

# Planners: What Stresses You Out?

(And what you can do about it)

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## (And what you can do about it)

Are the very qualities that have led to your success—being a ‘doer’ with a long to-do list—now causing you stress? It may be time to take a step back and take stock of your mental, and physical, health.

Stress affects everyone both physically and mentally—and event professionals have more than their fair share due to the demands of their work. In fact, surveys have found that that 67 percent of planners cited stress management as a top concern; and that’s likely a conservative figure.

So, what are some common taxing and upsetting situations affecting event professionals, and what are some stress-busting strategies that can help? Well, right off the bat, between the recent tariffs and trade restrictions, we’re all struggling with an uncertain economic and political climate.

But well before these recent issues arose, event planners had a specific set of challenges that may seem common to other professions, but are often exacerbated by something unique to event organizers—a very small margin for error, not to mention the very real fear that if anything goes wrong, their reputation is on the line.

Here are some of the main culprits contributing to planner stress:

- **Tight Deadlines:** Meeting and event planners often work with quick turnarounds, sometimes with only a few months or even weeks to pull everything together. When you need something “yesterday,” you’ll be stressing today.
- **Budget Limitations:** Managing a budget while trying to provide high-quality services, venues, and entertainment can be challenging. Planners have to constantly balance client expectations with financial constraints.
- **Client Expectations:** Clients often have high expectations, sometimes without fully understanding the practical limitations of budgets or timelines. Managing and meeting these expectations can be stressful, especially if a client is particularly demanding.
- **Vendor Coordination:** Coordinating with multiple vendors (catering, staging, AV technicians, etc.) and ensuring they all meet their deadlines and provide quality service is no easy task.
- **The Unexpected:** Unforeseen issues, such as weather problems, technical difficulties, or last-minute cancellations, can throw off even

the best-laid plans. Planners often need to think on their feet and come up with quick solutions to problems that arise out of nowhere.

- **Managing Attendee Lists:** Handling RSVP tracking, ensuring proper accommodations and managing any dietary restrictions or special requests can be time-consuming and stressful.
- **Long Hours:** The hours can be very long, particularly as the event date approaches, with many planners working evenings and weekends beforehand. In addition, during the event itself, the planner often closes out the evening and is the first one onsite the next morning. Are fatigue and burnout far behind?
- **Multitasking:** Planners are often juggling multiple tasks at once—coordinating logistics, managing staff, communicating with clients and overseeing budgets, among other things. The constant multitasking can be overwhelming and even disorienting.
- **Communication Challenges:** Ensuring smooth communication between all parties involved—clients, vendors, staff, and guests—can be a significant challenge. Miscommunication—or uncommunicative vendors—can lead to errors and create additional stress.

If these scenarios sound familiar, you're not alone. Over the last few years, and especially post-pandemic, Prevue has consulted a number of industry experts who have contributed to our knowledge of how planners can manage the stresses of their jobs. Here are some of their solutions:

- **Dial the Emotion Down:** Viewing the situation objectively helps enormously. Instead of jumping to "I'm a failure," concentrate on the steps needed to solve problems and roadblocks.
- **Talk to Someone You Trust.** It's all too easy to get lost in your own head when things begin to spiral, and it can really help to talk to people who can give you different ways to look at the situation. A colleague, a friend, a spouse—all can provide that objectivity needed for you to regain your equilibrium.
- **Take a Breath.** Instead of reacting in the moment, take a few breaths and give yourself time to calm down the reactionary part of your brain and concentrate on potential solutions. And as a subset of taking a breath:
  - **Make Space for Yourself**  
People who are at risk of burnout often try to be everything to everyone except themselves. So in addition to listing your tasks, add things like "take a walk, 2pm" or "have a cup of hot chocolate, 4pm" on your daily agenda. Then stick to that calendar.
- **Set Boundaries.** Boundaries are the limits or guidelines you set within your relationships—both personal and professional—that define what is acceptable and reasonable to you, and no one else. When your boundaries are defined, you'll know when someone or something has crossed a line. For example, are you throwing up your hands and doing other people's work rather than delegating like you're supposed to be doing? That's the fast-track to burnout. What about if you're a one-man (or woman) show? Firm boundaries can still help. Make sure any tasks to be done by others are clearly delineated, then follow up.
- **Let Go of Non-Obligations.** See "boundaries" above. Don't take on anything optional during your peak planning times. It's up to you to figure out what's truly a requirement and what's expendable. If it can wait, put it in your mental waiting room and continue with the "musts."

## Post-Event Stress

We've been focused on pre-event stress, but what about post-event stress? After an event ends, does it feel like your wellness and well-being tank is empty and you need time to recover?

It's a known fact that event industry professionals run on adrenaline, rarely giving their bodies an opportunity to recover from one event before executing another. This behavior is likely based on habits that have become learned behaviors, maybe a leftover from the grueling early days of their industry experience.

After all, stress and exhaustion are pretty much normalized in our society and saying, "I'm exhausted!" may feel like a badge of honor. Meanwhile, you're putting your body through a cycle of overexertion it wasn't designed for and can't cope with. Ultimately, it will catch up with you.

So instead of shrugging off the symptoms of burnout—irritability, anxiety, frustration and even a loss of motivation—use these few steps to refill that wellness tank so you're mentally and emotionally prepped for the next challenge:

- Give yourself permission to celebrate your accomplishments. Pat yourself on the back and celebrate.
- Disconnect from electronics and social media. Allow your mind to reset. Get enough sleep and eat well.
- **TAKE TIME OFF** to give yourself an opportunity to recover. Do something else—no work allowed.
- Pamper yourself—with that massage or other wellness treatment that you envisioned while you were working so hard.
- Engage in meditation and/or mindfulness practices. Relaxation exercises can improve your state of mind and outlook on life. Research shows that meditation may help you feel calmer.



# PHLCVB

Philadelphia Convention  
& Visitors Bureau

Planning a meeting, trade show, or event comes with its fair share of stress. But what if you had a partner in planning that served as your eyes on the ground and made your job easier? That's exactly what the Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau (PHLCVB) does.

From the moment you consider Philadelphia, the PHLCVB is there to help. With three specialized divisions—PHL Life Sciences (the first and only division of its kind), PHL Diversity, and PHL Sports—you will be connected to key networks, industry experts, and local businesses that help elevate your event. The Philadelphia Sales and Service teams guide you every step of the way, from bid submission to post-event wrap-up. And when you need quick answers, the PHLCVB's online planning tools like the venue search tool, business directory, and destination planning guide, keep everything at your fingertips.

Attendees will discover that Philadelphia is an accessible, walkable, and cost-effective city that naturally supports a successful and memorable meeting. From direct flights into Philadelphia International Airport—proudly American Airlines' #1 transatlantic hub—to seamless Amtrak connections, getting here is a breeze. Named "Most Walkable City to Visit" two years in a row by the experts of USA Today, planners and attendees will discover all hotels, venues, and attractions are within walking distance, saving both time and transportation costs.

Deliver a lasting impression for your attendees with the support of Philadelphia's team of destination experts. Start planning your next meeting, convention or event today.

## About PHLCVB

The Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau (PHLCVB) is your partner in planning a seamless event experience in Philadelphia. With specialized business development divisions, an expert Sales and Service team, and a city designed for inclusive, accessible and unforgettable meetings, Philadelphia is ready to help make your next event a success.

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