

celeb planner profile

michael russo

The rising star who designed Kevin Jonas's winter wedding and pulled off a dream affair for *The View*'s Sherri Shepherd in just six weeks shares his secrets.

go with your gut

As long as you follow your instincts, you'll be happy with the results. When I first meet with couples, I have them close their eyes and describe in one or two words their vision for the wedding. That initial mental image holds the key to what they'll love.

streamline your logistics

Unless you're particularly attached to a religious organization, I highly recommend keeping all your events in one place—from the ceremony to the cocktail hour to the reception. It's just so much easier for you *and* your guests when everything is in one spot, which is why working in hotels is a dream. Simplifying your schedule and locations increases the likelihood that everything will run smoothly.

let your lighting shine

You can transform your entire room just with the lighting. You don't have to go crazy, but a soft change in color is a chic (and, more important, discreet) way to signal a new portion of the day or evening to your guests. Start with a clean white palette for both your flowers and décor, and then use creative lighting to change the look of the room as the event progresses.

switch up the schedule

Mixing up the traditional timeline can be a welcome surprise for wedding-weary guests. Throw them off a bit by having your cocktail hour *before* the ceremony.

keep the maids to a minimum

The biggest mistake I see brides make is picking large bridal parties. You're probably already struggling with your mom, your aunt and every other highly opinionated female in your life. Adding a bunch of different personalities to the mix can create unnecessary drama. Although it's important to include those closest to you in your ceremony, stick to just four bridesmaids and honor the rest by recognizing them in the program or with a special dance during the reception.

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP For Kevin Jonas's wedding, Michael created a theme of cascading flowers; Sherri Shepherd opted for a bejeweled purple-fondant cake; Michael used clear chiavari chairs and low arrangements to give Sherri's reception a modern look; Kevin's tables featured tall natural branches sprinkled in blooms.

