Cost Comparison: Manual vs Online Registration

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Whether you choose manual or online event registration for your event, both methods will carry certain although different costs and benefits. It is up to you to decide which method works best for your event, but to help you with the decision we have outlined some of the more common costs and benefits that you will encounter with each method.

Manual Registration:

Manual registration means that people are faxing, mailing or phoning in their registration. From this we can assume a fairly definite set of costs that will be incurred in setting up and running a manual registration system:

Printing and mailing costs

Most events that handle registration manually have detailed information packages and registration forms that need to be professionally printed and then mailed to potential registrants. A large event can mean incurring significant printing costs, especially for high quality packages. Postage costs for mailing these packages can easily exceed the printing costs when you consider weight and size alone. Factor in additional mailing costs if your customer base is international and the tab keeps climbing.

Communications costs

Manual registration usually means lots of faxing and phoning: faxing registration forms, receiving registration forms, phoning people to verify information, taking calls for credit card numbers or phone registration or just to answer questions. Again, the phone and fax charges are considerably more for an international customer base. Donâ€™t underestimate the costs for toner and fax paper either.

Labour costs

Associated with all of the above costs are labour costs. Somebody has to send the faxes and make and receive calls over the phone and mail out the packages. Somebody else has to do all the data entry, manage the information and send out confirmations. If these people are your own employees, then in addition to their salary, you are also paying to manage them, for their office space and for their payroll deductions.

Online Registration:

Online registration is often done through an external company that specializes in online registration services. It is a more automated process with a different set of costs to consider. Bear in mind that with the majority of events it is unlikely that registration can be handled entirely through online registration as some people may not have access to a computer or they may just prefer to use more traditional methods. But if you do it right this can easily be minimized.

With online registration your cost is just the cost of using the service provided by the online registration vendor. Generally, there are two ways a vendor will charge for their services:

Setup and Administration fee

Here the vendor charges based upon the complexity of the service you need. So, for example, you pay more depending on the number of replies; whether or not there is an online payment option and how it works; security features that allow people to log-in and register and then change their information at a later date if necessary; the level of customization and branding involved; the size of your event and, consequently, the amount of data to be managed in the database, etc.

Percentage-based fee

If an online registration vendor uses this method to charge for services it means, in most cases, that they will take a percentage of the registration fee for each participant registered in your event. For example, if you have 500 people at your event and each one pays $100 to attend the event, the online registration vendor would take a percentage of the $100 for each of the 500 participants.

Check with your vendor to see which method they use and how they determine their fees. Once you have established a relationship with your vendor then a lot of the hard work is done. The vendor sets up the system for you and manages the data and there is generally very little required from you in terms of administration and time.

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