

White Paper – Online Event Registration

Overview

As nonprofit organizations continue to expand their presence on the Internet, they are finding that donors and prospects appreciate the “self service” nature a website provides. One of the successful ways organizations are raising funds and appealing to donors needs is through special events. By utilizing their websites to promote and register event attendees they can expand their reach, simplify their work, and save time.

Managing the Event

Managing any event can encompass many diverse activities. However, every event will have a common set of requirements. These include the need to market the event, maintain information about the event, track attendees, costs, special requirements, and provide reports. The following example will discuss options available with eTapestry in managing a special event completely online.

Set up/Planning

There are several things to consider when setting up your event. Consider how you want to market the event, who you want to invite, how you want them to register or respond, and what reporting you would like to do when the event is over.

Virtual marketing, or marketing over the Internet, can provide new ways to reach potential event participants. Using your organization’s own web site as the starting point, you can provide advanced information of the event to create interest and encourage supporters to return to the site for follow up information.

Partnering with other organizations, such as vendors or co-sponsors of the event may allow you to set up a link from their web site to yours. This is another way to reach participants who may not have been directly involved with your organization.

Inviting potential attendees to your event can now be done in the blink of an eye online through email.

Using eTapestry queries you can easily select those that you would like to invite. This can be based on virtually any set of criteria in your database. Then use the Communication facility to generate a mass emailing. Creating an email template allows you to personalize your invitations per event and distribute them in a timely manner.

As an advertising tool, email is one of the most effective you can utilize. A perfect example of this was seen from an organization that sent email invitations to 50 constituents inviting them to a poetry reading. The original invitation asked that they forward the email to anyone the recipient thought might be interested. Their hope was to get 35 people to attend. Over 300 people showed up! This may not happen in all cases, but it does illustrate the power of email. For your event, you could send a special invitation to members of your board, or your major gift donors – all with a simple eTapestry query. By creating and using an email template you would only have to make a few changes to personalize your message to them.

Registration Online

Your email message then directs recipients to your website where a prominent link points them to an event registration form. Your attendee could then sign up for the event right from the website by filling out a web based registration form. This form can be as customized as you like, from colors to pictures to anything else. This kind of form is highly effective in collecting and standardizing participant data. Since the information can be passed directly from the website into eTapestry, you eliminate the need to re-enter data and can begin generating reports immediately.

Based on real time registrations, up to the minute reports can be printed, nametags can be generated, and seating assignments can be updated.

One of the biggest advantages is the ability to process registration fees and/or donations online! Although this can be set up as a payment option for the event, the ability to collect funds immediately provides

more current reporting and less worry about when the attendee might pay. eTapestry can provide the ability to collect, process, verify, and send an email to the donor confirming a registration made with a credit card. These payments are then automatically recorded in the donor's journal.

Another benefit of online registration is that you can now offer your participants "self service". In addition to specifying information at the time of registration, you will be able to create a login id and password for that participant. This means the participant can return to the website, and make changes to their references, including phone numbers, mailing address, and email.

Often times event coordinators may want to get additional information from those attendees who have registered for their event. Your eTapestry online form can ask specific questions created by the coordinator, who can also determine the format of the answers, such as offering choices or selections, entering free text, or selecting yes or no. This information can apply to the current event or be more general information on the donor. This data is automatically recorded by eTapestry in the donor's record and is available for query, reporting and analysis.

Organization Reporting

With coordinators updating event information, participants and attendees registering, and options changing, one major advantage is having this information in one place and accessible online. Reports can be generated real time, including both monies coming in and monies being spent (such as payments to vendors, etc...). Reports for the number of registrants, who has paid and who hasn't, who is going to volunteer, or seating assignments can be accessed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. No need to go back to the office to generate this report. You can get the information you need from anywhere you have Internet access!

Summary

We have outlined steps in creating an online presence for your event and suggested how technology can be

a benefit to making your event more successful. One major contributor to the success of the event is how you manage the data. eTapestry has services available to track event information, collect credit card fees, and provide you up to the minute reporting. If you would like to create an event registration form, collect fees, and have it automatically integrated with your eTapestry database, simply contact us at support@etapestry.com. We can easily assist you in putting this together.

About eTapestry

Founded in 1999, Indianapolis-based eTapestry® is the first web-based donor database and communications management system that delivers its software over the Internet, allowing access from desktops, laptops and mobile devices. eTapestry's web site development, ecommerce and advanced email tools give its more than 3,000 customers a fully integrated and maintenance free solution. For more information, visit www.eTapestry.com.

eTapestry is a Blackbaud company.