



Planning the Pivot - Tips to Navigate the Current Reality in Event Planning

The **Ann Plans** team hopes you, your colleagues and loved ones are staying healthy and finding a sense of balance during this unprecedented time of uncertainty. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are working closely with clients to pivot planning for upcoming events. We have created this resource to help navigate the most pressing questions related to formulating Plan B for an upcoming scheduled event.

COVID-19 Related FAQs March 26, 2020

Is it better to reschedule, cancel or go virtual?

Most clients are rescheduling, but there are situations where another option is a better strategy. For organizations with a close-knit community of supporters, such as schools, hosting a virtual event can be a wise decision. If your event has been struggling to gain momentum around fundraising or attendance, canceling may make sense. Canceling or going virtual can also free up time and resources to focus on other pressing needs of your organization during this pandemic.

What do we need to be positioned for a successful virtual event?

Organizations best positioned for hosting a successful virtual event are those that have close relationships with the people who typically attend their live event and an audience that is comfortable engaging with technology. Pre-committed momentum gifts are critical to have in place going into a virtual event, and a large matching gift is another powerful tool to inspire giving. Keep the program short and super compelling. Include your most beloved and respected leadership, and focus on the sharing of your most impactful client or participant stories.

How far out should we reschedule?

We are recommending a reschedule no sooner than early fall based on the current climate of uncertainty. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, the fall 2020 schedule was already heavy, especially on Fridays and Saturdays, so we are encouraging clients to consider a Sunday, weeknight or rescheduling as late as December.

As soon as a new date has been secured, be sure to share it with all of your sponsors, donors, ticket purchasers, volunteers, and vendors. Having a new date confirmed gives your supporters something to look forward to, and allows you to adjust your planning timeline.

For now, it is important to put Plan B in place, recognizing that we may need to pivot again.

Should we permanently move our spring event to the fall?

With there already being a lot of competition for venue space and guest participation during the fall season, for 2021 we are suggesting organizations that traditionally host their event in the spring return to spring or consider a summer date.

Should we refund ticket purchases?

Some supporters will be happy to forego a refund and make their ticket purchase a donation. Clearly communicate the options while acknowledging these are challenging times for everyone. If your event is being rescheduled, communicate that you hope ticket purchasers can join you on the new date.

Is it okay to continue soliciting sponsorships?

With the exception of emergency campaigns related to the COVID-19 crisis, we recommend pausing for a bit on soliciting sponsorships and other gifts until people have had a chance to adjust to these uncertain times. Stay in touch, though, by letting your supporters know you are thinking about them. Share updates on how your organization is pivoting to meet the current needs of the community. Trust your intuition to know when resuming solicitations is appropriate for your donor base.

What should we do about auction donations?

Silent and live auctions will look different over the next several months due to the economic impact of COVID-19. With restaurants, theaters, sports teams and other businesses that support our nonprofits through donations on pause, we suggest pausing on auction solicitations for the immediate future.

When businesses are open again, it is important to note that many will be stretched financially, and some, unfortunately, will need to close their doors. If your organization has secured auction donations that still make sense to offer, consider doing an online auction. And, let's be intentional in supporting those businesses that have a history of being generous in supporting our community's nonprofit events.

[Please let us know](#) if there are questions we can help you navigate.



Ann Nelson, Senior Event Planner

Ann Plans has been celebrating and serving with the nonprofit community since 2007. An expert in fundraising events, we partner with organizations in creating amazing events that inspire generosity. Our team specializes in supporting each client's mission through purposeful storytelling and strategies that grow attendance, increase revenue and cultivate supporters.