

Incentives + Meetings

Products, trends and sparks of genius to up the ROI on your next program.



REGISTRATION DUE DILIGENCE

Your six-point plan when sourcing an online registration service, courtesy of Mark Strongman of Effective Registration.

1. Privacy Policy:

Ask what the company does with client information. (Do they sell it to third-party marketers?)

2. Payments:

Be wary of companies that collect money on your behalf and then promise to pay you.

3. Beware Upfront Fees:

Stick with a company that bills upon services rendered.

4. Credit Card Security:

Is the system encrypted? Do they adhere to the PCI Security Council Guidelines?

5. Multi-Year Contracts:

Just say no. Your needs and the quality of the service or product may change.

6. Get It In Writing:

After you've asked the tough questions, get their answers in writing.



“Today’s online systems are hospital corner crisp.”

Maria Martins, Congress Canada

Beyond *Name Badges*

These days, online registration can be as detailed and as seamless as you want it to be (or as your budget allows). Here’s the latest. *by Sherryll Sobie*

Event registration processes have come a long way. Just ask Maria Martins, director of operations at Toronto-based Congress Canada, who has witnessed its evolution—the good, the bad and the ugly—over the last 19 years with the DMC and full-service professional conference company.

“Fifteen years ago we tested the first online registration system and sought out various suppliers,” says Martins. “All had benefits, some had drawbacks.” But that was then. Mar-

tin says the growing pains have long since passed, and today’s online systems are hospital corner crisp.

For the last seven years Martin has been working with Streampoint Solutions, a Vaughan, Ont.-based online registration services company. According to Patrick Essaye, the company’s vice-president of business development, “Our system is based on modules that perform basic functions common to any event: demographics, hotel selection, membership information and so on. Our

niche is customizing each module.”

Streampoint’s vice-president of sales and marketing, Dharmesh Dayabhai, says how far you go with customization depends on your needs. “Delegates can enter a conference centre, scan their barcodes and immediately get a printout of their badge. Then they can walk into the ballroom and be tracked,” he says. That’s what Essaye calls “the sex and sizzle,” of the online registration programs, and while it’s nice to dream about super →

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high-tech features, what ultimately captures planners' hearts is the meat and potatoes of most meetings: reducing time and expenditures.

Another benefit is how effective it can be in impressing your clients or your company's executives, says Essaye. "Planners can set themselves apart by having a strong understanding of the technology and a solid relationship with an online registration firm."

Mark Strongman, president of Toronto-based Effective Registration, says, "As an application service provider we capture information on web forms, rather than having someone writing it all down. Therefore we eliminate a step, saving time and money. We give users the tools to manage registration, to keep track of secure online payments and make changes in real time."

Strongman calls his system "configurable;" how much you add-on is up to you. The most important factor is that it suits your client's needs and budget.

If it all sounds a bit sci-fi, it's really not. "It's an interface—like Facebook—it's easy to navigate," says Martin. As for the investment, she says, "The money you spend depends on the level of service you receive. You'd be surprised how inexpensive it can be." *

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