

RETREAT ROADMAP®

EVENT CANCELLATION CHECKLIST

- **Take a deep breath.** Find a place of calm inside yourself. Shift into focus and tune yourself up to your highest vibe. This will not be easy but handling a cancellation with grace and professionalism will make all the difference for your business in the long run.
- Assess the circumstances and **make a final decision** in collaboration with any co-organizers.
- **Communicate with your team**, any session collaborators or presenters so that they hear it from you first. It is so disappointing for everyone involved, and the more personal you can make the cancellation process, the better.
- **Revisit the refund policy** in your attendee contract & waiver and determine if it needs to be updated based on circumstances.
- **Communicate with your attendees** as soon as possible so that they can make changes to their own plans, including travel, childcare, work schedules, etc. This should be done via all communication channels that you use to connect with attendees – email, social media, Eventbrite, Facebook, etc. Make sure to acknowledge their likely disappointment, and share your own! Additionally, include information about your refund policy: what it is, if it has been revised, how much they can expect to receive, when you will begin to process refunds, etc. This will be one of the most important things that you do in this process. If take good care of your people, you will maintain customer relationships – you will likely even strengthen them, because they will know that they can trust your integrity.
- **Communicate with vendors** such as photographer, caterer, and venue. Review your contracts ahead of time and recognize that some payments may be non-refundable. This is when those solid contracts come into play. If this process results in lost money (which is likely will), make notes of things to learn for next time.
- **Review your budget** for expenses to assess where you can curb anticipated spending (for example, session supplies that have not yet been purchased).

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- **Communicate with sponsors** who have donated products or money to let them know that the event has been cancelled and ask how they would like you to move forward with their donations. In kind donations can be saved for a rescheduled event, or used in social media promotions. Money can be diverted to other programs that serve the same needs. Each situation will be different, so stay calm, be flexible, and work through it with each sponsor.
- **Outline a plan** for how to continue to serve your attendees and keep them connected to your work. Can you provide attendees with additional offers to work together/be supported in lieu of the event?
- **Write those thank you notes anyway** – to your team members, site coordinator, caterer, sponsors, partners, collaborators, etc. Thank them for their commitment to your work, and keep the door open for future collaborations.
- **Follow up with attendees** a couple of weeks later with additional offers for support, resources, and requests for feedback.
- **Reach out for support.** This kind of decision is never easy. It HURTS to cancel something that you worked so hard to plan. It is your right to be disappointed, angry, frustrated, and sad. Make sure to connect with someone who can hold space for you to express all those feelings!
- Celebrate yourself for a job well done! No, your event did not happen as planned. But you handled this whole process style and grace, and you learned a host of lessons throughout. Tuck those lessons into your toolbox for next time, and keep it moving. The world needs your message!