

## HIRING ENTERTAINMENT? WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW...

This document is a comprehensive guide to hiring disc jockey entertainment. It can also be applied to a band, musician, or other entertainers.

### THE VALUE OF A PROFESSIONAL DISC JOCKEY

Many times you will see a DJ advertise that they have so many thousands of songs in their collection or that they have such and such brand name speakers that are really powerful. They may have even put together a few special effects lights to light up the dance floor. They think that having lots of songs, a big sound system, and flashing lights is what makes a DJ valuable. They think this is why you buy their services. These DJs often consider themselves the stars of the show.

To more discerning entertainment buyers like you, all those features are of minimal importance and of no real value without a professional at the controls. In fact, when you visited the Armistead Events web site, you didn't see much of a reference to the size of our music collections or many details about our sound systems. Here's why.

The true value of your mobile disc jockey is not the size of his or her music collection, the loudness of her speakers, or the coolness of his lights. The true value of your professional disc jockey is in his ability to entertain. That does not mean he is the star of the show. YOU are the star of the show. (Or your company or organization as the case may be.)

### THE BENEFITS OF HIRING A PROFESSIONAL DISC JOCKEY

At Armistead Events, the definition of the phrase "ability to entertain" encompasses numerous benefits to the entertainment buyer. We have listed them here for quick reference.

- ✓ Your DJ becomes one of your great resources of creative and innovative ideas.
- ✓ Your event runs smoothly because your DJ willingly and voluntarily takes on the responsibility of preparing and directing the pace and flow of your itinerary.
- ✓ Your event will continue to run smoothly even if there are unforeseen delays because your DJ has already prepared for the unexpected.
- ✓ Your event will be even more unique and even more fun because your DJ will discover, and properly utilize the entertainment value of your event's every element and detail.
- ✓ Your guests will be more relaxed and comfortable because your DJ will start creating a rapport with your guests immediately upon their arrival at your event.
- ✓ Your guests will be kept informed of pertinent information about your event because your DJ will make all necessary announcements and introductions.
- ✓ Your guests will stay at your event longer and remain motivated due to interacting with your DJ.

- ✓ Your event will be intensely personalized and unlike any other due to your DJ's in depth inquiry covering your personal (or your organizations) style, tastes, and personality.
- ✓ Your event will have continuity because your DJ will not require breaks.
- ✓ Your guests will maintain their focus during special moments because your DJ knows how to tactfully command their attention.

You may have noticed the amount of work your professional mobile DJ is doing and the value your pro DJ is bringing to your event. If you look again you will notice that we haven't mentioned music, speakers, or lights. Of course a DJ will use those tools. We just wanted to point out that playing music through some speakers IS NOT the primary reason you are hiring a professional mobile DJ.

Here is what your professional mobile disc jockey should be able to do for you WITH music and a sound system.

- ✓ Your announcements and introductions will be crystal clear because your DJ has been properly trained to use a microphone without creating feedback.
- ✓ Anyone using the microphone for a speech or a toast will sound like a professional because your DJ gives concise directions to the speaker just before handing the microphone over. Your DJ will then use the sound system's controls to rapidly tune the sound system for the speaker's voice.
- ✓ Your special moments will be highlighted and enhanced when your DJ applies appropriate music at an appropriate volume to draw out an emotional response from your guests.
- ✓ Your music selections will be heard note for note because the DJ is using a commercial quality portable sound system.
- ✓ Music on your dance floor will be intense yet your guests will still be able to have a conversation a few feet away.
- ✓ Your music will sound its best throughout the entire event because your DJ will set equalization for your specific room. Your sound will constantly be adjusted in real time as the environment changes.
- ✓ Your crowd will dance more because your DJ will loosen up your guests with ice breaking activities early in the event.
- ✓ None of your guests will be offended or embarrassed because your DJ is sensitive to the age, religion, and morality of your particular guests. Your DJ will only entertain using family friendly language and FCC approved radio edited music.
- ✓ Music transitions will be smooth and pleasant sounding due to your DJ's excellent ability to mix music.
- ✓ Your guests will remain safe because your DJ has basic knowledge of electrical safety. Your DJ will also tape down all cords and cables to reduce trip hazards.

- ✓ Your sound system will not clash with your décor because your DJ will set up the sound system with aesthetics in mind.

There are many other skills that professional DJs possess that aren't listed here. Each professional DJ, or DJ Company, has their own service offerings and their own way of doing business.

## THE BUSINESS ETHICS OF A PROFESSIONAL DISC JOCKEY

Practicing business ethics is a huge part of being a professional DJ. You should feel confident that your DJ is up front about the way he does business. There should be no surprises.

- A professional DJ will register his business with the appropriate governing body and maintain a copy of his business's registration for client review.
- A professional DJ will license his business if required by the locality in which the business is registered, and will maintain a copy of the business license for client review.
- A professional DJ will maintain general liability insurance for his and his clients', protection and provide a copy for his client's review.
- A professional DJ, if employed by an entertainment company, will not compete against that entertainment company while he is in its employ, or under contract with that entertainment company. He will not offer you a "side deal".
- A professional DJ will always comply with the terms of his contract and deliver what is promised.
- A professional DJ will always clearly describe any requirements of the client in the contract or in a rider.
- A professional DJ is an Equal Opportunity Entertainer and will never discriminate based on age, race, religion, or national origin.
- A professional DJ will always have contingency plans if he is incapacitated prior to a performance. He should have a plan for a back up DJ.
- A professional DJ will never agree to perform when he knows that he will not be capable of satisfying the client's criteria for a successful event.
- A professional DJ will always strive to improve his performance and business practices through periodic training.
- A professional DJ will never consume alcoholic beverages or use illegal drugs while performing.

- A professional DJ will never use pirated music during any performance.
- A professional DJ will always arrive at an event early enough to properly set up and test the equipment, replace any faulty equipment, meet other members of the event team, and change into appropriate performance attire before the first guest arrives.
- A professional DJ will never use profane, vulgar, or otherwise offensive language or behavior during a performance.
- A professional DJ will never intentionally embarrass or humiliate any event guest.
- A professional DJ will never endanger any event guest. Safety is paramount.
- A professional DJ will never invite guests of his own to a client's event.
- A professional DJ will comply with all laws concerning noise, public performances, and public gatherings.
- A professional DJ will provide information and advice that can assist his client with creating a great event.

## THE CONTRACT USED BY A PROFESSIONAL DISC JOCKEY

We are not lawyers, and we don't offer legal advice, however we have seen enough entertainment contracts to know the basics. The contract used by a professional DJ often has many names. Some call it a Performance Agreement, some call it an Entertainment Agreement, and others simply refer to it as a contract. Just make sure your DJ uses a contract no matter what he calls it. When in doubt about a contract's contents, check with an attorney. A contract must have certain elements to make it legal and binding. Those elements are identified below.

**The Offer** – This part of the contract says that you wish the DJ, or the DJ Company, to perform some form of entertainment service for you. It will identify you by name and location of residence as the Entertainment Buyer, or Purchaser. It will also identify the DJ business as the Performer, Entertainer, the DJ, etc. by name and by the official business address. It will also contain the terms of the contract.

The terms are such things as the date and time of the performance, the location of the performance, any specific type of entertainment services or equipment you want your DJ to provide, and what is required of you. For instance, you may be required to provide a certain size table with cloth and skirting, electricity, a shelter in case of rain, etc. Any specifics on how the DJ is to entertain and what you must do for him or her are called the terms of the contract.

**Acceptance** – It is not enough for you to make an offer with specific terms in a contract. There must be language concerning the DJ's acceptance of your offer. An example would be language such as this:

"The Purchaser hires (the DJ) to entertain at his event on (Date) and (the DJ) agrees to perform such entertainment services for Purchaser."

Here you can see that you offered work and the DJ accepted. This is known as a "meeting of the minds" and proves that this agreement will benefit both parties. One way contracts are illegal.

Consideration - Consideration is the bargained-for exchange. It is the legal benefit received by one person and the legal detriment imposed on the other person. Usually consideration takes the form of money, property or services. In the DJ world, you are exchanging money for entertainment services.

Competence - means each party has the legal capacity to make a contract. Generally, people are considered to be competent to make contracts if they are over 18 years of age and of sound mind.

A minor (usually, a person under 18 years of age) who makes a contract can rescind or void it. A minor who rescinds a contract gets back whatever the other party received from the minor. People, who are of unsound mind, that is, those who are incompetent because of mental illness or disability, can also rescind their contracts.

Consent - This means that each party to the contract must agree to the terms of the contract. This requirement of consent fits the general idea of contract as a private law-making activity. However, consent does not mean that you have to know what the contract says. The law presumes you have consented to a contract by signing it or manifesting some other type of assent, such as clicking on "I accept" buttons in dialog boxes on your computer screen. Always read the contract. A professional DJ will go over a contract line by line and explain it in detail.

Legality - For a contract to be enforceable, it must involve a legal activity. The law does not enforce contracts based on illegal activity. For example, if a DJ cannot promise you a copy of the music played at your event in a contract. Your DJ does not have a right for distribution of the songs he played. If he did promise you a copy in the contract, but didn't deliver, a judge would not enforce that provision because that activity is considered music piracy. Illegal activities are unenforceable in a contract.

In summary, make sure the contract you sign with your DJ properly identifies both parties. The contract must contain an exchange of something of value; i.e. the DJ's entertainment services in exchange for your money. The terms of how the entertainment services are to be provided should be clearly spelled out. Make sure the DJ has clearly accepted your offer. Be certain that the services you are bartering for are legal. And finally, don't sign a contract without reading AND understanding the entire document.

One more thing, the Guarantee - The contract may include a provision that says that you are entitled to your money back if services aren't provided to your satisfaction. Sometimes the guarantee is called a Limited Liability clause. This says

that if the DJ doesn't do what he agrees to in the contract, you will get your money back, or at least a portion of your money back. The limited liability clause is preferred in legal forums over the satisfaction guarantee. This is because the limited liability clause is based on facts, the terms of the agreement. Either the DJ did or did not do what was agreed to in the contract. It's easy to prove. With a satisfaction guarantee there is no proof per se. All there is are subjective opinions. The court has to decide if the entertainment buyer was truly unsatisfied or if they are just trying to get something for nothing.

## THE TRAINING OF A PROFESSIONAL DISC JOCKEY

People are often surprised to hear that there is professional training and continuing education opportunities for DJs. You shouldn't be surprised. After all, every entertainer has a coach or a class to attend. Singers take voice lessons. Actors have coaches and acting classes. Shouldn't you expect your DJ to be educated when it comes to his craft as well?

In the business world, to be defined as a professional one must receive focused education, one must develop specialized skills, one must demonstrate particular abilities, and one must acquire expert knowledge through years of experience. Think about doctors and lawyers. They are considered professionals because they meet these criteria. Anyone that claims to be a professional must possess all four elements.

At Armistead Events, we are professional mobile disc jockey entertainers. We have earned the Endorsed Professional Entertainer designation from the National Association of Mobile Entertainers, a national trade organization for DJs and we do attend continuing education seminars and conferences yearly.

## A PROFESSIONAL DJ CARRIES LIABILITY INSURANCE

Every professional DJ, band, or other entertainer should maintain liability insurance. Liability insurance is not only for the DJ's protection, but for your protection as well. Significant repairs to event venues can cost well into the hundreds of thousands of dollars or more. If your DJ does not carry liability insurance YOU are responsible for any damages. If your DJ injures someone and does not have liability insurance YOU are responsible for medical expenses, replacing the injured persons lost income, and "pain and suffering" damages.

Always make sure your DJ has insurance. Ask to see his insurance certificate. Don't let your celebration become a day you are paying for over the rest of your life!

## FINDING A PROFESSIONAL DISC JOCKEY: THE INTERVIEW

If you want a really smooth flowing, stress free, and highly entertaining event, you will need to determine your prospective DJ's level of professionalism. Always insist on a face-to-face meeting. The DJ will most likely want to meet you in a restaurant or other public location. Make sure there will be a table where you can spread out your notebook or planner. Also make sure that you can have a conversation at the

location. A quiet restaurant is a great choice; a nightclub or library may not be. Some DJs have an office. If you are comfortable with it, some may even come to your home. You should always meet in person. Never book a DJ over the phone.

Another tip is to bring all of the decision makers (anyone that has a say in which DJ gets hired) to the meeting. There will be lots of information discussed during the meeting. You don't want to have to try to relay all that information to someone else hours or days later.

These are some questions that can help you find a great DJ.

Do you like performing at my type of event?

Not all DJs like performing at all events. If they don't like performing at your type of event they are doing it just for the money. They may not have your best interests in mind.

Will you manage my event's itinerary and flow of events?

Some less professional DJs don't want this responsibility and will want to be told when to move on to the next activity. This means you manage the details of your event instead of enjoying it.

Can you coordinate my event team's activities?

If the DJ does not know what an event team is he will most likely want you or someone else to coordinate the activities of all of your vendors. Once again, you are working your own event.

Can I see your business license or your business registration?

If the DJ doesn't have a license or registration then he is most likely a hobbyist with pirated music. You want a DJ that is a partner with the recording artists and supports their work.

Can I see your liability insurance certificate?

If the DJ doesn't have insurance you will be in a dangerous position should the DJ cause damage to the venue or cause personal injury to your guests. You hired him, therefore become responsible.

Does your insurance protect me personally in any way?

Some liability insurance policies provide protection for the person that hires the DJ and the venue. All insurance policies are different. The DJ should know how his insurance works.

Will you have back-up equipment at my event?

The answer should be "yes". Ideally the DJ will have a complete extra sound system in his truck or trailer. Electronics are man-made and are subject to failing unpredictably. By having a complete extra sound system and extra cables, any part of the equipment can be replaced. Don't fall for the DJ that says he only brings extra speakers. If the power amp fails, the extra speakers won't work.

How early will you arrive at my event to set-up?

Make sure set-up will be completed before your events starts. You don't want equipment to be carried in to the venue in the middle of dinner or cocktails. Many DJs will tell you they set-up an hour ahead of time. This isn't sufficient when you consider the possibility of a flat tire, the set-up time, testing equipment, replacing any non-working components, retesting, tuning the sound system for the room, taping down cables, cleaning up, and changing into performance clothes. If your set-up involves special lighting you need even more time. A professional DJ will want to arrive two to four hours early.

How would you suggest I conduct my event?

This question can only be answered by someone with experience. You don't have to like the DJ's answer. What you are looking for is the DJ's ability to put together the event quickly and logically. If the DJ can answer this question, then you know he has the experience to run your event and handle the unexpected.

How will you get my guests to relax and get onto the dance floor?

The DJ should be able to tell you more than what song he would start out with. In nearly every case it takes more than good music to motivate your guests to have fun. Before your guests can party they have to feel comfortable. Good music alone does nothing for your guests' comfort level.

What songs, or type of music, will you play at my event?

Some DJs are extremely flexible and have a wide knowledge of music. Other DJs specialize in one genre or another. Some let you choose every song while others limit your selections. Remember you are hiring a talented professional DJ. You should have some input as to what you want to dance to at your event, but you need to leave your DJ some room to add other selections for a smooth mix. If the DJ expects you to choose every song, he does not want the responsibility of programming the music. This is one of the talents you are paying for.

How will you entertain my guests that don't, or physically can't dance?

You should choose a DJ that doesn't depend solely on music to entertain your guests. He should be prepared with some non-dancing activities as ice breakers or as back up entertainment.

How many hours will you be working on my event?

Depending on your events complexity, preparing for a single event can take ten to thirty hours on average. The DJ that answers with "four hours" doesn't plan to do any prep work. He'll be flying by the seat of his pants at your special event.

Can my guests make announcements or give you CDs to play?

A professional DJ will advise against handing over the microphone to the crowd for unscheduled announcements. The same goes for playing CDs handed to him by guests. The potential for you or your guests to be embarrassed is just too high to risk, especially if you are serving alcohol. Its best to limit guest announcements to those designated to give toasts, speeches, or the blessing, etc.

How will you dress for my event?

If your event is a wedding or other formal event your DJ should dress in formal attire such as a tuxedo. If your event is a pool party your DJ should dress casually. Be wary of an answer that suggests the DJ may dress too casually. Khaki pants and a polo shirt are usually casual enough for any event.

Do you use a contract?

The only correct answer is yes. Don't settle for a one page contract either. The contract must be detailed enough to be specific about the work performed if it's of any value to you or the DJ. Vague contracts are open to interpretation and misunderstandings, and are generally not enforceable. When in doubt, check with an attorney.

What do you charge?

Beware of package pricing. If you have to choose among package A, B, or C then the DJ has put the responsibility of sound system design on you. You should be paying a fair price for the DJ's talents and expertise. One of those talents is designing a sound system for your venue. The shape and size of the venue, as well as the amount of guests, and type of furnishings dictate the wattage and the amount of speakers a sound system needs to adequately cover a particular room. If you hire a DJ you want announcements and possibly music heard at some level throughout your chosen venue. Package A, B, or C may not be flexible enough to cover every situation and before you know it you could be billed for extra speakers, cables, etc.

Also beware of the hourly charge and the overtime rate. If you are paying for a DJ's talent and expertise you will be able to settle on a fair price for the amount of time you want your DJ to perform. If the DJ is a professional he will make sure all activities on your itinerary are complete prior to the end of your celebration. If there was some type of delay then the professional DJ will simply stay a little longer to get all of the activities in and end the party properly. Twenty minutes or so either way shouldn't matter to the DJ. You should only pay overtime if you request the DJ to perform beyond what was agreed to in the contract assuming there were no delays. There are some DJs that will purposely peak the party at the scheduled end time to convince you to purchase overtime. A professional is already charging a fair rate and doesn't need to manipulate the schedule to get paid more.

## IN CONCLUSION

We hope we have given you a better understanding of how to hire entertainment for your event. If you have any questions you can call Chris or Carla at (434) 665-1792 or (434) 385-8008.