

**39 Easy, Cheap,
(or Free!) Ways To
Make Your Wedding
Totally YOU**

*Wow your guests with a personal,
Absolutely Unique Wedding Day*

Dalis Santiago

39 Easy, Inexpensive, Cheap or Free Ways To Wow Your Guests

In this booklet you will learn:

- How to use the wow effect to engage your guests so that they have more fun
- The easiest, cheapest ways to make your wedding “totally You”
- How to find your unique Wow Factor to create a wedding that really represents you
- 37 ways to wow your guests with a unique, unforgettable wedding.

The Wow Effect

When I was planning my wedding, I didn't need the most expensive dress or huge, elaborate floral centerpieces. I really just wanted a fun day surrounded by my family & closest friends in a beautiful location that was totally me and left my guests saying, “Wow! That was the best wedding I've ever been to!”

At first I was afraid that was impossible on my budget. I thought it took lots of money to come up with something unique & memorable.

Fortunately for me ...I was *wrong*.

What people don't know & the wedding industry doesn't tell you

Is that you can have a day filled with personal, unique touches that really say something about you. *And it doesn't have to cost a lot of money.*

The secret is what I call the “WOW EFFECT”

Have you ever walked into a beautiful historic building... or climbed to the top of a hill to find a gorgeous view... or heard such powerful music that you lost your words for a minute? It's like you were so absolutely overwhelmed by what you saw, heard or felt that it just blew you away.

That's the Wow Effect.

“Wow” is that overwhelming moment of appreciation when you're so moved that you can't even express it.

When your guests experience the Wow Effect at your wedding they won't just be impressed... they'll real “get” who you are and why you chose this wedding day, this location & this man. The Wow Effect is like a magic trick that casts a spell over your guests, transporting them to another world... *your world*... and makes them a part of it.

Your guests are wowed when your wedding is a totally unique expression of ***you***.

One of my brides explained it like this:

She & her fiancé poured a tremendous amount of energy into remodeling & decorating their new house. They spent hours painting and picking out just the right furniture, lights and accessories. It was a labor of love. When her parents finally came to visit, they took a long tour of the house and said, “Wow! This house is totally *you*.”

After all that time, money and energy she’d spent planning the wedding of her dreams... that’s what she wanted her guests to say: “This wedding is totally unique... totally *you*.” That’s the experience your guests get when you “wow” them.

It’s vitally important to wow your guests so that they experience your wedding as unique and totally unforgettable. The bonus is that when they “get” who you are, they become connected and involved... which means they have more FUNN.

If you don’t “wow” your guests they won’t understand that your wedding is totally you. Your wedding will be just like every other cookie-cutter wedding they’ve attended.

But when you wow your guests, they’ll be impressed. You’ll see it on their faces and they’ll say things like, “This is the best wedding I’ve ever been to!”

On the other hand if you don’t wow your guests they might end up leaving your reception early and telling people they had an “okay” time.

Wowing your guests gives you the power to create a wedding that really represents who you are. You can literally influence your guests to have a good time. If you don’t wow your guests, not only does your wedding **not** represent *you*, but you’re powerless to get your guests to have a good time.

The key to the Wow Effect is something called engagement

The Wow Effect happens in a group when you have people involved, connected and *engaged* in what’s going on. I’m not talking about the kind of engagement that happened to you when your guy got down on one knee, popped the question and you said yes.

Engage means “to occupy the attention of someone” or “to attract and please”. It’s what happens when you’re really into what you’re doing.

“This is the real secret of life – to be completely engaged with what you are doing in the here and now. Instead of calling it work, realize it is play.” –Alan Watts

You’ve probably experienced this type of engagement... or the lack of it... many times. For example, can you remember a time when you were given a group assignment in school and weren’t into it? Your teacher probably assigned a topic and forced you to follow the rules. It’s likely that you struggled through it because you didn’t want to get a bad grade... but nobody enjoyed it.

It was no fun because you were not *engaged*. The group wasn't involved or interested because the assignment had nothing to do with *them*.

Now if your teacher had the group engaged it could've looked like this:

You get assigned to the same group. You're still not into it at first but instead of telling you what to do, your teacher *engages* you by asking what you think. He asks you to come up with your own topic. Suddenly the whole group is interested and actively participating. And you even end up having fun.

So what happened? *Engagement*.

The same thing will happen at your wedding. When your guests are *engaged* and involved in the events of your wedding, they get active and interested. They have FUNN ...and so do you. The more you involve your guests, the more it works, the more unique and FUNN your wedding becomes.

There are 3 levels on which you can engage your guests: PHYSICALLY, MENTALLY and EMOTIONALLY. *None of them are expensive.*

1. **Engage them in ACTION.** You can do this by inviting them to participate in a reading, performance, or a group activity. We engage the bridal party with our live entertainment. Even the rest of the room is engaged when the bride & bridesmaids are looking cool, grooving, and singing a rousing, hip, chorus of "Ride Sally Ride" to Nelson's rendition of "Mustang Sally" (Wilson Pickett) You can do this if you have a talented performer among your friends. Almost everybody knows somebody that can perform.
2. **Engage them in THOUGHT.** Challenge their minds with a quiz or a game. We put table tent signs up asking people to sing LOVE SONGS during our wedding dinner if they wanted to see us kiss. Then we gave a long list (about 25) of songs with Love in the title or lyrics. It was a blast to hear "the Love Boat" as one of our friend tables all stood up. It had everybody laughing and having a good time.
3. **Engage them in EMOTION.** Get your guests involved and interested in the events of your wedding by touching their *feelings*. When you really "get" the love between you and your fiancé, when they laugh or cry, they are emotionally engaged. We do this with the "Romantic First Dance" and "The Love Story".

These three levels for engaging your guests can be combined for the greatest Wow Effect. But by far the most powerful and best suited technique for a romantic, unforgettable event like your wedding is emotional engagement.

WHO ARE YOU?

The best way to WOW your guests and get them engaged at your wedding is to give them the emotional experience of a wedding that is totally you. The secret to having a wedding that really feels like “you” is *weaving your personality* into your wedding day as much as possible. In order to create a dream wedding filled with fresh, unique ideas that really represent “you”... you need to know who “you” are.

No, you won't need to provide your ID for this one.

You just need to think about your personality. What are your interests and hobbies? They might give you dozens of inspiring ways to make your wedding totally “you”. These are your WOW Factors. Once you've come up with your unique WOW Factors it's easy to work them into your wedding.

FOR EXAMPLE:

If you and your fiancé share a lot of travel, that might be your WOW Factor. So you might choose to name your tables after the places you have visited together. You might create a scrapbook of your travels or have your DJ play songs that are from your travels and announce where and when and what these songs mean to you.

Dream Wedding exercise:

1. **Fill out all your hobbies, interests & activities.** Do you read books? Like animals? Are you good at music, dance, acting? Are you a crafter, cook? Do you travel, go to theater or concerts? In school? What are you studying? What work do you do?
2. **Fill out your fiancé's hobbies, interests & activities.**
3. **List both of your ethnic backgrounds and/or traditions of your families.**
4. **Compare which hobbies, etc. are the same.**
5. **Compare which hobbies, etc. are totally opposite.**
6. **Pick out 2 hobbies, etc to work into your wedding day keeping them in mind as we go through the rest of this booklet.**

Most People Are Suckers For A Good Story.

My absolute favorite way to get wedding guests engaged is to tell them your Love Story.

When your guests hear your story they will get emotionally engaged. They may laugh; some will even get tears in their eyes (Sometimes it's me crying!). It brings them to understand the meaning and uniqueness of the most important day of your life.

How did you two meet? What were your first impressions? Where was your first date? How did you get engaged?

Many of your wedding guests have never heard your story; especially the fun details. If you weave these unique things into your wedding day, it will make a lasting memory by involving them in your story.

On the other hand, if you decide NOT to tell your story, you are at risk for having disconnected disinterested guests.

How Do I Tell My Story?

- Have your officiant create a unique ceremony just for you with vows written by you or details of how you met and what you mean to each other.
- Ask your DJ Master Of Ceremonies to tell your story. We do this for most of our clients by giving a questionnaire and writing the story, then putting it to soft, movie soundtrack music. It adds a little more emotion. We find the guests are completely engaged during dinner instead of being bored while waiting for the next course.
- Write a letter to each other (Don't share it with each other) and have it read during your ceremony or during dinner by your DJ.

The reaction is *amazing*! Your writing can be romantic or quirky – just as long as it is totally YOU. Your guests will be drawn in and engaged emotionally. They'll be connected and ready to experience *the best wedding they've ever been to*.

MORE WAYS TO TELL IT

1. Get on the microphone yourself with your spouse & tell it.
2. Ask a talkative relative or your maid of honor or best man to do it
3. Print it up in your ceremony program, or put copies on the tables for your guests to read
4. Have a photo montage slide show play during cocktails or dinner

Getting an emotional connection going can be from romantic things, cute, sweet things, or even funny things in your story. The more they feel, the more involved and engaged they will be, the more fun everyone will have. **Especially YOU.**

WRITING IT:

Answer these questions:

1. How did you two meet?
2. What were your first impressions?
3. Where was your first date?
4. How did you get engaged?
5. Describe the relationship at first. Were you friends? Enemies? Fell in love at first sight?
6. Any funny quirky things you did for the other? WOW stories? Pick the best 1 or 2 stories and share those with your guests in the story.

INVOLVE TALENTED GUESTS

This will engage your guests emotionally & physically. Have your friends and/or family participate in your wedding day. Besides just having them read your story try inviting the talented singer/musician to perform for your ceremony, or first dance, etc. Have a dancer you know perform. Do you know someone who is a comedian? Have them do a mini roast (clean of course). Your guests will always eat it up because it is the wow factor of the entertainment you don't see every day that makes it special – even though they don't necessarily know the performer. They get engaged and the party becomes more fun.

Of course if you don't know anyone of this caliber you should find a different avenue. And don't necessarily invite someone who is not used to performing or is uncomfortable.

I GOT MY MUSIC

Have you ever thought of a memory because of a special song? Do you start singing with some songs even though they are “funny” to you? Do you have a song that brings you back in time to memories? Music has the power to engage your guests both emotionally and physically because people *feel* the music as they dance to it.

Not taking advantage of music's effect is missing out on one of the best ways to make your wedding totally YOU. It has the ability to make your day unforgettable.

BUT WHERE?

- 1. Down the Aisle:** When you walk down the aisle you don't have to stick with tradition. For example, I played my favorite movie music for my mom being seated, my bridal party & my walk down the aisle. All beautiful mood music from soundtracks with instrumental “mood building” fever.
- 2. Parent Dances:** Father–daughter or Mother-son dances can really be cool. One bride (Amanda) chose her Father-daughter dance: “Mandy” by Barry Manilow because that was the song her dad always sang to her as a kid. I was teared up watching her knowing the story, but so was everyone else because as her DJs, we announced it just that way before hand...Everyone engaged emotionally – including her DJs!
- 3. Introduction Music:** You can pick just about anything to be introduced to. I enjoy upbeat lively music that says something about a bride and groom's personalities. We also use custom introductions for the entire bridal party along with a little statement about them – **something fun, quirky** and everyone in the room is engaged. The songs each person

walks in to are as different as ethnic music, heavy metal, oldies, fight songs...You get the picture! This is one of the best ways to engage your guests because it helps them know about not just you, but who you love that are standing up for you.

PHYSICAL INVOLVEMENT

I used to hate gym class because I was lousy at sports. I often got picked last for a team because I was small. But when I first played dodge ball I was stunned. I actually started to get into it! I was pretty good at it! And it was fun! **I got physically engaged.**

Physical movement gets your guests engaged and having fun. This has been well known for years by entertainers and DJs. Songs like the electric Slide and Cha Cha Slide can really get the party started. Once your guests are up and moving everything gets fun. It doesn't matter if it's extra interactive or subtle – as long as the movement gets going somehow.

If your guests don't get moving they will sit like bumps on logs and most likely end up leaving early.

John and Joanne were total foodies and had the most elaborate meal with wine pairings and the whole nine yards. Of course everyone was impressed with the food. But because they thought the food should be the main focus they scheduled no music until after dinner. Because the food was so good and the guests were so weighed down they all started to leave after dinner. The DJ had a hard time getting the dancing going because no one was engaged.

It's important to let the music set the tone from the very beginning of the evening and add in all you can to make it interesting for your guests as early as possible, so they will be engaged and actively having fun.

HOW TO GET PHYSICAL

Participation dances: Electric Slide, Cha Cha Slide, Conga Lines, YMCA, you get the picture.

Ice Breaker: Centerpiece giveaways, or trivia game about the bride and groom, musical chairs...what do you like?

Inviting guests to dance: Back in the old days there used to be dances where the bride would dance with each gentleman for a dollar. It is sometimes used at ethnic celebrations still. Or just have your DJ to ask your guests to get up because the bride & groom request everyone get up for this next dance. (A good DJ should be able to handle this.)

Ask your DJ: We use a professional rendition of Mustang Sally with the bride and bridesmaids or James Brown's "I Feel Good" with the groom, bride and friends, but you can do this if you have a really talented friend who is a performer as well – just think outside the box!

Including your guests: You can also have your DJ dedicate a dance especially to one couple (play their wedding song) and invite everyone to dance with them because it is their favorite.

WHO ARE YOUR GUESTS?

Take a moment to think about who is coming to your wedding. If you can engage them by including them they will be engaged and have fun. On the other hand if they don't feel included in your wedding day they won't have fun and your wedding day is likely to be a big dud.

What are their songs? What are they into?

One of my favorite moments was Mark and Linda's wedding. The Wedding party kept asking for the Grateful Dead. Knowing that these songs were a little slow for dancing I was hesitant to play them. After I got a few more requests I finally asked one of the groomsmen if there was something special going to happen if I played a "Dead" song. He said, "Oh YEAH! Just wait!" So , on his advice and recommendation I played "Sugar Magnolia" and all H--- broke loose. The entire Wedding Party was on the floor bopping, the guys throwing off their tux jackets, and everybody in the room was engaged. We were all laughing and having a good time. At the end of the night the bride and groom were thrilled!

Another wedding we did, Dan & Nina we just had to play the YMCA. That wasn't so bad, but they wanted the hats, too. You see, Nina's dad thought it was the coolest, funniest thing he'd ever seen. As we did the YMCA, we put the "chief" hat on her dad, Pete and everything just got crazy. He was the most fun person I'd ever seen at a wedding! Nina couldn't believe how many compliments she got after that!

You don't have to have the YMCA with hats, but just throw something out there for your guests. When our brides fill out their song request sheet I give them an option on these kind of "Emotional Songs" (You either love 'em or hate 'em) Instead of saying NO to playing them I let them check "OK if requested". Then, if their guests really want to dance to the "Electric Slide" We can play it because the bride knows it will please her guests.

Other ways: Announcing birthdays, anniversaries; Having the "Longest Married Couple Dance": Announce other couples names and how long they have been married as they all leave the floor. Have a friendship Circle around the bride & groom to end the party and play "My Kind Of Town" or "That's What Friends Are For" for an unforgettable finish.

39 WAYS TO WOW YOUR GUESTS

Here are as many ways as I can think of to WOW your guests and make your wedding totally YOU. Use 3 secrets to wow your guests using the 3 letters in WOW:

W – Weave in your personality using YOUR wow factors

O – Others involvement is key. Get your guests involved.

W – Why do you do the things you do? Tell your story and they will understand the significance.

39 WAYS TO WOW

1. A LIST OF Love songs to sing during dinner for the bride & groom to kiss
2. Favors or decorations around your hobbies, talent
3. Childhood photos or baby pictures in an album on a table or wall.
4. Photos of your parents and grandparents their wedding days.
5. Pictures of your pets
6. Decorate your sweet table with momentos, collectibles or other themed style
7. Display love letters in a collage for a long distance romance
8. Have a groom's cake dedicated to your husband's hobby.
9. Use an unusual flower for your centerpieces
10. Play a favorite sports team or other theme
11. Do a funny dance you did when you were younger
12. Have a cutout of cardboard of someone famous you love (ie: Elvis, or the President)...Or someone who couldn't be at the wedding but is very important.
13. Performances by a musician, vocalist or dancer.
14. Share your Love Story during the boring part of dinner while people are waiting.
15. Have someone teach the newest dance on YouTube.
16. Table tasks like a disposable camera scavenger hunt.
17. Playing trivia games about the bride & groom or The Newlywed Game.

- 18.** Special Dances like a friendship Circle
- 19.** Wear something beloved with your gown like jewelry that belonged to someone special, or your spouse's dog tags from the service and explain what it is to everyone.
- 20.** Play and dedicate a song as an inside joke
- 21.** Have "Unique Individual Introductions" for the Wedding Party Introductions.
- 22.** Name your tables according to something you love.
- 23.** Table tasks like a list of what pictures should be taken with that disposable camera.
- 24.** Blank pages for them to write a memory about the bride or groom and turn it in.
- 25.** Announce Birthdays or Anniversaries
- 26.** Give a dance Lesson
- 27.** Write your own vows.
- 28.** Include ethnic traditions like the Hora or a Dollar Dance.
- 29.** Play a song with your love sentiments recorded onto it for your first dance.
- 30.** Make a donation to your favorite charity.
- 31.** Treat your guests to your favorite food, wine or dessert and tell them about it.
- 32.** Play some of your guests first dances.
- 33.** Include your favorite team, animal, hobby in your theme.
- 34.** Take Polaroid pictures for your guestbook.
- 35.** Have your guests write thoughts of the day for a "Time Capsule" to be opened at your 10th anniversary.
- 36.** Serve a special home-made treat on your sweet table and include copies of the recipe
- 37.** Share your own talent or skill.
- 38.** Have someone make your dress that you custom designed.
- 39.** Have centerpieces made from unusual things with no candles or flowers –maybe collectibles or feathers or something that reflects your hobbies.