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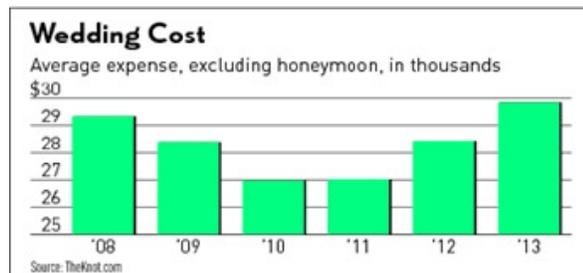
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## Eight Tips For Controlling Your Wedding Costs

By PAUL KATZEFF, INVESTOR'S BUSINESS DAILY

Posted 05/23/2014 04:52 PM ET



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The average cost of a wedding hit \$29,858 in 2013, excluding a honeymoon, according to the latest yearly figures from TheKnot.com.

That was the third straight year with an increase. The national cost averaged \$26,984 in 2010.

And the tab is much higher in some parts of the U.S.

In Manhattan, the average is just shy of \$87,000. In Chicago, the average hitching ceremony costs \$48,449. So it's no surprise that nearly everyone welcomes ways to trim the final tab.

"Very few people have a the-sky's-the-limit attitude," said Heather

Bandur, a wedding expert whose eponymously named events-planning firm is based in New York. "Even rich celebrities have a spending cap in their heads."

Make a list of what you need and want. "Need trumps want," said Kimberly Foss, president of Emprion Wealth Management in Roseville, Calif.

Price each item. If you end up over budget, trim your wants first. Either eliminate them entirely or find less costly alternatives.

With the traditional wedding season at hand — although that's changing, with autumn nearly overtaking summer in popularity — here are eight tips for controlling costs of your upcoming nuptials.

- **Negotiate.** If an item on your list is over budget, tell the vendor before you sign any contract what your cap is and ask the vendor how he can meet the cap.

"A vendor may have more ideas than you would," Bandur said.

And negotiating is not tacky.

"It's normal," Bandur said. "I've never met a vendor who won't try to help you meet your limits."

- **Beware of extras.** Ask what extra charges will apply for transporting things, setting things up and removing them, trash disposal, overtime and use of freight elevators.

If you use a band, will it charge you extra for setting up?

If you bring in a cake or alcohol from outside, will the facility charge for cake-cutting and corkage?

Are gratuities strictly up to you, or will the vendor add a set amount to your bill?

- **Yes to the dress?** Once you find a dress you like, buy that very one rather than order a custom-tailored version. By taking a dress off the rack and paying for alterations or even outside tailoring, you can cut the cost to hundreds of dollars, down from thousands, Foss says.

- **Cue the DJ.** A wedding band in Manhattan can cost you \$10,000.

"A DJ I use charges \$1,000," Bandur said. "That's a big savings."

- **Trim the guest list.** Don't invite relatives you rarely speak with. Limit the affair to close family and friends. "And think twice about allowing children," Bandur said. "They're usually priced the same as adults when it comes to meals."

- **Timing is everything.** Scheduling your ceremony for any night other than Saturday can cut 25% off the venue rental.

So can scheduling the wedding from November through March rather than April through October.

- **Do without a caterer.** Especially if your venue is someone's backyard, have friends and family bring food, says Foss, who saved thousands of dollars on her own second wedding this way.

- **Forgo fancy extras.** You don't need to give out-of-town guests welcome baskets, printed thank-you notes and printed programs upon their arrival, Bandur says. Each can cost hundreds of dollars.