



Gather

How to Create a Preferred Vendors List for Your Venue

A checklist of pro tips and easy step-by-step instructions



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A preferred vendors list can be a challenge to create. You have to find trustworthy vendors to provide the best possible services for your clients, because it could reflect poorly on your business if they don't. That's why creating the perfect preferred vendors list takes time and attention to detail.

We enlisted the expertise of Mollyann Russell, event sales and marketing coordinator at [The Stockroom at 230](#), a unique, urban venue located in downtown Raleigh, North Carolina, for some tips and advice. Read on to see the step-by-step instructions you can take to ensure your final preferred vendors list is one you're proud to show off.

Research, research, research

When it comes to determining who to feature on your preferred vendors list, start with what you know. Are there any local photographers, caterers or florists you've enjoyed working with in the past? Would you want to work with them on a consistent basis and feel confident recommending their services? Some venues even require clients to use their preferred vendors. "We decided to make it required for clients to choose from our list of caterers because they're familiar with working in our downtown venues and with our expectations – and our clients' expectations!" explains Mollyann. "This ensures a great client experience and a smooth event."



Craft your list

Next, start crafting your [preferred vendors list](#). Decide whether you want to make your preferred vendors required or optional. Is having a catering company you've worked with before important to you? Or, are you able to easily work with a wide variety of florists? Add in vendors for each category (like caterers, florists, photographers, videographers, event planners, DJs, officiants, hotels, etc.) and try to feature a variety of price points so your clients have options. Make sure these vendors will provide the best possible service for your client. "When starting to create our preferred catering vendors list, we reflect on the reputable vendors who have worked in the space and who have delivered an excellent service and/or product," says Mollyann. "We take everything into consideration, from their price points, frequency of events worked in the space, quality and diversity of products, overall performance, and more. We have a thorough conversation about the vendors in each category to determine the best ones for our list."

By the Numbers

40% of couples getting married expect at least weekly correspondence with their vendors.

- [WeddingWire](#)

Narrow down your finalists

Your final preferred vendors list can have as many options as you'd like. Anywhere from 2 to 10 vendors per category is usually a good number. Be sure to include the name of your vendor, their phone number, and their website. "Narrowing down the list might be the hardest part! There are so many amazing vendors who we enjoy working with in our area," says Mollyann. "This ensures a great client experience and a smooth event."

Pro Tip

Your preferred vendors list isn't set in stone. Remember that you can update it based on the quality of work you receive with your vendors.



Decide the terms of your relationship

What do you want your relationship to look like with your preferred vendors? What do you want the terms of your agreement to say and how long do you want this agreement to last? For vendors you recommend to clients, will your clients get a discount for using them? Will this recommended vendor have to recommend you in turn? "We have agreements and rules that our caterers sign annually," says Mollyann. "We simply send out an email to our other [recommended] vendors that says, 'We Recommend You!' and lay out some general rules in that email. We also explain that if you're on the list this year, it doesn't ensure that you will be on the list the next year."

Determine client requirements

Depending on the goals of your venue, determine if you want your preferred vendors list to be required or merely recommended. If your preferred vendors list is only recommended, clients are allowed to bring in outside vendors. "Because vendors, other than catering, are the client's choice, we like to supply a list of recommended vendors to get them started in the planning process," explains Molly. "If they don't have certain vendors already in mind for the event, this allows them to choose from a list where the vendors are familiar with working in our spaces. We often get compliments on how helpful our list is!"



Put your preferred vendors front and center

Now that you have your preferred vendors list, make sure your clients can see it. We recommend either posting it under the "Events" section of your website, or even creating your own "Vendors" page on your navigation bar for your list to live. This will allow you to put your list front and center, so that your clients can easily navigate through your recommendations and narrow down vendors that they think will be great for their event. "Our preferred vendors list is definitely a helpful tool as clients often ask for vendor recommendations," explains Mollyann. "It helps our team stay organized because it includes contact information for the vendors and we're all on the same page about who we recommend."

By the Numbers

On average, 13 professional vendors are hired for a wedding reception.

- *WeddingWire*

The Checklist

- Research, research, research
- Craft your list
- Narrow down your finalists
- Decide the terms of your relationship
- Determine client requirements
- Put your preferred vendors front and center

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