, 3 EVENTS (JUNE: 2 COORDINATIONS + 1 PARTIAL)	AMOUNT
Revenue	\$5,200
Event-day assistants	-\$300
Supplies, travel, parking, printing	-\$160
Software (CRM, contracts), insurance	-\$120
Marketing + styled shoot fund	-\$200
Pre-tax profit	\$4,420
Tax reserve (27%)	-\$1,193
Owner take-home	\$3,227

BREAK-EVEN

1 booking

A single coordination booking repays the entire lean launch with room to spare. The real cost of entry is the lead time: weddings book months out, so your first contracted event may be 60-90 days away even when you sell it in week two. Corporate and milestone events close faster; chase them while the wedding pipeline matures.

Illustrative figures at typical market rates; your market, prices, and costs will differ. Run YOUR numbers in the One-Page P&L from THE LAUNCHPAD, Module Six. Remember the 25-30% tax reserve on every dollar of profit.

Pre-decided, so motivation is never consulted.

WEEK ONE: FOUNDATIONS

- LLC filed, EIN issued, business bank account open
- Insurance bound; broker confirmed for same-day COIs
- Contract template purchased and attorney-reviewed
- Packages and pricing finalized with floors written down
- Portfolio site live, even with styled or borrowed proof

WEEK TWO: DOORS OPEN

- Announce to your whole network; book 1-2 founding events
- Tour 5 venues; leave one-pagers, start relationships
- Styled shoot partners confirmed, date set
- CRM live: inquiry-to-contract flow tested end to end
- Coffee with 3 wedding vendors (photo, floral, DJ)

WEEK THREE: MOMENTUM

- First contracts signed, booking fees collected
- Directory profiles live (Google, The Knot, Zola)
- Styled shoot produced; gallery in 2 weeks
- First behind-the-scenes content posted
- Nonprofit gala co-production pitched

WEEK FOUR: THE SYSTEM

- First event executed or final-month prep underway
- Review and gallery pipeline confirmed with clients
- Founding rate retired publicly; posted rates live
- Month-one P&L done; one growth lever chosen
- Next season's venue check-in calendar set

DAY 30 VERDICT

Green light: 2+ signed contracts with booking fees in the bank, 5 venue relationships opened, styled shoot done or scheduled. Yellow: inquiries but no signatures: your packages are vague or your booking fee pitch is apologetic; tighten both and re-quote every open lead. Red: under 5 real inquiries after a full month of outreach: your proof is invisible, so stop pitching and produce the styled shoot first.

How this business fails, and how it grows.

THE FIVE KILLERS

- ✗ **Working without a contract 'for friends'**
Friend weddings are where scope creep, blown budgets, and resentment are invented. The contract protects the friendship as much as the fee. No paper, no planning, no exceptions.

- ✗ **Letting 'day-of' mean day-of**
Showing up on the morning of an event you did not prepare is malpractice with a lanyard. Take over weeks out or decline the booking; your name is on the day either way.

- ✗ **Becoming the client's bank**
Routing vendor payments through your account creates escrow liability, tax confusion, and refund nightmares. Clients pay vendors directly. Always.

- ✗ **Skipping vendor COIs**
The one event where the uninsured DJ's speaker stand cracks a guest's head is the event that ends your business. Certificate and signed vendor agreement from every vendor, every event, filed before the day.

- ✗ **Saying yes to every event type**
The planner who does weddings, quinceaneras, galas, and trade shows in month one masters none and builds no referral identity. Pick a lane for year one; the venues need to know what to recommend you for.

THREE SCALE PATHS

- 1 **The associate model**
Train associate coordinators to run your system on the weddings you cannot take, at 50-60% of the fee. Your brand books three Saturdays at once and your timeline templates become the product.

- 2 **The corporate ladder**
Shift mix toward corporate and nonprofit work: bigger budgets, weekday events, annual repeat contracts, and clients who decide in days, not engagement seasons. One retained corporate account can equal a quarter of wedding work.

- 3 **Full production and design**
Climb from coordination into full planning and design at 15-20% of budgets that keep growing. At the top of this path you are producing \$100,000 events with two coordinators, a design fee, and a waitlist.

YOUR FIRST HIRE

A trained event-day assistant before you think you need one: 10-12 hour days cannot be run alone past your first few events, and venues notice the difference. Pay them well, train them on your timeline and radio protocol, and they become your test: if your event binder is good enough that an assistant can run the cocktail-hour flip without you, you are ready for associates.

THE STAIRCASE CONTINUES

The playbook is the map. The machine is waiting.

Everything this playbook describes, Epic Advisory Group can build with you: the brand, the cinematic website, the entity, the engine. Describe your idea to the Launch Engine and see your business real in about sixty seconds, free.

- The Launch Engine: your idea, built free, in about a minute
- THE ASCENT: Founder Edition: the eight-module course
- Launch-in-a-Box: entity, brand, site, and first campaign, one flat price
- Growth, capital readiness, and the path to the public markets

"There is no right age. There is only the decision."



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