Upper Makefield Basketball

Upper Makefield Basketball Scores Major Efficiencies and Improved Effectiveness with Convenient Online Registration System

Background

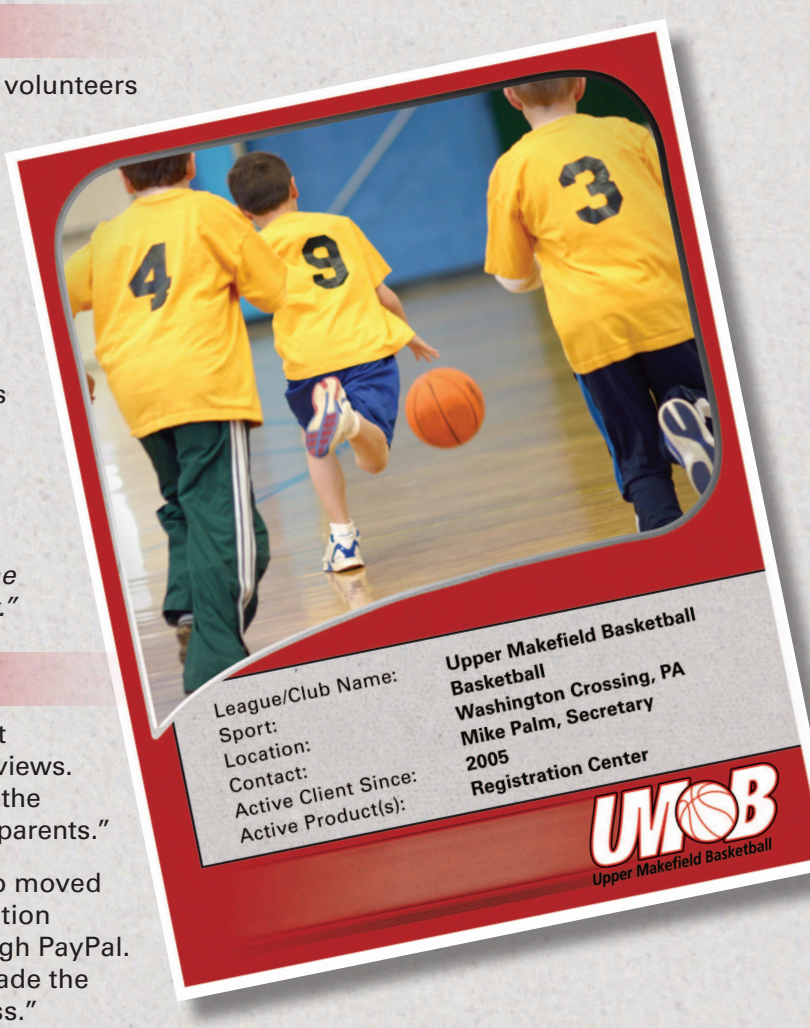
For over 20 years, Upper Makefield Basketball volunteers have coached and led second through twelfth grade boys and girls basketball teams in the Upper Makefield Township of Pennsylvania. The 501(c)3 non-profit organization's season runs late September through March encompassing 14 travel teams and 58 intramural teams. Mike Palm, Secretary and Board Director of the Upper Makefield Basketball program, is the first to recognize that there is no real off-season for the coaches, Board of Directors or volunteers when there are hundreds of athletes to attract, register, assign to teams and communicate with throughout the year.

Challenge

Up until about five years ago, Upper Makefield Basketball volunteers would hold open registration usually comprised of two Saturdays and three weeknights happening over a six week period. The open registrations required two to three volunteers to work up to four hours handling the large volume of pre-season registrations. For the families that were unable to attend the open registrations, the Board of Directors would field calls to fill out the registration forms over the phone.

In total, the registrations required well over 70 man hours just to collect the paperwork.

"Our biggest pain point actually came after the open registration events," noted Palm. "Once we had stacks of paper registration forms, we had to convert them to electronic forms. We invested a significant amount of time simply inputting data. And as we all know, time is money."



Solution

"We heard of a local baseball league in the community that moved to an online registration system and gave it rave reviews. It provided more efficiencies and better effectiveness, and the league noted that online registration was well-received by parents."

So Upper Makefield Basketball took the initiative and also moved to online registration. "We looked at three online registration systems, and even considered just a billing system through PayPal. Of the three, one system, Active's Registration Center, made the most sense to us in terms of the fees and user friendliness."

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Best Practices

Palm admits that in the first year using the online registration system, Upper Makefield Basketball limited its marketing of the service to just a postcard mailed to its existing database. The organization still hosted open registration nights the first year, but limited them to four nights total. Approximately 35% of total registrations in the first year came through the new online system.

By the second year, Upper Makefield got serious about promoting the convenience of online registration to parents, and actively promoted it through an email blast with the help of Active Network, Sports' email services, a separate email blast targeted specifically to families in the Upper Makefield Basketball database, through a promotion on the Website, through a direct mail campaign, and on flyers distributed through the local schools. Its efforts paid off. "We drove well over half of our registrations to the online system in the second year, closing in on almost 70%."

Results

Just three years later, well over 90% of registrations were processed through the online system in the most recent registration period. "I think we had a total of 20 walk-in registrations out of our more than 600 registrations."

"The online registration system has made life so much easier for us," says Palm. "We're now only receiving a couple of checks that we have to deposit, versus the 600+ checks we used to receive. Reconciliation used to be a mess; now we can reconcile immediately, daily, weekly, monthly. We know the status of every player's account with the click of a button."

In addition, Upper Makefield Basketball has also gained efficiencies and effectiveness in several different ways. "We've eliminated the collection and deposit of tons of checks, and we've improved data accuracy, as the ownership is now on the parents to accurately enter and update their information online. We've also eliminated our pain point on the manual data entry because the information is already electronic."

In addition to improving operations on the back-end, Palm notes that the organization's customer service capabilities have improved. "We get pinged every time someone registers online. Families can register when and where they have the time, so we see these pings come in at all different times. We see this as meeting our members/families' needs and making our services available in ways that are convenient for them. We've just made it very easy for families to engage with us and find information on demand."

Upper Makefield Basketball's Advice for Organizations Considering Online Registration:

Do it. If there's a fear of moving toward online registration because you think customers may not want it, believe me, people want the convenience.

Once you do it, market it. If you have online registration, people won't necessarily just use it. Make the statement loud and clear to your customers that this service is available for their convenience through multiple touch points.