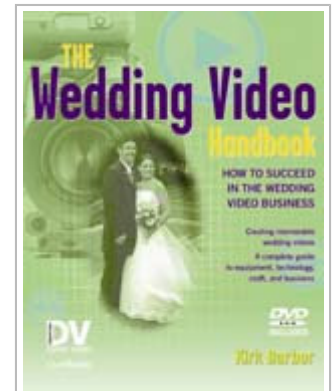




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Review: Kirk Barber's The Wedding Video Handbook

For many years, John Goolsby's brilliant *The Business of Wedding and Special Event Videography* was the only book available that addressed not just the practice of wedding videography, but the business of it as well. Books offering some how-to advice on shooting weddings came and went, but generally targeted hobbyists rather than professionals. That changed in 2005 with the emergence of Brett Culp's *Capturing Creativity*, which explored ways to bring imagination and inspiration to your work. But there was no other book, besides Goolsby's, that attempted to address all the aspects of building a wedding videography business until the January 2006 publication of Kirk Barber's *The Wedding Video Handbook: How to Succeed in the Wedding Video Business* (CMP Books, \$34.95, www.cmpbooks.com).



Barber and his wife run a San Diego-based wedding and event videography outfit called Sunray Video. They opened Sunray in 1996 shortly after moving to San Diego, and have built it into a successful business despite starting with no contacts in the area or experience in the field.

In *The Wedding Video Handbook*, Barber charts a course to success in the field. He provides a comprehensive plan for establishing a videography business, right down to the relative value of "fictitious" business names (vs. those that include the videographer's own name), to the kinds of insurance you need as an independent studio, and the rudiments of setting up an office. The book also takes an in-depth, but appropriately general look at key equipment, discussing not just the most commonly used camera brands but also acquisition formats, the differentiating power of CCDs, and the value of interchangeable lenses. He also provides helpful advice on camera support, audio, and lighting, introducing the topics in a chapter on "Choosing Video Equipment" and providing more pointed instruction in chapters titled "Setting Up Your Equipment" and "How to Use the Equipment." Barber's book, like Goolsby's, is most effective in its discussions of how to establish and grow your business, and how to capture the essential elements of a wedding day that will make for a satisfying product.

While Barber's book is emphatically not for amateurs, it assumes very little experience on the part of the reader. Barber does, however, assume that you've entered the wedding videography field to make a living at it. The book has quite a bit of practical advice that experienced videographers will find useful as well, but the just-hung-out-my-shingle ingénue is his baseline reader.

After dispensing with many preliminaries, Barber gets to what he calls the most important chapter in the book: "Marketing and Getting the Clients." He recommends researching your market by picking up flyers from other videographers at bridal shows (which will teach you not only what they charge, but in some cases what they're doing right and what they're doing wrong); developing the kinds of packages, services, and pricing you'll offer (photo montages, love stories, bridal elegance, short-form highlights, multi-camera, etc.); and figuring out who your clientele will be and how you'll reach them. Barber also makes some recommendations on creating your demo—good points about "conveying your style" and using special effects in moderation, and a great suggestion about including a segment on "how to choose a videographer." He cites 20 minutes as a typical length and 30 minutes as a maximum; both seem too long to me.

He also makes some interesting organizational choices, such as diagramming camera positioning in a church layout while he's discussing multiple-camera packages. I like it, but some readers may find it off-putting.

Barber also offers some nice tips on shooting the wedding ceremony, such as how to capture the processional and other portions of the ceremony, with good attention to both camera placement and audio. He makes good points about establishing rapport with the photographer and minister, including helping the minister put his or her mic on. Of course, there's way too much to cover than can go in a single chapter (Jewish weddings summed up in seven bullet points!), but in some instances Barber points readers to other resources (such as TheKnot.com's Jewish weddings page). He provides a good overview of receptions, emphasizing getting key shots of the cake-cutting and various dances (check out the sample clips on the included DVD for examples of how Barber does it). There's lots of advice on guest interviews, too, although Barber notes that in many of these so-called interviews, "there may not be any actual questions being asked."

In addition to suitably generalized chapters on editing, packaging, and delivery, Barber wraps up the book with helpful hints on add-on sales, the value of referrals, handling customer service problems, and continuing to grow your business—all the while continuing to convey his overarching point that if you build your business and learn your craft in the right way, you will have what you need to succeed. The concluding chapter, "Keys to Maintain Your Business," includes some especially good points about the dangers of over-booking, how charging more can make you seem more professional, and avoiding common pitfalls like grabbing at new technology just because it's new. After all, technology, like a wedding day, moves too fast to keep the whole picture in view—but Barber's book can help it seem like less of a blur and more of a business.