

Sandy Plains Baseball Association

Sandy Plains Baseball Association Becomes a Fan of Active Network's Online Registration System

Background

Located in Marietta, Georgia, Sandy Plains Baseball Association (SPBA) is nearing its 40th anniversary as a youth baseball organization. Each year, the association plays two seasons for athletes ranging from 4 to 18 years old. With over 1,100 recreational and travel players participating in the spring season and nearly 800 in the fall, SPBA Registrar Win Halkyard has had his hands full over the years.

Challenge

In the past, the SPBA conducted registration in a few different ways. The process began with pre-registration forms. The association would mail out the forms, parents would complete the forms and mail them back with payment, and the handwritten forms were interpreted by Win and manually entered into the association's Windows-based software program.

Halkyard notes, "In my past life, my daily routine three to four weeks prior to the registration deadline consisted of leaving work, driving to the post office, pulling out more than 100 envelopes at a time, driving home, skipping dinner, opening and sorting all of the registration forms, entering the data, separating checks, and filing forms. And that was just the process for the pre-registration forms!"

"Our registration was challenging and labor-intensive, to say the least."

Solution

Over the past two years, Halkyard received phone calls from Active Network, Sports, about its Registration Center solution, an online registration system that would store data, process payments and required no set-up fees. SPBA board members researched a couple of other online registration providers as well, but Active's name kept coming up. **"Active seemed to be the most commonly used and simplest to understand. After we overcame our initial fears about online registration and found a company that looked like the right fit, we were ready to move forward."**

SPBA selected Active's Registration Center solution and in the spring of 2008, debuted online registration for the first time.



Success Strategies

To promote the availability of online registration, Halkyard notes that the board communicated the new option through four different channels. First, information about online registration was splashed across the homepage of the association's Website. Second, hard copy notices were sent to all previous registrants notifying them that pre-registration forms would not be mailed out that year and instead, parents and players could register online at their convenience. Third, the online registration information was included on the association's telephone hotline. And finally, the board relied heavily on word-of-mouth to drive registrations. Board members personally disseminated information to coaches and managers, who were then responsible for disseminating information to parents and players.

Each of these strategies worked. **Approximately 75% of SPBA players were registered online through the Active system in its first season.** For the remaining 25%, Halkyard notes, "We'll likely always have to have a walk-up registration session. Some families don't have computers or don't use credit cards."

Results

"Now that parents are empowered to enter in all of their player's information themselves, three to four weeks prior to the registration deadline, I now go home, eat dinner and watch the registrations come in. This has absolutely been a very positive experience for us."

As for the cost, Halkyard notes that the board evaluated the cost upfront, considering a number of different registration scenarios. Ultimately, the board elected a minimal fee increase to cover the cost of the registration and credit card transactions. "The fees were negligible for our participants. For organizations considering online registration, know that there is a cost to cover transactions fees, but you can offset it through a modest fee increase. Our parents certainly didn't mind."

SPBA's Advice for Organizations Considering Online Registration:

You cannot over-communicate the shift to online. We did it one way for a long time. When that pre-registration form doesn't show up in their mailbox anymore, you're bound to get calls. Start early and communicate often. Use the database in place today and start mailing out postcards to tell your participants and their parents about the change.

Don't skip over the questions you put on the online form. There is a lot of information that is required in order to effectively run an organization. Active has been very helpful in providing questions to ask. Take that advice. There are templates already built. Use them.