

PERSPECTIVE AND ADVICE

Dear Readers:

I wanted to put to use my 40+ years of experience in the festival and special events world, having weathered a number of very difficult periods from 9/11 to the Great Recession, to provide some perspective and advice to you as to how we all might respond to these difficult circumstances.

Immediate (This Week)

- During this "wait and see" period, communicate consistently and clearly with your stakeholders (registrants, guests, vendors, sponsors, volunteers) to assure them you are monitoring conditions and evaluating alternatives.
- Prepare for questions about cancellations/postponements.
 - It is better to postpone for a date later in 2020 as the possibilities of retaining sponsor revenue is greater than an outright cancellation.
 - Determine ticket and/or registration fee policy. If this is already established reinforce with your constituents.
 - Review sponsor agreements for termination and force majeure clauses and how that will guide your options with them.
 - Determine your policy regarding sponsor payments, such as:
 - Set new payment dates for postponed events.
 - Establish policy regarding full or partial refund if cancelled.
 - In the event of a full cancellation, offer to apply 2020 payment to next year.
 - Share this response with all staff/board members or other representatives of your event so that everyone is sharing a consistent message.
- Check out vendor agreements and other commitments for force majeure, cancellation and refund deadlines. (Don't miss an "out clause" deadline.)

Short-term (During 4-8 week quarantine)

- With the end of restrictions on public events unclear, producers with events as far out as July 2020, should **proactively**

determine if they can find alternative dates later in the year to produce event.

- Consider a pause on all marketing and promotion.
 - You also don't want to appear "tone deaf" with upbeat marketing campaigns at this time.
 - Consider amending your messaging, (as applicable) to fit the current conditions
- Put a hold on making further marketing commitments and investments.
- During this time of uncertainty and market volatility, anticipate a full-stop to most sponsorship discussions
 - Better to wait until there is less uncertainty to reengage than to press for a decision now. (Right now, they will be "no's")
- Current Sponsors
 - Expect calls about postponement or cancellation (see above)
 - Anticipate a delay of sponsor payments
 - Expect a delay in signing outstanding agreements
 - Sponsors are going to require the addition of COVID-19 language in Force Majeure paragraph
- Continue to communicate proactively, transparently and clearly with your constituents about plans for event
 - Keep your website and social media updated with current plans for the event
 - Use your social media to be encouraging and positive about the current circumstances
 - Do NOT share information that has not been verified
- Communicate with current sponsor leads to keep process moving (albeit slowly)