

All Photo Booth Companies Are Not the Same

Photo booths continue to be a popular addition to any special event whether it's a Wedding, Sweet 16, Senior Ball or Junior Prom. One side-effect of this popularity is that more people are entering the business or adding a photo booth onto their existing business. Many DJ's and some photographers have done this with equipment that is hard to classify as a "Photo Booth." [See my paper "*All Photo Booths Are Not the Same*" for more information on that topic.] While others look to enter the market as quickly as possible by purchasing lower quality equipment or going the homemade route.

On the surface all these companies may look the same, however a little research and a few phone calls can quickly tell you who you should work with and who you should avoid. The things you should pay attention to generally fall into two categories:

- Customer Service
- Quality of Their Booth and Equipment

Let's look at these in a little more detail.

Customer Service:

When contacting a prospective company and you leave a message, track how long it takes for you to receive a return call, same thing for email. This may give you an early indication of what level of customer service you can expect. Superior companies should reply to all emails and voice mails within 24 hours.

Pay attention to their pricing structure. Do they offer all inclusive pricing that covers items like unlimited prints, set up and take down, on site attendant, props, USB stick with the images from your event, etc? Do they offer a la carte pricing where the per hour rate may appear cheaper but you pay extra for props, reprints, set up/take down or a USB stick with all your images? Outstanding companies provide all inclusive rates which take all of these expenses under consideration in order to eliminate any client surprises. You should never pay charges in addition to you package price for things like delivery, set up, extra prints or to have an attendant stay with the booth during your event.

The booth should be set up and ready to run at the appointed time. Ideally the photo booth company will work with your venue and arrange set up well in advance of anyone from your event arriving on site. (You do not want your photo booth being set up while you and your guests are enjoying cocktails or dinner.) Set up /tear down time should not eat into your rental time; if you pay for 4 hours of rental time the booth should be available for your guests for the full 4 hours.

What options are available for the photo layouts? Some companies only offer the traditional photo strips, typically two strips of four photos printed on one 4x6 print. Photo Booth Companies focused on

exceptional customer service will offer a landscape layout or maybe a post card layout they should also try to match the colors of your wedding. It goes without saying they should also personalize the photo layout with your event information i.e. names, dates etc. One interesting thing to note is if you decide to utilize the traditional photo strips option, does the onsite assistant offer to separate the strips for you? Remember they print on one 4x6 piece of paper so having some way to separate the photo strips is desirable otherwise how can you share the joy?

Many good photo booth companies offer unlimited prints in color or black and white. They will allow people to go into the booth as many times during the event as they like and print photos for them each time. Great photo companies encourage this as well but they go one step further and make sure that **every person in the photo (whether it's 2, 4, 6 or more people) gets a copy of the photo.** Make sure you clarify the term unlimited prints when speaking with a prospective photo booth company.

Equipment:

The second item to consider is the quality of your prospective provider's equipment including the photo booth itself. What does the booth look like? Is it enclosed so that it offers people privacy or is it open (which by definition cannot be considered a booth)?

The booth could look nice but what is in the booth? What type of printer do they use and what type of camera? Your provider should use a dye sublimation printer, a professional standard. These printers quickly produce consistent high quality prints that won't smudge. They can cost in excess of \$1,000 and will easily print 300 photos per paper roll, reducing any down time required during your event for paper or ink changes. They also print photos in 12-15 seconds so your guests will spend less time waiting in line for their photos and more time enjoying the photo booth. If your potential vendor is using anything other than this type of printer it's time to consider another vendor.

Of course you cannot overlook the type of camera used in booth either. A first-class company will use a digital SLR camera and never a web cam like those found today on many lap top computers. Digital cameras like those used by professional photographers produce consistent clear results, creating images you will cherish for years to come. If your vendor uses a webcam or some other lower end equipment like an iPhone then I'd consider looking elsewhere.

Selecting a photo booth company for your big event need not be a difficult task. By doing a little homework and comparing service offerings, pricing structure and equipment offerings a clear winner will emerge.

Need more information on photo booth rentals for your big event? Give us a call we'd love to answer any questions you may have and provide you with a night of entertainment you won't soon forget.

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