

Title:

Registration Online: 10 Secrets For Success

Word Count:

1673

Summary:

In working with more than 1000 clients, we've seen some really great ways to enhance event registration. And the best thing is that with the advent of online registration systems, much of these techniques can be automated and streamlined.

The result: a better experience for your registrants. In addition, these online registration systems eliminate many of the headaches you and your team face on a day-to-day basis.

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- * Attract more ...

Keywords:

online event registration system, registration software

Article Body:

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The result: a better experience for your registrants. In addition, these online registration systems eliminate many of the headaches you and your team face on a day-to-day basis.

These 10 little success secrets will:

- * Attract more registrants
- * Make events more valuable
- * Result in more satisfied attendees
- * Make your life as a meeting planner easier

1. Take the time up-front

You might be surprised how simple changes in your registration design can make everything much easier and more efficient for you and for your attendees - which makes everybody happy! Plus, preparation up-front will save you a lot of time and hassle in the end. Online registration systems are event registration tools to help you build your event quickly. But, all too often, building the event takes longer than anticipated because not enough time was spent designing the registration process.

Give yourself a week or more to create a great design for your online registration. That way you can percolate some really good ideas, bounce them off of others, and even get some assistance from your online registration system's support team. Some support teams will help you scope everything out, brainstorm on ideas, and even help you build your registration pages.

2. Maximize registration time

Give yourself plenty of time to register and round up registrants. The more time you have to register people before an event, the more registrants you'll have. We see so many events where registration starts a couple weeks before the event. By increasing the registration period, people perceive the event as being bigger, more important, and have a sense that it's even more worthwhile for them.

This also enables you to have tiered pricing, such as early bird specials that motivate people to sign up even earlier. Some online registration systems will automatically turn different pricing tiers on and off based on dates that you set.

3. Make Signing Up Easy

Give your prospective attendees as many opportunities as possible to say "yes" to your event. How many times have you come across an event you've wanted to attend... only to have to sort through web pages to try to find the small "register here" text link hidden at the bottom of a page. This means lost registrants and revenue. It also means more staff time in directing people to where to go. Display the link prominently on your home page, in the navigation bar, certainly on every page that discusses the event, at the bottom of emails (in the signature), and include the URL on your printed materials.

4. Help them feel at home

With most online registration services, your attendees click from your site to

your registration provider's site. This has the potential to be confusing to your attendees and may make them uncomfortable sharing their contact and credit card information. You can avoid this by changing the border, headings, and font colors on the registration pages to match your site. Also, upload your logo into the custom header and/or footer pages. Now when people click to register, they feel all warm and fuzzy about your brand and colors being right there with them.

5. Welcome them in

A "welcome" message is such a nice touch that tells people exactly what event they are registering for and make them feel good. It's a wonderful opportunity to remind your prospects of the value they'll get out of attending your event. Be specific. Whether it's a conference, incentive trip, training, or golf tournament, we all need reassurance on why we are investing our time and money. It is also a good place to explain a little bit about the online registration process (especially if there's a lot to decide on or fill out)

For example:

Welcome to the Conference on Happy Golden Retrievers. We are so excited that you will be joining us in Lake Tahoe this August 20th-23rd.

Among the 300 happy goldens, all the cool dog tricks they'll do, and all the fun we'll have hanging out with each other, it ought to be dog-gone-fun! In the next four registration pages we will ask you some questions about you and your dog, your preferences for meals, your hotel preferences, and your preferred method of payment.

Please feel free to call or email if you have any questions or problems along the way. We want to make sure you are as happy as your golden.

6. Give access to detail

One reason people abandon their registration is because they want to learn more before buying. Having links from the registration pages to more detailed pages (either on the registration form or to your website) is very important. It enables the registrant to open secondary windows, get more information, and then come back to finish their registration. You may want to encourage people to call you while they are registering, so they can get answers right away and finish their registration right then and there.

7. Ask Deeper Questions

Ask your registrants more questions than their contact information, meal

preferences, and credit card numbers. Learn more about them; their expectations for the event, their views and experience on topics related to the event, and their demographic data. Your registrants will feel the event will be more tailored to meet their needs. You can actually use the information to make the event more relevant.

Some example questions are:

- * What would you like to get out of this event?
- * How did you learn about the event?
- * Why did you decide to attend?
- * How many times have you been to this event?
- * Have you recommended it to others? Why?
- * What would you do to improve the event?
- * Which part(s) of the event are you most looking forward to?

You could use this information to improve the event, promote it, track marketing efforts, gather aggregate data to share with all attendees, and pump up aspects that people are really looking forward to. Some online registration systems will enable you to add custom questions like these to your registration pages. They may also output the responses into a nice, neat format for you as well.

8. Fulfill their desire to buy

Give your registrants the opportunity to buy more than just an event registration. Your registrants are already in the buying mood. They may be itching to get something to help them before, during, or after your event. Do you have books, t-shirts, tapes, white papers, or autographed copies of books from the speakers at your event? Or if you are a charity, this might be a great opportunity to ask for a donation. With an online registration system, you can offer your registrants additional value (with very little additional effort) as they are going through the registration process.

9. Thank your registrants

With online registration, the system automatically sends out confirmation emails to the registrant. Use this opportunity to help your registrant feel really good about their decision to attend. Write a confirmation email that sincerely thanks them, gets them even more excited about their decision to attend, and gives them a subtle reminder to tell their friends and colleagues. You may even want to put a special offer in the confirmation that would help their friends get a deal on your event.

10. Add value before the event

Most online registration systems have options for automated reminder emails at time frames that you determine. Use this capability to increase your attendance, develop more rapport, and increase referrals.

The super charging trick is to give additional value in these emails.. a tasting of a topic that will be covered at the event, an article from one of the speakers, an industry whitepaper, or hard-hitting controversial questions facing the industry.

Maybe just before the golf tournament, it's a blurb from Tiger Woods on how to putt. Give something that would add value and color to your registrants' lives.. anything that would cause them to feel like the event organizers have obviously done their homework and, therefore, the event is going to be super valuable, too.

Bonus Tips:

After reading these 10 tips, you may be asking, "Is there anything else I should know?" We decided to throw in a few bonus tips to help further enhance the event and registration experience.

1. Recruit testers to break your registration

Fully test your registration pages before going live with them. It is much easier to spend the time up front than to have the hassles and embarrassment of a misaligned registration form.

Sometime you can just be too close to it and need another set of eyes to do an adequate job of testing. The more testing you do, the smoother everything will go. Rehearse the registration while it is still in testing mode with several people in your organization. Ask the tech support advisors of your online registration provider to test it for you. Their expertise in event setup will ensure you're getting the most out of the application.

2. Bring back the people who abandon

Some systems are able to automatically email people who came to register and never finished. The email would ask if they had any questions or problems. This gives you an opportunity to be proactive in helping people complete their registrations, thereby increasing your registration numbers. On some systems, this may be a report that you can run yourself and then email to manually.

3. Talk to attendees after the event

Post-event follow up is so often overlooked. You can stand above the crowd by doing a post-event follow-up email and/or survey. Thank your attendees, ask them what they liked about the event, and what they thought could be done better. Some online registration systems can automate that process too. For example, set the system to automatically send out personalized emails with a survey link one week after the event is over.