



The Big 10

The Major Keys to a Successful Run

Websites, Online Registration, & Entry Forms

Information distribution is crucial to achieve the registration numbers your event desires. Your event should be utilizing multiple forms of marketing and media platforms making it simple and quick to register.

1. Does your online registration, websites, and entry forms look good?

The ever changing face of technology has brought great solutions and opportunities for races to succeed. Races should rely heavily on the internet and the different solutions for data distribution and registration. Websites should have a website landing page, this could be an online registration site, along with being listed on online calendar. Paper registration forms should be used as a last resort. With all forms on media – information should be fun, clear, and quickly while accurately portraying your event.

2. Does your website, online registration, and entry form convey all-important information?

Event type, Date and Time, Location (parking info is also helpful)

Cost Information: Clearly indicated cost, as well as dates and amounts of price breaks

Contact Information: Contact name, Phone number, E-mail

Participant Response Parameters: Name, Address, Phone number, E-mail, Date of birth, Gender, Event specific info (shirt size, specific event if several, team information, etc.)

3. Did you get your online registration, website, and entry form out in a timely fashion?

Runners are typically a pretty organized bunch. The sooner you get your entry form out, the sooner they can work you into their training calendar.

4. Are you posting your information in multiple locations

Playmakers' offers a great online calendar that is utilized by many around the Greater Lansing Area and throughout Michigan. However, there are many other opportunities to publish information for free around the web including running specific websites (RunMichigan.com), local community websites, and through social media.

5. Get social and stay social

Social media rules the world of marketing and can provide free opportunities to get the word out about your event. Utilize the social world to create positive buzz about your event.

Volunteers

Volunteers are the key to a great event.

1. Do you have enough volunteers?

You should always plan on at least a few of your volunteers not showing up on race day. Furthermore, don't plan on most volunteers being able to perform multiple tasks. It's usually a good idea to bring in more volunteers than you think you will need. No sane race director has ever complained of having too much help.

2. Do the volunteers have sufficient direction?

One person (from your race committee) should be stationed to direct and answer volunteer questions. Make sure that volunteers are comfortable with their assignments prior to their jobs beginning. Try to anticipate any questions your volunteers may have.

3. Did you take care of your volunteers?

Your volunteers are giving you their time. You want to make sure that they have a good time. Make sure to have refreshments for your volunteers. It is customary, as well, to have t-shirts for your volunteers (This can have the added benefit of helping to identify your volunteers, if the shirts are unique.)

T-shirts (or bags, etc.)

Most runners have an ample supply of shirts. They don't need another shirt. They need another really cool shirt. Think of your race T as free advertising for your event. It's in your best interest to have a shirt that runners will repeatedly pull from their drawer. There are several things to keep in mind.

1. Does the shirt look good?

Spend an appropriate amount of time on the artwork. Make sure that any artwork on the shirt enhances the look. When in doubt, it's usually best to simplify. Resist the temptation to overcrowd the shirt. Runners want a cool design, not a billboard.

2. Do you have enough?

Make sure to have enough shirts to cover your pre-registered entries. Early registration discounts will encourage runners to sign up earlier. Have on hand, also, sufficient shirts for your expected race day entries. In the event that you do run short, you should have a predetermined contingency plan to accommodate those who do not receive a shirt.

Registration

If not done properly, registration has the potential to become a major headache for runners and volunteers, as well as race directors. One simple rule to remember here: Runners Hate Lines. The key to a successful registration is planning ahead.

1. Have you selected an appropriate location for your registration?

Registration should be conveniently located to both parking and the event. Consider, also the expected size of your crowd. It is very difficult to process a large crowd through a small room.

2. Have you selected an appropriate layout for your registration?

Unless you have a very small event, it is not efficient to process all of your participants through one person or area. You should have a separate area for pre-registered and walk-up registration. Your pre-registered area should be appropriately segmented to handle multiple runners (alphabetical, etc.). You need to make sure to have plenty of volunteers here.

3. Have you properly trained your volunteers?

Your volunteers need to know how to efficiently process registrations before registration begins. Never assume that someone will be able to figure it out as they go. In addition, your registration staff should be able to answer basic questions about the event. A prepared information sheet is helpful.

4. Do you have all of the necessary supplies?

Make sure to have plenty of pens, markers, cash, safety pins, etc. that your registration volunteers may need.

Course

There are many factors in the design of a successful racecourse.

1. Is the course enjoyable?

Consider scenery and terrain, as well as potential crowd support. Remember, you want your event to be more fun than running on the treadmill at the local health club.

2. Is the course safe?

There is no room for error here. All reasonable precautions must be taken to ensure that every participant is able to complete the event safely. If the course utilizes roadways in any form, there must be sufficient barricades or safety personnel. Any hazards on the course should be sufficiently marked, and announced to runners in advance of the event.

3. Is the course accurate?

Unless your event has been published as a fun run or walk, every effort should be made to ensure that your course is accurate. This means measuring the course several times. Remember to account for any obstacles around which runners will have to detour.

Make sure, as well, that the entire course is clearly marked. Cones can be moved or knocked over. Chalk and paint work great. Never assume that runners will be able to figure out the correct line to take. Always assume the worst when it comes to marking your course. All corners should be marked, and incorrect paths blocked whenever possible. It is helpful to have volunteers stationed around the course to help direct runners. In addition, most runners like to have mile marks clearly indicated on the course.

4. Does your lead vehicle know the course?

The race leader must be certain of the entire course. The leader needs to go over the course in advance of the event.

5. First Aid/Medical

Make arrangements with local municipality to make sure there are ambulances and police on staff.

Have a plan! If something were to happen on the course, how long would it take for help to arrive? Do your course marshals have communication from the course?

6. Severe Weather

Rain, Snow, Lightning, High Winds, or Flooded Course can impact your event. Do you have a plan to make the necessary changes in order to ensure the safety of your participants and volunteers? Can you delay the start? Can you change the course?

Again, have a plan! When something unexpected happens nothing is worse than trying to invent a reasonable safe solution on the fly.

Finish Line

A race is, after all, a race. Most people are there to make it to the finish as quickly as possible. This is, therefore, one of the easiest places to ruin an otherwise excellent event.

1. Does your finish line look professional?

You should have sufficient signage or banners so that runners are able to clearly identify the finish line. In addition, a professional looking finish line helps to leave runners with a positive impression of your event.

2. Is your finish line large enough?

This is based on the number of participants, as well as the timing technology being utilized. Your finish chute, or chutes, should be large enough that every runner has the chance to finish easily and safely.

3. Do you have enough workers at your finish line?

Make sure to have enough workers to assist runners, as well as process finishers quickly. Make sure, too, that these workers know their assignments ahead of time. It's very difficult to train chute workers once runners are finishing. Along with registration, this is an area where it can be particularly helpful to have experienced volunteers.

4. Do you have some means of recognizing your participants?

Runners enjoy being cheered, by name, if possible as they approach the finish.

5. Are you prepared to process the results?

It's important that your results are processed quickly and accurately. You may want to hire someone to do this for you. If you do hire someone, make sure to communicate about whom will be staffing the finish.

6. Did you stay for the whole event?

Every participant counts, even the last one. Make sure that the impression of the last runner is as positive as the leader.

Kid's Run

A children's run can help to make your event more enjoyable for whole families. It is a great supplement to your adult's run.

1. Did you give attention to your kid's event?

The kid's event takes just as much focus as the adults run. If you don't have someone who can really focus on your children's event, it is usually better to forgo it.

2. Do you have a course clearly laid out for the children?

It is important that the course be clearly marked, as well as safe. It is usually best if the course doesn't get too far from a central location. You need to station volunteers around the course.

3. Have you communicated the details of the kid's run?

All of your volunteers should know the particulars of the kid's run, so they will be able to answer parent questions. These include the time and location, as well as the necessity of registering their children.

Refreshments

Refreshments refer both to food and drink after the race, as well as to any that might be available to runners on the course. There are several keys to successful race refreshments.

1. Is the food appealing to your participants?

The food should be appealing to people who have just completed a run. Items such as bagels, rolls, fruit, juice, and water are popular choices, but feel free to be creative. Food should be easy to serve and relatively mess free. Make sure to keep food well presented for all of your participants.

2. Do you have enough?

Don't try to be stingy here. Make sure you have plenty of refreshments for all of your participants. This can depend on the weather, as well. In hot conditions, it is vitally important that you have lots of water conveniently available to your participants.

3. Are the refreshments accessible to your participants?

Your refreshment layout should be set up to minimize lines. It helps if you can spread your food out over a large area. It helps, as well, if your refreshment area is accessible from multiple sides.

Awards

The awards are one of the last opportunities you have to impact your runners.

1. Did you select appropriate awards?

Cash prizes can appeal to the more elite runner and give the race an air of professionalism. They are out of the reach, however, of a majority of your participants. Most runners prefer more attainable prizes and mementos of their run. Take this opportunity to give them something unique. Finisher's prizes give you the opportunity to reach the greatest number of participants. Whatever form of award you choose, make sure that you invest the time to make it special.

2. Have you planned the award ceremony or award distribution?

All too often there is little thought or organization to the awards distribution. You need to have a plan in place prior to your event. It can be helpful to have a person in charge of your award distribution or a ceremony. An awards ceremony is a great opportunity for race organizers to thank participants, but in this day and age most participants would prefer to skip the pomp and circumstance and quickly pick up their award and get on with their day. Regardless of the direction your event intends to proceed, a well organized plan is a must.

3. Did you make your runners feel special?

The main point of an award ceremony is to make people feel good about themselves. Make sure you do this. Give attention not only to your overall winners, but also your age group winners and placers. The more people you can reach, the better.

Intangibles

This one is a little more general than the other nine. Put simply, focus on the things that make your race special. Inattention here may or may not wreck your race, but attention to these details could turn your event into a truly great one. Take advantage of the uniqueness of your event.

1. What have you done to make your race really stand out?