

## Corona Cancellations: How to Handle Events & Booking Fees

by Gretchen Fleener

Over the past couple weeks I've had the opportunity to be a part of some Zoom calls with fellow artists & agents, which has been great! I've seen many of you doing Zoom parties and jams with fellow artists online as well, and I hope this continues as it really helps keep us all going in this current state!

One of the most common concerns I'm seeing pop up on calls and in Facebook groups lately is what to do with event cancellations. Should you let people cancel or only allow them to reschedule? Should you give back all of the money they've paid you, or keep it? How far out should you allow people to cancel an event? How should you handle events going forward? Here are my two cents on the matter!

### Handling Cancellations

Some of my clients reached out to me right away, and others did not. However, I personally found it best to be proactive in this respect, really for my own sanity, so that I could get a plan of action laid out for every upcoming event, rather than waiting for the client to come to me. I decided to give everyone booked through May two options: 1) Postpone their event, I keep their payment, and we apply it all to a future date, or 2) Cancel with a full refund. Of course the former is what I aim for, but realize some events like Easter don't make sense to reschedule in summer or fall.

I sent out emails like this,

Dear [client]. In light of the current situation we all find ourselves in, I wanted to reach out to you regarding your upcoming event on [date]. While our signed contract states that we do not allow cancellations once a date is booked, we realize that this is a situation that none of us could have predicted, nor do either of us have control over. For this reason, we would like any to extend to you a temporary exception to our policy by offering you some options for your event. If you feel the need to cancel your event outright, please let us know as soon as possible and we will issue you a full refund. However, if you would like to give it some time, see how things progress, and possibly reschedule your event, we are happy to do so. Please let us know what future date you would like to reserve, and we will

apply 100% of your payment to the new date. We will then check in as your new date approaches, and if there are still government restrictions on gatherings or other COVID-19 related issues that would prevent your event from happening, we can revisit those same two options again and go from there..." So far some have had to cancel, and some are holding out hope while I hold their payment. Either way, because of situations like this, you should never, ever spend deposits/booking fees until after the event has occurred! I keep them all safely in savings and move to checking the day of the event.

### Non-Refundable Deposits: Keep or Return?

First, if you are still calling payments that you receive towards your service to book a date "deposits," it is best to start calling them "booking fees," because deposits by definition are refundable in many areas. I personally am offering full refunds, because it's the right thing to do. Yes, I take full, non-refundable payment from most clients in order to book a date on my calendar, and this is to protect me from flaky clients. This situation is not a cause of flakiness. This is a moment in time where I choose to show grace and compassion, not take advantage of people who have no control over the situation. In the end, I want to be remembered as the understanding and flexible business owner that my clients rush back to when life returns to whatever our new normal is.

My amazing painty friend, business coach, speaker, teacher & fellow local agent Lori Hurley called to my attention this week a little piece of contract law called "Force Majeure." It is a law that protects parties in contracts, should there be an unforeseeable circumstance that prevents them from fulfilling said contract. So, while I'm no contract lawyer & you may want to research the laws in your state, whether you choose the flexible/compassionate route or not, you may be legally obligated to return those deposits.

### Does This Make ME Look Flaky?

But if I flex on my contract by offering to return non-refundable payments, does this make me look flaky by not enforcing my own contract? Well, not if Force Majeure trumps your contract of course, but even

with that aside, I say no. The reason we enforce non-refundable payments is not only to protect us from flaky clients (Which we've already noted is not the case here), but because we turn away other jobs once we save a date for someone, and if they cancel, that takes away all chances for income during that time slot. This case is different because if the government has issued a shelter-in-place order during the event date, you are not losing out on income because of that client anymore....you are already losing any chance of income because of this pandemic and restrictions on gatherings. Again, out of both of your control. If you're still worried about looking wishy-washy, just make sure that you are clear all along, verbally and in writing, that the exceptions you are making are temporary and limited only to COVID-19 related conflicts.

### But That Sucks for Me!

Yes, and I'm very sorry, but it does. Being our own bosses is awesome much of the time, but this is one of those times when it really is not so awesome. As small business owners, this is one of those hits that we just have to take on behalf of our customers and the safety of everyone, so that when things settle down again, we are still seen as a legitimate business who is truly there for their clients, not just out for themselves. These are the businesses who's reputations will withstand this crippling economic situation.

### Going Forward..

It's hard to plan not knowing what's coming, but for now I am offering people the same thing I normally do...pay up front and the date is yours...but as we approach their date, if COVID-19 is still an issue, we will go back to my two options of cancelling or rescheduling, until we are back to life as normal.

I hope this helps give you some ideas for handling sticky situations while still protecting your business' good reputation. Feel free to email me any time through [Paintertainment.com](http://Paintertainment.com)...I love to hear others' opinions and help fellow artists! 

# What's News?



# EASTER BUNNY



**EFABE 2022**  
You guessed it...EFABE had to cancel! But pencil in your calendar for March 2022! Visit [www.EFABE.eu](http://www.EFABE.eu) for more info!



**New Bling Stencils!**  
Check out our NEW ballerina & fairy stencils, designed to work with your bling and/or one strokes for fast, beautiful designs!



**Balloon Blowout Sale!**  
We are reducing our balloon assortment, and selling many at our cost! Get your deals before they run out! Find them in our clearance section!

**April Coupon Code!**  
All cosmetic glitter, glitter gels, festival glitter & creams!  
Enter code **SPRINGBLING** at checkout. May not be combined with any other offers.  
**Offer expires 4/30/20**

**15% off**