

Agent Decision Tree

Managing pressure, risk and representation

Before You Respond

When pressure first arises, you are often the first point of contact. Messages may feel urgent, incomplete or emotionally charged. The greatest risk at this stage is reacting before understanding what is actually happening.

Your role is not to resolve ideology or absorb institutional anxiety. It is to slow the situation, clarify what is being asked and distinguish real risk from reputational discomfort. Legal or safety risk requires verification. Most other pressure requires judgement, not speed.

Notice whether the artist is being properly consulted. If the process is drifting into informal or indirect communication, restore structure. Be cautious of artificial deadlines – urgency is often a tactic.

A pause is not avoidance. It is professional control.

Step 1: Identify the Source of Pressure

Where is the pressure coming from?

- Venue, festival or promoter
- Sponsor or funder
- Media enquiry
- Activists or campaigners
- Other artists or peers
- Internal concern within an organisation

*Different sources require different responses.
Do not treat all pressure as equivalent.*

Step 2: Identify What Is Being Asked

What is being requested or implied?

- Withdrawal from an event or project
- Public statement, apology or explanation
- Change to work or programme
- Silence or non-engagement
- Political or ethical declaration
- Nothing explicit yet - pressure is indirect

*Requests are often implied rather than stated.
Clarify before responding.*

Step 3: Separate Risk from Reputational Pressure

Is there any **credible** risk?

- Physical safety risk
- Legal risk
- Contractual breach

If **yes** → pause, document and verify.

If **no** → treat this as reputational or political pressure.

Discomfort, offence or controversy are not the same as risk.

Step 4: Check How the Artist Is Being Treated

- Is the artist being consulted directly?
- Is the artist being spoken about without involvement?
- Is pressure being channelled through third parties?

If the artist is **being bypassed**, your role is to **restore process**, not transmit pressure.

Step 5: Watch for Speed as a Red Flag

Are you being rushed?

- “We need an answer today”
- “This has to be resolved before it escalates”
- Threat of public announcement

Urgency is often a pressure tactic. Speed increases risk.

Decision Point

Based on the above:

- If **credible legal or safety risk exists**
→ slow down, document, seek advice, protect the artist
- If **reputational pressure only**
→ buffer the artist, minimise exposure, avoid escalation
- If **process is breaking down**
→ intervene to restore clarity and boundaries

You are not required to resolve institutional anxiety or moral disagreement.

What to Do Next

Before any response:

- Clarify what is actually being requested
- Decide whether a response is needed at all
- Keep communication away from the artist where possible
- Document pressure and correspondence
- Avoid speaking on the artist's behalf without consent

If escalation is required, it should be **deliberate**, not reactive.

Key Reminders for Agents

Your primary duty is to the artist's professional interests. You are a buffer, not a conduit for panic. Not all pressure requires response. Silence can be strategic when chosen deliberately. Most campaigns depend on momentum. When met with process, proportion and calm, that momentum often fades. Your role is to prevent temporary pressure from becoming permanent damage.