

AuctionITWizard.com and R-TEAMS

Real-time event and auction management system.

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If your organization has a major fundraising event coming up, and you want to simplify the auction process, increase revenue, and simplify the payment collection process for the event, R-Teams is a solution you should consider.

R-Teams leverages barcode technology in combination with touch-screen terminals, wireless PDAs with barcode scanners, and credit card processing to achieve the following goals.

1. Increase event revenue by making it easier for participants to spend money.
2. Reduce wait times for participants.
 - a. Purchasing any type of items.
 - b. Auction item pickup.
 - c. Checkout.
3. Increase accuracy and simplify the auction process.
4. Provide real-time accurate accounting / tracking of the event's proceeds and participants.

What we will do:

1. Work with you before the event to make sure your needs are being met.
2. Come to your event and setup the system.
3. With the help of your volunteers, run the system at the event.
4. Provide you with a full detailed accounting of the event's revenue at the end of the event.

More about the system:

The system uses barcode technology to charge and track purchases at the event. At a typically event, we give barcoded wristbands to the participants as they enter the venue. Using touch-screen terminals with barcode scanners and credit card swipe readers, we can have the participant self register as they enter the event and self checkout as they leave the event. We can sell the participant entrance tickets, raffles, drinks, poker chips, just about anything using PDAs to scan their wristband and charge their account – all in real-time. We also use these PDAs to close the silent auction tables and track live auction purchases – all in real-time. This system totally eliminates the auction checkout scramble, and the “after event” accounting nightmare. The ability to scan the wristband and “charge” the purchases makes buying easy for the participant thus resulting in increased event revenue.

Check-in Process

Our system requires that all guests “check-in” as they enter the venue. If appropriate, we can integrate online pre-registration with the event check-in process resulting in overall faster check-in times. The event check-in process is a quick and simple self-registration process using touch-screens terminals. This is required to create an account based on the participant's wristband number and associated phone number and name.

Furthermore, through the check-in process, the participant is asked if another person should be added to their account on file. This is typically used for a spouse and or a child, but can also be used for a company wishing to sponsor its employees.

Typical registration takes about 30 seconds per person. With 4 terminals running, the math indicates the check-in period needs to be at least 15 minutes per 100 guests. But as guests don't arrive in a nice conveyor belt queue, additional times needs to be added. For 200 to 300 guest expectancy, the check-in time window should be about 1 hour. By increasing the number of terminals, we can further reduce overall check-in time and wait time bottlenecks.

Credit Card on File (CCOF) Option

Additionally, if the organization wishes, during the check-in process, we can collect the participant's credit card information and store it with their registration information for the event. This process is very similar to what happens when checking into a hotel. The credit card is not charged for any purchases until the event is closed out. CCOF guests can also pay cash for any purchases instead of charging their account. This added feature essentially guarantees payment for all purchases.

By using the CCOF option, you make the checkout process very easy for participants – especially those who do not win any auction items. The participants can leave without formally checking out and their credit card will be billed automatically for their purchases (they are told this as they enter the venue). Furthermore, when the guest checks out, they have the option to pay with cash or check for their charges if they don't want to charge their credit card.

If you decide to use the CCOF option, there will be participants who do not want to "leave" a credit card on file. Those customers will be considered normal cash customers. They will still have a wrist band and be required to check-in, but will pay with cash at the time of sale for any purchases. Cash customers who win auction items will have to pay (cash, check, or credit card) for their items before receiving them up. If a cash customer wishes to use a credit card, they will need to return to registration and register their credit card.

For most charity events, the reason the guests are there is to support the charity – financially and socially. If you decide to use the CCOF option, then communication to the participants prior to the event is very helpful, and of course necessary as the guests arrive to "educate" them in the benefits of this process.

Details, details, details... Explanation of the different components.

1. Identify each participant.

The first thing to do is uniquely identify each person in the system. The easiest and most secure way to do this we found is by giving each participant, as they enter the venue, a sequentially numbered barcoded wristband. This unique number becomes their "account number". It is

best to have a few people greet the guests, put the wristbands on them, and explain the check-in / checkout and purchasing process.

2. Participant check- in / checkout

We have designed the system so that participants can do a very simple quick self check-in / checkout using touch-screen terminals. This reduces the number of staff needed to “man” the stations. For 5 check-in/out stations, you might need 2 staff to help and guide the participants as needed. Check-in consists of

- a. Scanning the wristband.
- b. Swiping the credit card if the CCOF option is selected - name is electronically read from credit card and stored.
Otherwise enter the first and last name if cash customer.
- c. Enter the phone number
- d. Guest is given the option to add additional guest to his / her account.
- e. Registration finished – Enter Venue.

3. Participant Checkout

Using the same touch screen terminal used for check-in, participants will be able to checkout by scanning their wristband which pulls up their account, view their purchases including won auction items, and select a payment method (cash, check, or charge). Note that a staff member is needed to collect cash and checks. A receipt will print with their charges for the evening. Furthermore, an “auction printout” sheet will be generated that the auction attendants will use to collect all items won by the participant. Please see the section below on auctions.

4. Purchasing & Scanning.

Using the participants wristband barcoded number, we can use wireless PDA's with bar-code scanners to charge the participants for drinks, raffle tickets, poker chips, essentially anything – without the participant having to reach for his or her wallet or dig into their pockets for cash. The ability to easily scan the wristband and “charge” the purchases makes buying easy resulting in increased event revenue. All transactions are updated in real-time to the database.

5. Live auction.

Live auctions are very simple to administer. Once an auction item has been sold, an auction attendant will scan an auction sheet that has the live auction items listed on it, then scan the winner's wristband, then enter the final bid. For verification, a second auction attendant should be writing the winning bid on a separate copy of the live auction items list.

6. Silent auction items.

Before the event:

We will provide a spreadsheet format for all auction items to be entered into that will included all of the necessary information that we need, plus any information that the organization needs for their records.

All auction items are assigned a barcode number. Corresponding numbered sticky labels are provided to attach to the auction items for positive identification. We use an auction file folder box that has a folder for every auction item – that is sorted by auction item number. All gift certificates and paper like auction items are filed in this folder box with the sticky label attached to the certificate. For physical items that won't fit in the file folder (like a pair of skis), the sticky labels is attached to the auction item.

The system will print out a single bid sheet for each item with the details of the auction item, barcode number, starting price, bid increment, etc. Only one bid sheet is needed and should be securely taped to the auction tables so participants can't remove them.

During the event:

At the auction tables, participants write their barcode number and their name on the bid sheet when placing a bid. When the table / item closes, an auction attendant uses a marker pen to cross out the bid sheet and circle the final price thus preventing future bidding on this item. Then using a PDA, they scan the bid sheet to identify the auction item, enter in the barcode number of the participant, and then enter the final auction price. This information is immediately transmitted back to the database and the system is updated. There is no longer a need to take duplicates of the bid sheet back to a workspace and tabulate who won what and sort it and figure it out. The system will do all of this right away.

The participant can go to the checkout table at anytime, scan their wristband at one of the self-service terminals, and see how many items they won, pay for the items, and print a list of auction items won. An auction printout pick list sheet is printed so an auction attendant can collect and give the items to the participant, and have the participant sign the printout to verify that they received their items. The auction attendant files the auction printout sheet in the auction file folder under the first auction item that was won.

If you have ever done a manual auction, you will appreciate that the system has done all of the messy and stressful work for you.

Credit Card Fees and Credit Card Security

Our system is designed to electronically capture credit cards using credit card swipe readers. The system encrypts the data as it is being collected thus making the customer's data completely safe and secure. Because the credit card information is collected electronically, it is sent in a secured electronic form to the financial institution resulting in very low credit card fees. The best rate we have found for a non-profit is with PayPal. PayPal offers to non-profit organizations 2.2% of credit card charges plus \$0.30 per transaction with a setup/monthly fee of \$30.00. For most organizations, the total credit card fees, which include the one time \$30 fee, we typically see a final rate of about 2.6%.

We also have options for organizations who have an existing merchant account that they wish to use. In addition to Visa and MasterCard, we can accept both American Express and Discover.

If you currently use the manual credit card machines (the ones where you put the customer's credit in the machine and emboss it on a carbon copy), or manually enter in a customer's credit card information on a charge slip, you are being charged the maximum rates for credit card fees – typically around 5% to 6%. Using our system instead, based on \$15,000 worth of transactions, would save over \$500.00 in credit card fees.

Accounting

At the end of the event, our system will print out a detailed accounting sheet showing the total credit card charges, cash and check payments. All cash and checks will be immediately reconciled against the accounting sheets. The cash and checks will be entrusted to the care of the event organizer or their delegate.

What we charge:

Our primary goal is to help support the community. Every dollar that you have to pay to a vendor – is one less dollar that will help support our community. To that end, we will negotiate a fee that makes sense for your organization and the size of your event. We have found that the money saved on credit card processing fees, by using our using our electronic credit card processing system verse the manual credit card processing that most organizations use, will typically cover a major portion of our fee – thus a minimal additional expense to use our system – but gaining all of the advantages of the real time event and auction management system.

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