

# Watch the Panic...or Be the Solution

BECOMING AN OFFICIANT, FOR YOUR BENEFIT AND THE BRIDE'S PEACE OF MIND

By Dr. Ken Day, D.Th.,D.Div.

**D**J's are used leading the festivities that follow a wedding ceremony. But have you ever considered leading the ceremony itself? Being the officiant can actually benefit you even if you have no intention of offering this service to your clients. It can significantly affect your close rate and your bank account, let alone give you the satisfaction of knowing that you can be the solution in a panic situation when the another officiant is a no show for one reason or another.

First, a few questions to ask yourself:

- What's the benefit of a DJ being ordained?
- Is the time and effort to become ordained worth it?
- Is this an additional service that I would like to offer my clients?
- What kind of revenue can being an officiant bring in?
- How long can I be a DJ, in comparison to an officiant?

I'll take these on one by one. Bear in mind that these are just basic answers. There are many variations to being ordained as a wedding officiant and a few critical ways to make as much or more than the role of DJ provides.

## WHAT'S THE BENEFIT OF A DJ BEING ORDAINED?

You would be amazed at how simple this answer is, yet most DJs never consider it. I've been DJing for over 35 years and just like you, I've seen dozens upon dozens of officiants over the years; the good, the bad, the ugly, the bizarre, the funny, the not-so-funny...and the absent. Ask yourself and the officiants that you come in contact with, "How many officiants have you seen perform a wedding ceremony?" The answer from you is "many." The answer from most officiants is "less than five." So, how do they know what they are doing is good or bad? Do you think you could perfect the "performance" beyond what you currently see in others? Why wouldn't you? You have a broad frame of reference from which you can pick and choose the best aspects.

Ask your bride, "What will you do if your officiant is a no-show for whatever reason?" You, the DJ, can let your bride and groom know, at your first meeting, that you are ordained, and that you'll be available "just in case" to ensure the day is not ruined. How much more valuable did you just make yourself in their eyes, even if you never have to perform the officiant task?

Do you have to create ceremony from scratch? No, just make sure to get a copy of the ceremony script ahead of time.

## IS THE TIME AND EFFORT TO BECOME ORDAINED WORTH IT?

You can go to seminary to become traditionally ordained via a four-year (or more) college degree and spend thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours. This is the hard way, but for some, the only perceived ethical way.

In contrast, the time it takes to get ordained online is about 10 minutes depending on how good your keyboarding skills are to fill in the online form. The cost is anywhere from \$39 to \$69. For DJ purposes, well worth the benefits, I'd say.

A quick word on the limitations and legalities of online ordination. My apologies to those of you in Connecticut or Pennsylvania: Online ordination is not recognized in your states; and there are a few other states and cities in the USA that require additional elements. However, with only a little more effort, you may also be able to perform ceremonies in these geographic areas. You can look up the particulars at your state government websites. New York City and Las Vegas



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have additional rules, since weddings are a revenue source for these cities. Bottom line is that your geographic location will determine the legal issues you must deal with in order to provide this service.

### IS THIS AN ADDITIONAL SERVICE THAT I WOULD LIKE TO REGULARLY OFFER MY CLIENTS?

I have found that my comfort level with public speaking, as with most of us in the mobile DJ world, makes my brides and grooms more comfortable with my ability to perform as their officiant. They often ask me to be the officiant as well as their DJ/MC.

However, I have also found, the few times I agreed to do both, that it is awkward and confusing for the guests, can make it appear that the DJ is "money-grubbing," or that the bride and groom "cheaped out." The guests may also hold back on having fun at the reception because the officiant (the equivalent to a "minister" to many people) is running the show. Based on my experience, I would advise you to do one or the other if you plan to offer officiant as a service, but not both for the same client.

### WHAT KIND OF REVENUE CAN BEING AN OFFICIANT BRING IN?

This has a little bit to do with geographic location and what the officiants in your area are charging. Keep in mind that a church-affiliated pastor, priest, minister or rabbi will charge very differently from an independent wedding officiant. Since it is already part of their paying job, they often only ask for gift being made to the church.

I've found that most independent wedding officiants across the nation charge between \$200 and \$400 for a ceremony and \$75 to \$250 for a renewal of vows or an elopement. Sometimes geography plays into this level of pricing but I have found that more often than not it's the way their services are presented.

Based on extensive experience and exposure to hundreds of weddings, officiants, brides and grooms, and other wedding professionals, I have developed a unique approach to officiating that is extremely valued by brides and grooms. I routinely book ceremonies for a fee between \$750 and \$1,200 all over the USA, because of my approach to the ceremony development and performance.

### HOW LONG CAN I BE A DJ IN COMPARISON TO AN OFFICIANT?

Think about it: At what point do your clients start to question your ability to play "their kind of music," even if you know the most current music? When does doing the load-in/set-up and

tear-down/load-out routine start to linger in your muscles more than a few days? When do you start getting tired of being treated like the hired help because you're the DJ?

Would you instead appreciate instantly being treated with respect and reverence; revel in not having to haul any equipment in or out; enjoy the fact that the money you make doesn't have to be spent right away to maintain your equipment; and that you get to spend the weekend evenings with your family and/or friends.

As long as you can stand and speak for half an hour, you will be able to perform a very long time as an officiant.



There is also the potential to make nearly the same amount of money that you were making with DJing, at 1/5 the time commitment.

This isn't meant to say that officiating ceremonies is a total cakewalk. Some effort is required to gain a complete understanding of the all nuances.

However, whether you are looking to add the role of officiant to your sales presentation as a "just in case" proviso to increase perceived value to the client, offering a fully-fledged additional service, or even embarking on a new career, it all comes down to the question: Are you going to watch the panic or be the solution? They will be willing to pay for the extra peace of mind. **MB**