

You Just Postponed or Cancelled an Event...

Now What?



1 FIRST STEPS

Venue Management (reducing liability)

- ☐ **Cancel vs. Postpone**
 - a. Discuss reasons for postponing vs cancelling
 - b. In some cases, postponing/ rebooking has a better chance of lessening financial liability.
 - c. If postponing, have rebook dates available to discuss with the property.
- ☐ **Review the hotel contract clauses carefully.**
 - a. The Force Majeure a.k.a. Impossibility Clause
 - This is an important clause, as it allows for cancellation of the contract with no penalties.
 - Determine if the cancellation is met under these conditions and the clause is a strongly worded one.
 - Prepare your support documents in advance.
 - b. The Cancellation Clause
 - If the cancelation/postponing isn't due to the Force Majeure, the Cancellation Clause kicks in.
 - Review the date span and penalties for canceling the meeting.

2 CONTACT THE VENUE

Negotiations

- ☐ **Begin with a phone call to inform of cancellation or postponement.**
 - a. Approach with professional deference and understanding of what venues are experiencing in this unprecedented time.
- ☐ **Start the negotiations in writing (so you have a trail to reference) with your assigned venue representative.**
 - a. Remain open and flexible. If not mutual, ask how you can get there. Remaining partners is key.
 - b. Cancellation Clauses will stipulate amount of penalty based on length of time before the event date. For example, the penalty for cancellation 3 months out is much different than 3 weeks out. The closer to event time, the higher the penalty, as the opportunity for the hotel to resell sleeping rooms or event space is slim. The penalty is based on anticipated revenue from sleeping rooms and event room rental.
 - c. Be prepared with alternate event dates.
 - d. Ask that a portion of the cancellation be applied to the new event date.
- ☐ **Request a contract addendum so all previously negotiated terms remain in effect.**
 - a. The addendum should have the new dates, and change in event space and associated change in rental costs.

3 CONTACT VENDORS

- ☐ **For vendors that you have been working with closely, contact them by phone first and then follow up in writing.**
 - a. Make sure to contact all vendors in writing regarding cancellation or postponing, even if you've only asked for proposals and have not written a contract or given a deposit.
 - b. Obtain an acknowledgment from vendors and collect addendums to contracts.
- ☐ **Create a matrix to track email notices sent and acknowledged.**
 - a. Note on matrix the vendors and expenses paid.
- ☐ **Check cancellation clauses and liability. (See section on venue.)**
 - a. In most cases, they will forgive as long as the intention is to use their services when it is a go.

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- ☐ **Vendors can include:**
 - a. Caterers
 - b. Transportation
 - c. AV vendors
 - d. Lighting/decor
 - e. Entertainment
 - f. Staff, temp staff
 - g. General services contractor
 - h. Printing
 - i. Translation or transcription services
 - j. Sign language or other interpreters
 - k. Security
 - l. Creative/graphics personnel
 - m. Offsite venues
 - n. Furniture
 - o. Travel
 - Any company sponsored travel – plane or train
 - Double check fees and policy for cancelling, rebooking
 - Account for service charges that are not refundable
 - p. Track expenses for deposits, supplies (badges/holders, lanyards etc)

4 DISCUSS VIRTUAL PIVOT

Confer internally and with external stakeholders

- ☐ **Consider polling attendees and members.**

5 CONTACT ATTENDEES

(or prospective attendees)

- ☐ **Put notice on event apps.**
- ☐ **Put notice on websites and registration sites.**
- ☐ **Send direct emails to the invite list or registrants.**
- ☐ **Notify exhibitors and sponsors.**
 - a. Be prepared to give next step directions, what happens to their sponsorship money, the exhibitors' booth money, expense for power drop, furniture and advanced shipments.
- ☐ **Notify speakers.**
 - a. Track speaker fees paid
 - b. Check cancellation fees for speakers