

## Event Cancellations: Five things you must know

*Five key takeaways – and 5 great screen shots - from Running USA + imATHLETE Data Insight Series No. 10, presented by Jeff Matlow on March 19, 2020*

Want to watch this webinar in entirety? [Find it here](#)

Running USA presented the best attended running industry webinar in its history in partnership with imATHLETE on March 19. In an indicator of the stressors COVID-19 has placed on the running event production industry, more than 300 participants logged on to learn about best practices for event cancellation.



If you weren't able to make the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the Data Insight Series, you can watch it in its entirety at the link above. Or if your time/attention span is short, glean five key takeaways from the session by reading on here.

- 1. Never had to cancel your event before? You're not alone.** An informal survey of participants in the presentation shared that 62 percent had never had to cancel their event before. But this year, 66 percent have already had to cancel one or more of their events in 2020. The vast majority of those who have decided they must cancel carried no cancellation insurance – 80 percent, on average, of industry events were uninsured going into 2020.
- 2. Planning is paramount.** We put in an immense amount of planning and effort into preparing for an event, but it's just as important to have a plan for when the event isn't able to take place. There are 11 key questions you should ask yourself when putting together a non-event plan. They are listed below. Want to hear about each in detail? [Watch the webinar, each](#)

[question is featured individually.](#)

## 11 Important Planning Questions

1. What is your ultimate goal?
2. Do you have the financial resources to refund people?
3. Will you cancel the event or is there an opportunity to postpone?
4. Will you allow people to defer until the following year?
5. Will you give a discount for the following year?
6. Will you allow people to defer to another event?
7. Are you going to set up a virtual option?
8. Can participants pick up their goody bag (shirt, bib, medal) or will you ship it?
9. Do you want/need people to track their virtual finish times?
10. Will you provide any incentives for people who defer?
11. Do you have event cancellation insurance?



3. **Timing is a big part of the planning process. Here are 3 key slides that focus on key communication planning for events more than 8 weeks out, 5-8 weeks out, and less than 5 weeks away.**

### Events >8 Weeks Away

*The When*

- Include blurb in regular newsletter.
- Show empathy
- Acknowledge your desire to keep the event
- Explain you are monitoring and will keep them updated
- Communicate every 3-4 weeks until <8 weeks out



## Events 5-8 Weeks Away

*The When*

- If you haven't already, send notes to all sponsors and participants
- Empathize
- Be transparent
- Show strength and guidance
- Let them know when you will communicate next (every 2 weeks until <5 weeks out)



## Events <5 Weeks Away

*The When*

- If you haven't already, send notes to all sponsors and participants, NOW.
- Empathize
- Be transparent
- Let them know when you will communicate next (every week, then 2-3x/week when 2 weeks out)



4. **Make your decision to cancel as soon as you can, rather than delaying til the last minute.** The more runway you have to offer alternative options, communicate to runners, and halt the registration process in progress, the better off you will be. Proactive planning will give you forward momentum as you figure out next steps and constructive ways to move forward.

5. **Communication is key.** Eight golden rules of crisis communication are presented below. These are applicable not just to the running industry – but to ANY crisis situation you may need to communicate in work or in life.

**8 GOLDEN RULES OF CRISIS COMMUNICATION**

1. Tell the truth
2. Communicate quickly
3. Take responsibility
4. Show empathy (acknowledge & appreciate)
5. Be level-headed, not hot-headed
6. Just the facts
7. Prepare management and employees
8. Implement crisis plan

*the*  
**HOW**



Before we go, a few more ways to stay informed and educated:

Credit for all of the slides used above goes to our fantastic presenter, Jeff Matlow of imATHLETE.

To find all the slides from this presentation in a downloadable format, visit [bit.ly/CancelBestPractices](https://bit.ly/CancelBestPractices)

And one last time, you can find the full webinar [and get a bunch more useful takeaways here](#).

Past Data Insight Series events have covered virtual runs, customer service best practices and more. You can find all of those recordings on [the Running USA webinar page](#).

Visit [RunningUSA.org](https://RunningUSA.org) to find out about upcoming webinars and we hope to see you online in a presentation soon.