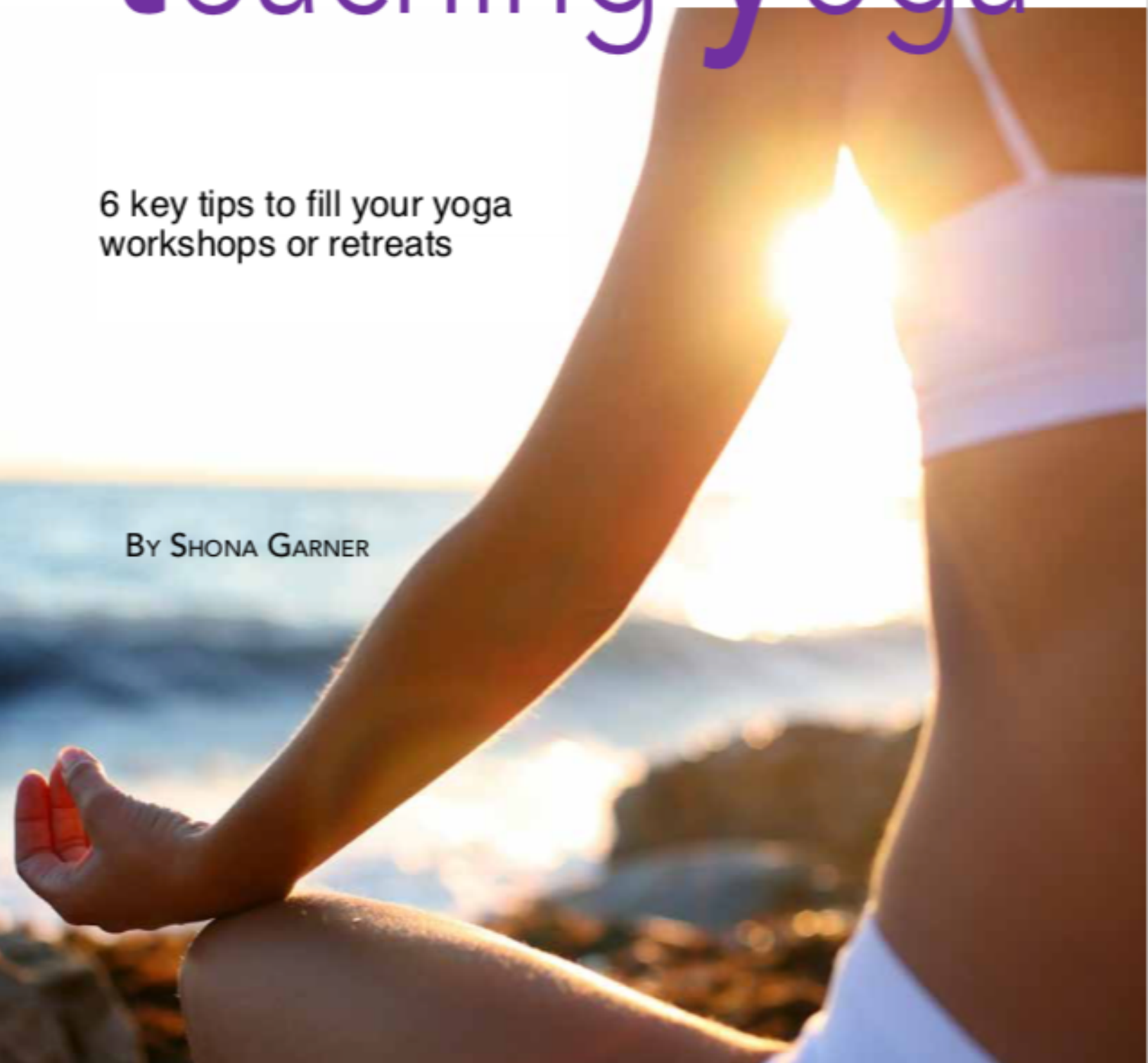


DEVELOP A SUCCESSFUL CAREER

teaching yoga

6 key tips to fill your yoga workshops or retreats

BY SHONA GARNER



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Almost every yoga teacher I speak or network wants to run, or is already running yoga workshops or retreats - and there's a very good reason for this - they can be lucrative and a good injection of cash into your business!

But the truth is they can also be extremely challenging - especially to price and to fill! There is a lot more to this whole thing than I can put into a short blog post - but let me start with what I see as the absolute basics you need to consider if you're going to run a retreat or workshop. ([See courses page on website](#) - for details of a forthcoming training which goes into this in much more depth).

Running yoga retreats and workshops can be a lucrative addition to the offerings for your students but in my view they are NOT for the fainthearted or inexperienced teacher!

6 keys to filling your yoga workshops or retreats:

OK - so here's the things I think you need to have ticked off your "to do" list and have thought about before you ever advertise a yoga workshop or retreat.

1. *Start small – with one day or half day retreats and workshops*

There are SO many reasons why this can be a good idea - unless you're **really** experienced in event management and teaching yoga! It's so tempting to dream about this fantastic retreat you'll hold in Bali or Thailand - and all the wonderful things you'll do - but I'm sure you're well aware of sites such as Book Yoga Retreats where retreats in wonderful places are jostling for attention - and which have very little to differentiate themselves from each other.

If you thought there was a lot of competition out there for yoga classes, then yoga retreats are JUST as competitive.

If you want to stand out, and not have to advertise on these sites, giving a hefty commission to them too - then learning how to run retreats which sell out at home first - will build your confidence and massively increase your chances of being successful with higher priced offerings further away. **Learn to walk before you run!!**

Which leads me nicely to key tip number 2!

2. *Have you created a community of students who know/like and trust you?*

You know, I've spent time studying the most successful retreat leaders and they have one thing in common and all say the same thing:

Don't create a retreat and then try to sell it.

Create a BUSINESS that fills retreats that sell.

I've filled 13 day retreats to date - next step long weekends - but I didn't start doing the retreats until I had built a good community of loyal, regular students who liked and trusted me and the way I worked/taught.

Once you have that, filling retreats is actually SO much easier! Every retreat day I've run has at least 75% of the numbers we need already pre-reserved so when we actually open the doors for people to book, they are the ones we go to first - and at least 50% of the places are already gone before I open it to the wider community! And sometimes we've actually had a waiting list for spaces!

I can't emphasise enough how important it is to build your community if you want to fill retreats or workshops.

So - do you have your own community yet?

No?

Then focus on building that first! Seriously! It's worth the effort in more ways than one.

3.

Do you have a plan for your retreat/workshop that actually fits the needs of the students you most want to serve?

Honestly, this HAS to be THE most important part of the work towards a retreat. There's so much to it, it's impossible to put all that into a blog post but here's my key tips on this one:

- a) Does the content of your retreat/workshop match the needs and interests of your ideal student/niche?
- b) Have you actually canvassed your ideal students to check if what you're planning is something they would love to attend?
- c) Can you say with clarity what **benefits** students will receive from attending the retreat or workshop? (**Note: this is NOT the features - not when, where, how much - but what will they actually EXPERIENCE? How will they walk away feeling? What will the learning from the day help them with? You need to connect with them EMOTIONALLY - and you can ONLY do this through talking about benefits.**)

4.

Pricing your retreat or workshop properly is absolutely crucial.

This is where the “reverse engineering” I teach in my **30 days to 30K as a yoga teacher** course can come in useful!

There are so many stories of yoga teachers who either end up having to cancel their event because they realise they haven't got enough numbers (and this often costs them as they still have to pay the venue or other up front costs) or the yoga teacher ends up not making *any* money from their workshop or retreat – or worse, ends up actually **losing** money, it's really frustrating. Even a half day workshop takes a lot of time, energy and love to pull together – and to have to cancel, or lose money on all that hard work is just totally dispiriting and likely to leave you licking your wounds for months – or even giving up on the idea altogether.

Unless you're into yoga teaching as an expensive hobby – and you can afford to do all this for nothing, then you truly cannot afford to get this wrong. The bottom line is – you need to make a profit for your effort, so planning this is absolutely critical.

And one tip here – **base your profit around a minimum number of attendees, NOT the maximum who can attend.** If you only make a profit if you fill the retreat or workshop you put yourself under FAR too much pressure – and stand to lose money. So if the maximum number is 15 students – you need to be making a profit from student 5 at least!

5.

Give at least 3 month's notice for a half or full day – and 6 to 12 months notice for a weekend or a retreat a long way away and give a deadline for payment to pre-reserves!

People need time to organise their lives! And the longer you want to keep them in your retreat – the more they'll have to plan! I promote our day retreats at least 3 months before the day and pre-reserves are given a reminder one month before that they have “first refusal” and when the deadline is to pay before we open the doors to the wider community. That usually means we are more than half full (sometimes almost full!) even before I advertise it to my wider list.

6.

Get absolutely clear about your payment and refund policy!

Cannot overemphasise this one! **Always** have a clear payment and refunds policy which prospective students are fully aware of. It's only happened to me the once - but one student on the pre-reserve list ignored all e-mails reminding her she needed to pay or her place would be opened up for someone else. I took her off the list in the system, and filled her place, and she turned up on the day!

I turned her away. We were fully booked. We had given the caterer the numbers for lunch. Could we have squeezed her in? Possibly. But you know what? That's disrespectful. She said she had seen the messages - but just wasn't sure whether she'd be able to make it or not - but she never wrote to explain and just assumed she'd be OK on the day!

There are some students it's better to lose!

Have a policy and stick to it - unless there are exceptional circumstances with a loyal student you know had a real problem.

So there you have it. Have you got those 6 things in place? If not - then I urge you to work on these things first - before you run your first event. And get as much teaching under your belt as you can: get to know your students, build those relationships, and that will pay you back massively when you come to promote your retreat or workshop.

Good luck!

Namaste,

Shona