

# Managing Event Registrations: The Keys to Keeping It Organized

Lauriane Lebrun, Marketing & Communications Coordinator

Event management can get pretty overwhelming – but, ironically, this usually means your event is doing well. We all want lots and lots of people to attend our events, right? Why wouldn't we when events can be such a great tool for raising awareness about our organizations while also raising funds?

The only downside to lots of registrations is that they can be a challenge to track. A few people registering at the wrong rate here, a few cancellations there, and a few checks in the mail in between can lead to a whole lot of confusion if not kept organized from beginning to end.

There are plenty of ways to handle the event registration process. For some organizations, registrants can preregister online using a service such as Constant Contact. While these online options tend to be well-organized, they may not provide exactly what your volunteers need during onsite check-in. For example, if someone registered at a member-exclusive rate, can your service confirm whether or not that person is in fact a member? An online registration service can also tell you if a registrant intends to pay by check, but it can't tell you if a check has been received unless someone updates it manually.

For these reasons, it's important to keep a separate, detailed spreadsheet – a “Master File” – for registration tracking *in addition* to your online service. And, if multiple staff/volunteers handle the registration process, it is necessary that this Master File be accessible to all of them, and that it is updated on a regular basis.

What should your Master File include? The specifics will, of course, vary based on your organization and event, but here are some ideas:

- Registrant contact information and membership status/ID number
- Registrant payment information (tender, date paid, fee due, etc.)
- Details regarding any complimentary registrations
- Notes about important registrants, such as event sponsors
- Badge information, if badges are to be printed for your event attendees

Once you've mastered the tracking of pre-registrations, it's also important to consider onsite check-in procedures. Will walk-ins be allowed? If so, what information needs to be collected from walk-ins? Does the check-in sheet you are providing to your onsite staff/volunteers make it clear when someone has not prepaid? Will onsite check-in also include an opportunity to buy raffle tickets, merchandise, etc.? If so, how will registration-related cash be separated from other purchases as funds are collected?

Ideally, the individuals working your event check-in station are friendly, organized, and able to keep calm under pressure. It is best if they are provided with envelopes, pens/pencils, paper clips, and something to write notes on as check-in takes place. Laptops or tablets may be utilized, but make sure to have a back-up plan, as WiFi or charging issues may lead to disaster. Additionally, it is important to have a solid understanding of what the check-in station will look like prior to the event and to streamline the process accordingly. The goal is to get everyone checked-in quickly and efficiently. Consider splitting the check-in lines alphabetically, or setting up individual stations for walk-ins, pre-registrants, raffle purchases, etc. If your registrants have to fill out any kind of form after they check in, consider handing out clipboards and pens so they aren't forced to linger at the registration table, potentially holding up the line.

Finally, if you are the person working the check-in table, be sure to make note of any chaos or confusion that takes place. Share your observations with the people who handle pre-registration – they will likely be more than happy to modify procedures for your next event. After all, the goal is the same for everyone involved: to put on an enjoyable, successful event that helps your organization thrive... and it all starts with people registering and showing up.

Recommended Reading:

[Tips on Running an Effective Event Registration Table](#)