

# How to use Online Registration Effectively

## A TelSpan Worldwide Conferencing White Paper

So now you've decided to use online registration. You know that studies show you will save between 80-90% by using online registration versus old methods. You are excited that online registration will give your organization a professional state-of-the-art image. You are anxious to experience increased response rates and attendance at your events.

Now that you're committed to this exciting new technology, how do you learn to best utilize its features to increase your efficiency, and save your organization both time and money?

Let's review a few things to keep in mind as you utilize your online registration product.

### **Don't try to collect too much information.**

Many organizations make the common mistake of trying to collect too much information from their registrants. Although your online registration tool may provide you with an almost unlimited capacity to collect data, there is a fine line between utilizing the product to its fullest data collection capability, and making the registration form so time-consuming and complex, that no one will want to register for your event. Limit the number of "required" fields in your registration form.

### **Get your invitation read.**

One of the drawbacks of online registration is the proliferation of email. All of us are inundated daily with an overabundance of email. The problem then presents itself, how do you make your email invitation stand out and get read?

- Send your invitation emails on a day of the week and time of day when they are most likely to be read. Tuesday through Thursday, late morning or early afternoon seem to be slower traffic times for SPAM emails. Avoid having your invitation land in the mailbox overnight, where it will be lost in the morning shuffle among all the SPAM that arrived overnight.
- Use an attention-grabbing headline. Put careful thought into the subject line of your invitation email. The subject line is what your recipient will scan to determine if they will even click and open your email for further review.
- Try to avoid the SPAM filters. Steer away from words in your subject that may trigger the SPAM filters. Avoid words such as "free, loans, subscribe, opportunity, please read, special promotion and all new". Avoiding words and phrases like these will increase the likelihood that your email actually reaches its intended recipient.
- Be succinct. Keep your invitation email text short and to the point. Remember, your goal once they read your invitation, is to get them to click the link to register for your event. Don't go into a long drawn out description of your event. Summarize it in one or two sentences, and emphasize exactly why your invitee would want to attend and what benefit they will receive by doing so. Phrases such as "learn how to save time and money" are more eye-catching than such things as "attend our session on time-management and office productivity".

### **Provide event information in your confirmation email.**

Carefully consider the content of your confirmation email. It should be brief and to the point. Your invitee has already registered, now is the time to simply provide information they will need to attend the event. If you are conducting an audio or web event facilitated by the same provider as your online registration product, your confirmation email will probably include instructions and codes your registrants need to attend your event. Other things to consider in your confirmation are:

- Contact information in case they need to get in touch with the event coordinator.
- Instructions on how to make changes to their registration if necessary.
- For a live event, instructions on how to physically get to the event, directions, and advice on the dress code, etc.

### **Consider how to best utilize email reminders.**

If your online registration product offers email reminders, use them! Consider them your chance to remind your registrants to attend your event. When do you want your reminders to go out? It is suggested to send a reminder approximately two days prior to your event, reinforcing the date and time of the upcoming event, and reminding registrants to check that their calendars are marked. For virtual events in particular, it is often helpful to send out a reminder several hours prior to the actual event to jog your registrants' memory one more time. Using reminders wisely should help ensure that your registrants actually attend your event; after all, it's of no use to you to have participants registered, if they forget to actually attend.

### **Use pre-event questions to learn more about your registrants.**

Put some real thought into the questions you may wish to ask your registrants prior to your event. Be sure to limit the number of questions you ask to a small number which probe for the information you wish to receive. Asking too many questions makes the registration process more time-consuming, and may discourage people from registering for and attending your event. Depending on your type of organization, the type of invitees, and what you wish to accomplish through your event, you may want to consider the following lines of data collection through pre-event questions.

- If your goal is sales prospecting, craft your questions to help qualify your prospects as potential customers before they even attend your event. You could ask questions pertaining to their current usage of a particular type of product, what they might use the product for, or ask how far out they are considering making a decision on the purchase of such a product.
- If you are prospecting for potential customers or prospective members for an organization, you may simply be looking for additional demographic information, which will enable you to mine the resulting database more effectively.
- An organization providing informational content through their events, such as an association, may wish to poll its members for ideas of possible topics they would be interested in for future events.
- In order to target your upcoming event to the audience who will be attending, you might try to ascertain questions they have for the speaker, ask their expectations of the event, or learn more about their interests in order to tailor your event content even more to those who will be in attendance.

### **Utilize reports and data after your event.**

One of the best things about an online registration product is its data collection capability. Because the data fields are set as "required" you will no longer deal with incomplete information on your attendees. Because your registrants type in their own data, misspellings or inaccurate data due to illegible handwriting or typos are virtually eliminated. The data from your registrants should be provided to you in a report format easily converted into excel. This allows you or other departments within your organization to sort the data virtually by any parameters imaginable. You will be able to use the reports to update your current database, knowing you have up-to-date phone number, fax numbers and even email addresses for future endeavors.

Remember that utilizing online registration should provide benefit to three categories of recipients, invitees, the event planner, and the planner's superiors or the organization's upper management. Let's look at the benefit to each of these.

1. Invitees
  - Online registration is appreciated by invitees because it is simple, convenient, and fast, and provides them with automatic confirmations and reminders.
2. Event Planner
  - Online registration, when used effectively, will make your event planning process much easier. Used correctly, you should shorten your event planning cycle, increase your registration and attendance rates, glean accurate data about your attendees, and overall increase your productivity while saving money.
3. Organization Management
  - Online registration should be an easy sell to your boss and other managers when you consider you should realize higher attendance and revenues, decreased costs, improved

attendee satisfaction, and receive a high quality database on all your registrations which will aid other departments such as sales and marketing in their future endeavors.

- Online registration gives your organization a technologically advanced, state-of-the-art image and keeps you in step with your competition.
4. By putting some thought into the ways you utilize online registration, you should be well on your way to higher productivity, experiencing savings on registration, and enjoying increased attendance at your events.

Call 1-800-800-1729 or contact us to learn more about **Telspan's** online registration product, **RegistrationPlus**. Let **TelSpan** show you online registration can benefit your organization today!