



YOUR ULTIMATE GUIDE TO CHOOSING THE BEST REGISTRATION SOFTWARE

Choosing the best registration software and features for your organization.

What you'll find in this eBook:

- ✓ How to select an online registration software that is right for your organization.
- ✓ Comprehensive list of features and options to look for in an online registration software.
- ✓ Explanation of how choosing the right software can boost your income and lighten your workload!
- ✓ How to evaluate the price of online registration software and choose the best one for your organization.

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Manual and paper application processes have tons of issues. Lost checks via snail mail, paper applications mis-filed or lost in a pile on someone’s desk. Paper is just no longer worth the hassle in the 21st century.

An online registration software allows anyone to register from any computer, any country and at any time as long as they are connected to the Internet. According to research conducted on registration processes, a survey of over 100 event participants concluded that over 90% of attendees preferred an online registration option instead of paper!

An automated registration system creates an application that is customized for each and every user who logs in. Automation allows you to auto-fill a returning member’s information so repeat clients don’t waste their time completing things they’ve already done and they finish the process more quickly.

Statistics on online registration software show that moving from paper to an online system can net you 25% more completed and on time applications and payments.

Automated systems also allow for easy payment processing. Not only is this easier for your applicants to use a payment method they want (echeck, credit, PayPal, etc.) they probably prefer paying online instead of writing a check or filling out a credit card form and mailing it in.

Online payments mean you receive dues, on average, 15-30 days faster than you normally would.

Online payments also offer you and your members and participants a safer and more secure method of payment.

WHY ONLINE REGISTRATION?

90%

of applicants prefer registering online

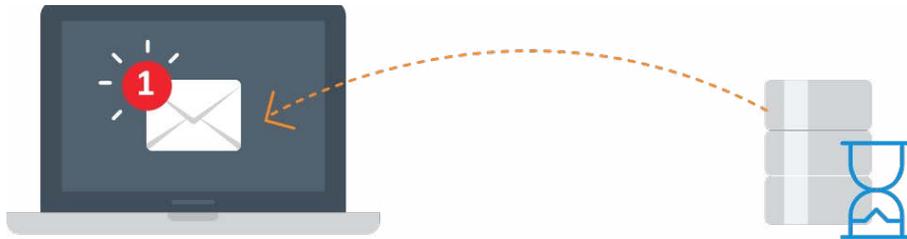
15-30 Days

Faster Payments

25%+

More completed applications

Automated systems also allow you to communicate better with your applicants. You can create triggered emails that send automatically when a user completes a specific task in your application, like a payment or completing a form. You can even automate reminder emails that keep your members on task and in the loop, as well as schedule mass newsletters and mailings.



The trend of looking for “features” in a registration software is all across the software and business world lately.

It’s the endless search for features! Just look at software reviews on CNET and you will see that there is a table comparing features of different software’s. Apple loves to boast about thousands of new features in their latest operating system release as does Microsoft. Everyone is obsessed with features! Features! And then some more features!

But let’s stop for a second and think about what you really need from a software (or whatever product you’re looking at) and frame our question in the following way: “I have problem A, does this product solve this problem?”

The idea is to look at the problems you are trying to solve and not look at the abilities of the system you are inspecting.

A software can offer HUNDREDS of features, none of which are useful to you or your organization, so is it worth using it just because of a long list of features? Remember, sometimes less is more!

PART 2: LOOK FOR A SOLUTION, NOT FEATURES: WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN ONLINE REGISTRATION SOFTWARE

When it comes to picking the right software for your organization, look at your problem and seek a solution for it, not the other way around! This might sound really simple but very few people actually do it.

In order to show how this works I want to talk about one “feature” everyone seems to be looking for with registration software: “timed emails”. Organizations are always saying how they need emails to be sent on a specific date and time so they want a software that will let them schedule this so they don’t have to think about sending it on the exact date and time. So let’s look at this specific case study.

*Look for a
Solution*



Do you really need this feature? Case study on “timed emails”.

While “timed emails” sounds nice in theory let’s try to break this down according to the “problems not features” idea. The first thing to do is try to understand what the problem is that we are trying to solve.

Based on my experience it seems that different organizations try to solve different problems with this same ‘solution’. The idea of timed emails is to send over information to the user on a specific date and time. So the ‘problem’ isn’t that you want to send timed emails but can’t. The problem is you have a certain amount of information you need to communicate to clients, and there are many ways to do this or many “solutions” depending on what information you’re needing to send. Timed emails aren’t necessarily always the answer.

While it might be nice to not have to remember to send an email on a certain day and time, this ‘feature’ actually gives you no control over the registration process.

What if the list of recipients changes from the time you schedule the email and the time it sends? Why do you need to schedule a specific email so far in advance? Am I making sense? No? So, let’s look at some examples and I’ll start to (hopefully). There are

different problems that can bring you to the conclusion that you need timed emails.

Registration problems and how to solve them.

Problem #1



Problem: Communicating the status of an incomplete registration to a user after they left the site so they can complete it.

Solution: The real problem here is that users did not complete the application the first time around. This could be due to three possibilities:

1. They did not know that they did not complete the application.
2. The applicant did not have all the needed information in order to complete the application.
3. The user got frustrated with the registration system since it was asking them a lot of irrelevant questions.

Are timed emails the solution?

Timed emails might solve the first problem but not in a very elegant way.

In order to make sure that the applicant completes the application on the first round the system needs to:

- Allow the user to “flow” from one stage to the next seamlessly.
- Give a clear indication on how far they are in the registration process (ex. a progress bar).
- Have a dashboard that clearly states what is complete and what is not in a color coded way (red not complete, green complete).
- Make sure that every applicant gets only the questions that are relevant to them (i.e. conditional logic).

This is just a short list of things that need to happen and in this list there are about 37 features I can think of off the top of my head. Do you really care about them or do you care about the fact that the system will solve the problem of people not knowing they have not completed their application.

Timed emails are actually a pretty bad solution to this problem. Why? It would be much better to automatically send an email to the applicant that did not complete their application but left the process with a list of incomplete items. When they are “in the process” there is a much better chance that they will go back into the system right away and finish it up.

Problem #2



Problem: “The applicant did not have all the needed information in order to complete the application”.

Solution: The real problem here is that you do not allow the user to flow through the application and actually come back to it later in order to complete the incomplete sections!

This can happen a lot. Let’s say you need their passport number or you need their annual income and they do not have that information handy. Will timed emails solve this problem? Most likely no. In order to solve this problem you most likely need to give the following tools:

- The ability to login back to the system.
- When logging into the system, it should take them directly to the incomplete information so they can fill it out right away.
- A great solution in this case is an email with very direct action items on what is incomplete that arrives in their inbox right when they logout.
- A timed email is a pretty bad solution to this problem since it will come in too little, too late. You need to give them the ability to solve the problem right when they have the information handy.

Problem #3



Problem: “The user got frustrated with the registration system since it was asking them a lot of irrelevant questions”.

Well... that is just a bad registration system. Period! Annoying your users with timed emails to enter an annoying system that asks them irrelevant information will not get you more people completing your registration process. It will just get you more people marking you as spam or sending you support emails that they do not know what to answer on question a, b, and c. The solution here is a conditional logic engine that makes sure each person is asked only the questions that are correct for them.

Again, timed emails is not the solution. It will actually make the problem even bigger. You will suddenly need to deal with support issues, annoyed clients and so forth. If your registration system is that bad you just better get on the phone with them and get the information you need from them manually. Or better yet... start looking for a better registration solution.

Problem #4 – The BIG One



Problem: Sending out a payment reminder email (which is not the REAL problem). This seems like a valid reason for timed emails, right? Wrong! Let’s do the same thing, look at the problem and not the solution. The REAL problem is: People are not paying their dues on time.

Possible reasons the problem is happening:

1. The registration system does not include an integrated payment solution so they need to go to a different site to pay and they are not doing it. Or worse, need to mail a payment form and/or check to you via snail mail.
2. You offer payments in installments yet people are not paying on time.
3. Your charging structure is based on a deposit and then a full payment by a specific date.
4. The user did not have their preferred payment method with them (let’s say their debit card) when registering and they wanted to come in and pay later when they have it with them.
5. The user is not sure they want or can attend and therefore are reluctant to pay.

Will timed emails resolve these issues? With the exception of item 3 that a timed email can solve in a very insufficient manner in all other cases it is actually a pretty bad solution. Your goal is to not need to remind people they need to pay but for it to “just happen”.

So let's look into the various possible solutions that will actually solve the problem based on the possible reason for it.

1. The registration system does not include an integrated payment solution so they need to go to a different site to pay and they are not doing it.

The solution is pretty simple here: get a registration system that does have an integrated payment solution. According to this research when you are sending people to an external site for payment (even one everyone knows like PayPal) you are going to lose 27% of your applicants. Yep, 27%! Pretty crazy. A timed email will not solve the fact that they are not sure they are arriving to the correct place to pay.

2. You offer payments in installments yet people are not paying on time.

Yes, you can time the emails to them and send them reminders but wouldn't it be better to put them on a payment plan that the registration system will automatically charge on the correct dates and will notify them before doing so? Obviously that is better.

Let's say that that is not an option, then sending out an email to everyone that needs to pay will be an overkill. You need a system that allows you to easily search and filter your results so you're first sending the right email to the right people, and then easily allows you to send your email. To be clear, this isn't a TIMED EMAIL, this is sending an email in real time, but with the ability to filter and find the exact people you want to send an email to, a system that can populate the email with the recipient's personal information and send immediately. You might think a 'timed email' feature is what gives you control over your registration process, but THIS ability is actually what gives you control!

3. Your charging structure is based on a deposit and then a full payment by a specific date.

Again payment plans is the solution. After all, you have their payment method saved from the deposit. And if the system does not save the payment method that is a whole different problem...

4. The user did not have their preferred payment method with them (let's say their debit card) when registering and they wanted to come in and pay later when they have it with them.

Sending them an email right when they log-out (automatically!) is actually a much better solution! You should also allow them to automatically login through the email that you send them and direct them right to the page they did not complete.

5. The user is not sure they want or can attend and therefore are reluctant to pay.

A timed email will not help here. What you need is a flexible refund and return policy.

You should always have a way to make the client feel that if they do not act they will not have a space when they do want to come. This can be done by presenting the overall number of remaining spaces and showing it is going down while they are logged in as a motivator. Part of the solution to this problem, however, might benefit from timed emails. Emails explaining the value of your offering in 3-4 emails that come a few days after they logged out and did not pay might encourage someone 'on the fence' to pull the trigger.

PART 3: THE CLOUD AND WHAT IS IT?

Everyone is talking about the “cloud”. What is the “cloud”? And why is all my stuff there? Or at least everyone telling me all my stuff should be there? Should I be looking for this ‘feature’ when picking a registration software?



We are constantly bombarded with a variety of products and companies offering “cloud” services. Amazon, Apple, Google and Dropbox all use the “cloud” as a key feature and selling point to get you to buy into their products. So what is the cloud anyway?

Most people’s basic understanding of it (and it isn’t incorrect) is that the cloud is a place to store your data that isn’t your physical computer’s hard drive. So if you drop your phone in the toilet or your computer just doesn’t turn on one morning, the data you have saved in the cloud is safe from hardware malfunctions. And while that isn’t untrue, the cloud is so much more than that! Think about the Kindle, for example. When you buy a Kindle book and download it to your Kindle, you can also view the book and the page you last were on your desktop, phone or any other device with the Kindle application. Amazing! It’s obvious that the ‘cloud’ is an amazing service for consumers but what about for businesses?

What can the cloud do for small and medium size businesses? Is it worth buying into a software that offers cloud based solutions?

The cloud, in essence, is a way for small and medium businesses to cut costs, ensure their data is secure and allow them to focus on their offering to the market and not on technology. Win-Win-Win!

Let's get into the specifics about what the cloud is, how your business can use it and get to know a little more about the technical details of cloud services and why you should consider them for your business!



What is the cloud for business?

Cloud computing, technically, is the ability to run a software or program on an offsite server, from many devices and applications simultaneously. So someone riding the train home from work with a data connection, another at their desk and yet another at home on their iPad can all access the same information, run reports, view statistics, and communicate with applicants.

So now that you understand what the “cloud” is, why should you, as a small or medium sized business consider implementing a cloud solution? Here are 4 reasons...



#1 No hardware or setup costs.

Whether you are a company, an educational institute, or a non-profit your core business is not technology. Yes... we all use technology and it helps us be more productive. Our phone and computers have become extensions of our brain, but only a small number of organizations can claim that technology is the service they provide. If concepts like Linux Kernel, PHP extensions and

database memory caching are not things you talk about regularly with your co-workers chances are you should shy away from anything connected to setting up servers, maintaining databases and controlling apache instances.

Cloud services, however, supply exactly that for you. You do not need to setup any servers, you do not need to buy and maintain hardware and you do not need to take care of hardware upgrades and malfunctions (and the backup schemes that are created to recover from them... more on that later).

So switching to a cloud based solution will save you a ton of money and spare you headaches and worries. Yes, once every organization had their own servers and managed everything in-house, but that doesn't mean that this is the best solution for a small or medium sized business, especially with better options, like a cloud solution, available.

Think of it this way: if you had the ability to get a car whenever you wanted, with a snap of your fingers a car appeared, complete with a driver, and took you to the place you needed to go, would you buy a car? Most likely not. Why would you, when you have this awesome magical car showing up to cart you off wherever you need, whenever you need it. No parking issues, gas buying, and yearly maintenance, just the comfort and functionality you want. That's cloud computing!

#2 Hassle Free Backups!

Close your eyes and think back to 5 or 10 years ago, to a time when you lost some important data on your computer. When you frantically called or ran to your computer whiz friend or colleague that helps you out every time you are in a jam, the first question they probably always asked you was, “Where is your backup?” Sadly the answer for most people is “what backup?” or “I haven’t backed up in 3 months!” Losing personal information such as a family pictures or a song you bought online is annoying and frustrating of course, but losing business data can be catastrophic for a small or medium size business.

You have to back up your business data constantly and in a way that will result in the smallest harm possible to your operation when data loss happens (and don’t say “it will not happen” since hardware, just like cars, do malfunction sometimes). The problem with backups is that it needs to be all encompassing. It is not enough to just backup your databases and documents once a week. You need to back up the business logic you have created in applications, the permissions you have created for different admins and users. And you need to do all this on a daily, if not an hourly, basis.

If you really want to get fancy you would implement a “on change” backup that would backup every time a change in a file, database, or application config is detected. Implementing this type of backup scheme by yourself will most probably cost you an arm and a leg, and maybe even a finger or toe! You will need to setup backup servers, schedule tasks and run periodic tests to make sure that the backups worked and they are available when, and if, you will need them. With cloud computing all this is taken care of without you lifting a finger, or toe.

#3 Automatic Upgrades!

“The Social Network” is worth watching if only for the following quote:

“**Eduardo Saverin:** So when will it be finished?
Mark Zuckerberg: It won’t be finished. That’s the point. The way fashion’s never finished.
Eduardo Saverin: What?
Mark Zuckerberg: Fashion, fashion is never finished.
Eduardo Saverin: You’re talking about fashion? Really, you?
Mark Zuckerberg: I’m talking about the idea of it. And I’m saying that it’s never finished.”

Your business is never finished. It is constantly evolving and with it the software you use needs to evolve to meet your needs. Software that sits in the cloud is constantly updated with new features, bug fixes and new tools all the time. Why? Because many users just like you have various needs that are incorporated into the software. You do not need to do anything in order to get the new update, you do not need to pay for the update, and since so many people are using the software, you normally do not need to pay for the new features you get. Enough said!



#4 Seamless Team Collaboration

You have applicants registering in the East coast, Asia and Australia for your amazing program. Your staff is distributed in California, Canada and England. How do you make sure that everyone is seeing the correct information all the time and getting the right tools to make the decisions they need to make? How can you accomplish all this seamlessly, effortlessly and quickly?

The way to do this is to have a centralized software that is constantly updated with new features and a database that talks to all the units in real time.

Data in the cloud is always up to date and the most recent version always saved automatically.

So several team members can work within the system simultaneously and no one is left wondering what is current, what information may be outdated, etc. It also means that team members in different locations (or time zones!) can view and work on the same data from wherever they are.

Data in the cloud can be accessed from anywhere, at any time of day with the only requirement being an internet connection!

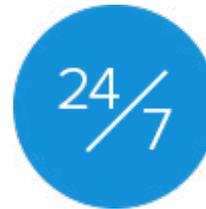
In a business environment today that requires immediate answers, immediate access to data and immediate everything, implementing a cloud solution is the only answer to building and maintaining quality team collaboration and completing tasks on time. Business today has evolved into a work-from-wherever-you-are kind of environment. People work outside the box, outside the 9-5 work day and they need access to their data on the road, in the office and at home. A cloud based solution for your business is the future of small and medium sized business.

PART 4: HOW TO CHOOSE A REGISTRATION SOFTWARE THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU

Choosing the best online registration software can be an involved task. What are the options available for your type of business? How much will it cost? These are all valid questions, however the first question you should be asking before tackling the ones just mentioned, is do I need an online software solution for my registration?

While the answer to this question will be different for every organization, in general the answer is yes! The three most important reasons are:

1. **Your registration process will available 24-7.**
2. **A smart registration process will get you more completed applications and will cut down on administrative costs.**
3. **You will get paid faster (if your registration includes a payment component) that will help your cash flow.**



3 Steps to Choosing the Right Software



Step 1: Understand your own registration needs by understanding and evaluating how your current process works.

If you are already thinking about going online, you probably need to go online. But if you are still on the fence, before jumping into the myriad of software choices out there, first ask yourself the following questions:

- Does my current registration process create problems for my clients?
- Do I or my staff spend a significant amount of time fielding calls and emails from clients confused or frustrated with my registration process?
- Am I constantly waiting for payments and important forms and documents to come in via email or snail mail?
- What about my registration process currently is not living up to my expectations that has me seeking out an online, automated solution?

If, after answering these questions, you realize that your current registration process just isn't cutting it for you, you can then...



Step 2: Decide what features in an online and automated software you really need.

The first thing you can do when deciding which features in an online registration software are right for you, is mapping out your current process and figuring out what WORKS in your process and what DOESN'T.

When you figure out the aspects of your process that aren't working for you, begin looking for a software that has a solution for those specific issues. In general, the solutions will, at their foundation, automate the task that you are currently doing on a

manual level.

For example, if you've identified one negative aspect of your current process being payment collection, you'll probably be in the market for a software that automates payments and offers a payment solution from within the software itself. This feature is great since it puts together all aspects of your registration in one place – forms and payments – and provides an online and automated way for clients to pay, via e-check or credit card. This feature eliminates confusion on your client's part about how much they owe, when they owe it and how they can pay you since everything is built into your new system.

Once you identify what features are most important for you...



Step 3: Compare online registration software options and pick one!

Finding software options doesn't have to be difficult. Google is your friend! Do a google search for "online registration solution" or "online registration system". You can get more specific and search for something like "online registration system for camps" or "online registration system for courses". You will find a number of options. Go into the websites (maybe open each on a different tab so you can compare them faster). Then look at the sites, check out the general feel you get from them company and

ask to see a demo! That way you will get a sense of what each software can do but more important you will educate yourself on what is possible and what is not. This will also allow you to check out the service the software provider gives at this very initial stage.

Another great way to learn what's out there is checking out your competition! Check out what others in your field are using as a software solution. They may have had the same issues with their manual processes that you have, and may have found a budget friendly and great solution that will work for your needs as well.

Word of mouth is also great, since so much of business these days is conducted via recommendations on social media, email, LinkedIn, etc. If you are a member of a LinkedIn group in your field, post a question! You will get a lot of answers from your peers but also from vendors that will offer you their services. Check them out! If they are investing time in answering your questions on social media they most likely know your field and might be a good match.

Once you've found a few options you need to look at the whole package (and not just price). The major things to consider are the following (not necessary in order of importance):

- ✓ Price
- ✓ Features
- ✓ Understanding of your field
- ✓ Service level
- ✓ The ability to keep your business front and center (systems that can embed to your website for example).
- ✓ Ease of use and the system's ability to expand.
- ✓ The ability to stick to the process you want and not force you to do the process they can do.

But first and foremost, the important thing is to compare! Setup times to see demos, read testimonials, ask your friends, consult with your team. Don't pick out the first system you find and don't select the system based on the colors of their website (yes, people actually do that). Registration is a major part of your business so you need to make the right decision, right?

Take into account that no two software's are alike, really look at what you are getting from each software and the specific features they offer. Sometimes the most expensive or the cheapest option is the best, but other times they might be offering tons of features that sound nice but that aren't relevant for your business and another option might suit you better. This is where truly understanding the needs of your organization comes into play. It will help you filter out what software can really meet your needs.

Software Pricing Models

When on the hunt for a registration software, it can be overwhelming for many reasons. There are tons of features offered (which one is best for you?), many add-on's to consider (social media integration, emails, payment processor, etc.) and of course, the cost of the system itself.

When money enters the conversation, you will see that every software offers a certain pricing model. Trying to decide which structure will be the most cost effective when in the market for a registration software depends on your business and needs, but in general there is one model that will fit best you: one that will give you all the features you need at the best possible price.



1. Fixed One-Time Pricing

While this takes the #1 spot on my list, it's probably the least used pricing model out there. Usually this is a pricing structure used when the software isn't a SaaS (Software as a Service which means the software company basically takes care of servers, databases etc... It is what is called "the cloud") system or if the system is very old. The fixed cost software's are normally a high upfront cost product and when you want or need changes to the system, you are charged an additional fee. Obviously for a dynamic organization this isn't very cost effective.

Who is this option good for?

This model can be a great option though for an organization that has a structure they've been using for years and that doesn't change and you do not anticipate it on changing (as if that really happens...). This is normally well suited for an organization that is not client-oriented, or if the registrants really want to register no matter what. These organizations are usually bureaucratic, large and/or have the money for the large down payment. If all of the above is you then this might be the most suited pricing structure for your organization.



2. Price per Applicant

There are many registration software companies that use this pricing model. Basically, you pay a fee, usually between \$2-10, for every applicant that registers. This can be great since you 'pay' for what you get. If no one registers to your event or program you will normally not pay anything. Note that normally this pricing model does not take into account if the applicant makes a payment, completes the application or anything of the sort. If they registered (even only with their name) you will pay for them. Assuming that every applicant is a paying customer then basically part of the profit you make from each confirmed applicant 'pays' for your online registration system.

The downside to this model though is that the software company becomes, in a sense, your "partner." As you succeed, you are paying more and more to the software company. This means that it is hard to predict the overall price you will pay for the system at the beginning since the number of applicants you have can grow exponentially (which is great for you, but not so great for your bank account when your software bill is due!). Furthermore, since this pricing model is normally registrant based and does not take into account the level of completion or if they paid or not your bill can actually be very high even though your earnings are not growing.

Let's do a little exercise to know the actual cost per applicant you are paying when using this model. We all know about the people that start a registration and never complete it or people that do nearly everything except pay. In order to really calculate the cost per applicant you will need to know your conversion rate and then calculate accordingly. A pretty good conversion rate for completed applications is 75%. When payments come into the picture if 60% of your registrants actually make a payment you are in good standing. This means that if you are paying \$2 per applicant (which is considered low, normally the model is \$5 per applicant) then if you are not taking payments you will actually pay $\$2/75\%$ (you completed applications) = \$2.66 per applicant. If you are taking payments and only someone who pays is actually an applicant for you then you are paying $\$2/60\%$ (you completed applications) = \$3.33 per applicant. If you go up to \$5 per applicant (which is the majority) you will be paying \$6.67 or \$8.34 per applicant. Quite a lot!

Who is this option good for?

This model however can be good for an organization that is small, seasonal, or has cash flow issues. It becomes very uneconomical as you grow, and I'd assume most organizations want to grow so this model probably is limiting for most organizations.



3. Price per Administrator

This is the model most organizations prefer, in my humble opinion, and not just because it's the model Regpack uses. This is the model that 90% of the companies in the SaaS world use, so that should tell you something.

The reason most companies use this model is that the price is directly connected to the size of the organization.

So small organizations needing only 1-2 admins with access to the system will pay less and bigger organizations that need 10-20 admins will pay more which is fair for everyone involved :)

For example, Regpack's pricing looks like this:

\$49/month/admin up to 200 applicants

\$99/month/admin up to 2,000 applicants

\$149/month/admin up to 5,000 applicants

\$249/month/admin up to 15,000 applicants

Pricing based on administrators is a really good option for any size organization since the price basically changes according to your needs and will grow proportionally to the growth of your business (vs #2 above which will grow significantly as your

business grows). There are event systems out there that allow you to add and remove admins on a monthly basis. This allows you to really control your costs since you do not need to pay for admins annually. Hence in peak registration time you can add admins and during your off season you can remove. This obviously makes these online registration systems really budget friendly.

The main draw to this option is that you do not have a large down payment to make. You can alter and change the process as you wish, you can react to peaks in your registration and finally: the registration company is not your partner – they are someone supporting your success and not taking a cut out of it.

Who is this option good for?

Basically any organization. It is especially good for organizations that care about their bottom line, are in constant change, want full control over their expenses and what there to be a connection between their profits and their amount of clients and their costs. Like I said: nearly every organization (maybe with the exception of the government).

Is there ONE software pricing model that is just the best for everyone?

There is no ‘right’ software or pricing model that is universal, there is only the software that is the best fit for you. Keeping in mind and understanding your needs is the number one thing to do. Then, look at the price of your options since your budget and what you can and can’t afford will factor in heavily to your decision. Most organizations in our experience are growing or hoping to grow, have dynamic programming and are wanting a system that can adapt and change as they do, at a cost that doesn’t prohibit them from offering great technology and services at a reasonable price.

Fixed One-Time Pricing



Price per Applicant



Price per Administrator



How the Right Software Can Boost Your Income

Whether in the non-profit business world, educational classes, youth camps, conferences or anything that demands a client onboarding process, your profit is important. That’s why you want to find ways to generate more income but without changing everything you do. Additional income is what allows you to offer better programming, more value to your clients and basically allows you to focus on your organizations ‘mission’ and not on just surviving.

Selecting the correct online registration system (which is basically the sales engine for your organization) – will boost your income with very little effort on your end.

This obviously brings up the question: Is the old saying “You get what you pay for” true for software today? Do you really need to spend a fortune and steer clear of cheaper systems to get what you need?

Unfortunately, many small and medium sized businesses think this is true and either spend way too much money on a system they really don’t need or worse, spend no money and just put up with what they have to the detriment of their business and their bottom line.

Start focusing on cost and not on price.

The first thing you need to do is stop thinking about “price” and start thinking only about cost. The price is the actual money to pay for the software you are going to use. This can be a monthly price you pay or a one-time price (which is never really one time) you pay in order to get the software. The cost obviously includes the price but frankly it is the most insignificant part of it (this is mainly correct if you are selecting one of the new “software as a service” software’s or SAAS out there). The cost includes:

- ✓ The price you pay for the online registration software.
- ✓ The time you invest to get it up and running.
- ✓ The effects it has on your conversion rate (how many people complete the process).
- ✓ The effect it has on your cash flow (how many people pay on time).
- ✓ The effect it has on your productivity.
- ✓ The effect it has on the time it takes you to onboard a new client.
- ✓ And last but may be the most important – the effect it has on your client satisfaction.

So as you can see, price is there but it accounts to very little.

When evaluating cost as opposed to price suddenly things look very different. It could be that a totally free system actually costs you more than a system that you pay a one-time fee of a few thousand dollars for or a system you pay for monthly. It’s possible then that one system can cost less for business A than for business B. That is why you need to assess the various factors for your business and that can be done only when you look at the true cost of a system and not just its price.

Now let’s take a closer look at the cost of your system based on the amount of new business and/or increase in revenue from current clients that the software will generate for you. I’ll also go over how to calculate the cost for YOUR business. Exciting right?!

Little details to look for when you want to increase your income (who doesn’t?).

The price of a system is fixed, but the ‘cost’ is in the details. Different software’s give you the capability to work differently. Many of Regpack’s clients have seen an increase in their profits because moving online has allowed them to communicate more efficiently and effectively with applicants, get paid on time and therefore, get paid faster. It has also helped them get organized so they don’t miss out on collecting money when they need to.

Here are just a few examples on how the correct system can boost your income:

- Implementing payment plans that allow an online registration system to automatically charge the clients according to their order and the plan they are eligible to will make sure you can plan your cash flow without constantly contacting your clients for payment.
- Enabling the system to embed into your website will lower your abandon rate by 27% (yep, that is the actual number our stats have shown) which is a major income creator.
- Short application processes that are tailored to the client’s specific situation will lower your drop rate by 32% (again, a real number based on stats we have gathered). If clients are so bogged down by your long application or confusing flow they will abandon it half completed, never to return (and sadly never to make a payment).
- Lowering your support emails and phones by deciding on a system that is intuitive, gives constant information to the client and makes sure they go through a flow that is made for them can lower your expenses by a full employee salary (This can free up to 20 hours a week which will translate to you and your staff focusing on other areas that can generate even more income!).

HOW THE CORRECT SYSTEM CAN BOOST YOUR INCOME?



Payment plans that automatically charge according to the plan users select.



27%

Less people will leave the process when it’s embedded directly into your website.



32%

Less drop rate with a shorter application process.



20 Hrs

of emails and phones saved every week.

PART 5: PRICE VS. COST OF SOFTWARE

When evaluating an online registration system (or any software for that matter) you should evaluate the overall cost of the system and not just the price tag for the system. What's the difference you ask?

The difference is that price is what you are actually paying the software company, either through your monthly fees or the one-time payment you make. Cost, on the other hand, is how using the system actually affects your bottom line. Eventually, only cost matters since that is what is truly affecting your business.

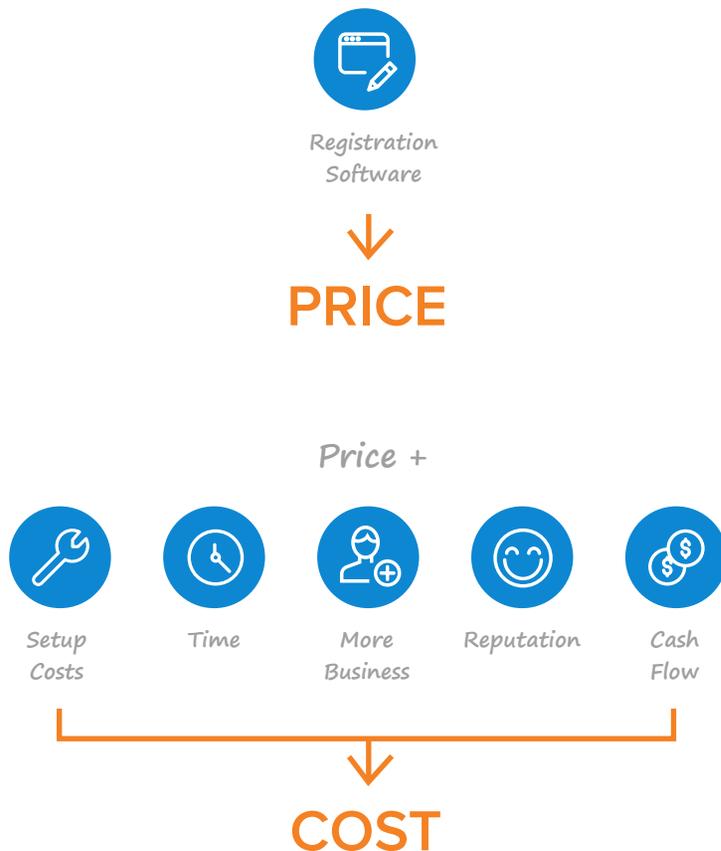
What does “Cost” consist of?

Let's say you are paying \$99 a month for your registration software. That is the price. Whether the price is simple or complicated, it is what you are paying each month to the vendor. This is pretty simple to understand and its simplicity is the main reason most people refer to that as “the cost”. But it is not your actual cost. The cost consists of a few factors that I've broken up into 5 categories:

- 1 Initial setup costs.
- 2 Time spent or saved in the first 3-6 months of using the system.
- 3 Amount of business you get because you are using the system.
- 4 The effect the system has on your reputation.
- 5 The effect the system has on your cash flow.

When evaluating cost as opposed to price suddenly things look very different. It could be that a totally free system actually costs you more than a system that you pay a one-time fee of \$2,000 for or a system you pay for monthly.

Furthermore, since the factors above are directly connected to your business and the way you work, one system can cost less for business A than for business B even if they have the same price. That is why you need to assess the various factors for your business and that can be done only when you look at cost and not price.



Calculating the Initial Setup Costs

Setup costs consist of the 5 following components:

- 1 Any hardware you need to buy or rent.
- 2 Additional software (in addition to the online registration software) that you need to buy for your system to function.
- 3 The cost of integrating the online registration system into your website.
- 4 The cost to make the online registration system work according to your existing business processes.
- 5 The cost of building the system and altering it in the future when your business processes change.

Hardware and Additional Software Costs

The world has moved completely to SaaS (software as a service) systems so 99% of the time items a and b are irrelevant when considering your total cost. This is not true if you are taking a software company to build you a tailor made system. Even if they tell you they are hosting the system, the cost of setting up the servers and the additional software will come back to you is

you ever want to move away from their hosting. So that cost is still there! But like I said, it is a SaaS world so A and B should be irrelevant and if you have not boarded the “future of software” wagon, now is the time :)

The cost of integrating the online registration system into your website.

The cost of integrating the online registration system into your website is easy to calculate. There are systems that do not integrate with your website at all (RED FLAG!!!!). Then the cost in that situation is normally just adding a link to your site. But that is a bad option since it will reflect badly on your reputation and will also cost you in the number of people that complete their application.

According to our numbers, 27% of the people that are sent to an external link that does not have your URL will stop right on the first page since they are not sure that everything is legit and secure. So a system that does not integrate seamlessly with your website is costing you 27% in potential clients aka \$\$\$.

Just to help you calculate, let’s say your program price is \$1000 per applicant and you get 1000 people clicking on the application link. Let’s also say that only 70% of the people

that start a registration actually make a payment (after all your registration process is your conversion funnel so it would be wrong to assume that everyone that starts actually makes a payment). That means that from 1000 people you generate \$700,000.

Since you did not integrate the system into your website out of the 1000 people that click the link 270 just leave right away. Then out of the 730 remaining only 70% actually pay which totals you \$511,000.

Let’s take a closer look at just what happened: a so called very small detail that you might not have taken into consideration when evaluating the price of the online registration system you selected actually cost you ton! You just LOST \$189,000! Yes you read that right, \$189,000!!! That’s a lot of lost business and that will actually snowball in other areas. Less business means less people referring you (which generates more business) and less people returning to future programs and on and on.

Compare that to a system that integrates into your website: your webmaster or software company that take care of your site might charge you \$50 or even \$500 (which they should not) for the 5 minutes it took them to integrate the system into your site (if the online registration system you select is good then that is the amount of time it will take) and this saved you \$189,000.

I need to write this so there is no mistake: that is a saving of one hundred and eighty nine thousand dollars. Small detail, big difference!

The cost to make the online registration system work according to your existing business processes.

As I have explained, your online registration process is your onboarding process. It is the last step that a client does before paying you. Hence, this is your conversion funnel and frankly, the most important part of the funnel.

In order to visualize this think of a different conversion funnel: buying a shirt. When you are buying a shirt you initially evaluate the type of shirt you need, then the style you want, the brands you trust, the ease of getting to the online or actual store and then eventually selecting the shirt and going with it to the checkout page or cashier. The last two parts is what an online registration software takes care of and hence what it can affect, positively or negatively, on your business.

The evaluation of the type of program the client wants to go to (educational program, camp, sport league, event or anything else a registration software is used for), the brands they trust, and the ease or reaching or finding the website are all things that you do regardless of the registration software. This is something

your marketing should be taking care of. The last two stages: selecting the shirt and going to the checkout page is what the registration software takes care of. But unlike buying a shirt the process is a lot more complicated.

When someone is coming to your program / event / project they cannot order everything you offer. By this I mean, a 5 year old cannot go to sessions in a camp that are geared towards 10 year old children, right? So the registration system needs to make sure that you are offering the user what is matches their needs and eligibility. Otherwise even if they order and pay you will need to turn them down since what they selected is incorrect for them.

Hence, an online registration software takes care of the selection of the order possibilities and actually “going to the cashier” and becoming a client. “Going to the cashier” when dealing with educational projects (or actually nearly anything that is not a simple product like a shirt) is not as simple as taking out your credit card and paying. In order to be on boarded you actually need to get their personal information, sometimes their medical information, their preferences, their friend requests, they need to e-sign some type of agreement, and the quota to see if there is space on the program they want to go to needs to be checked.

Depending on your organization and your programs there might be additional information that is needed. Then you can offer them the correct products and programs that are right for them and only then do they go to pay. Your online registration software should be doing all this for you.

Furthermore, since you need specific information, the process normally takes more than a few seconds (as opposed to just paying for a shirt) hence you need to enable them to start the process and return to it whenever they need to add more information or when they managed to find the information you requested.

How to calculate price vs cost of making the registration process work according to your process.

Let's say that you found a really cheap system that allows you to ask specific questions but not everything you need. Is there a cost associated with filling in the holes? Of course since now after each applicant completes the initial process you need to get back to them via email or phone and get that additional information.

According to what we have seen, during registration season, when actual contact is needed with the applicants in order to get

additional information, you will have a ratio of 100 registrants per administrative staff that will be collecting the information. Let's return to the example of having 1000 applicants to your program. Now you need either 10 people for a month or 1 full time person for 10 months just collecting data. This person cannot take care of more innovative stuff like program structuring, lowering your costs or anything else. They are just communicating with clients and gathering data. This costs you approximately \$60,000 a year. That all just sounds like a big waste of TIME and MONEY, which of course it is. So even if the registration system you found is free it is actually costing you \$60,000 a year.

Let's compare the \$60,000 you wasted on a full time employee just to get missing information since you selected a system that was free and could not ask all the questions you need to a more expensive system that allows you to ask any question, make sure that the process is exactly according to your needs, and that fully integrates with your current business processes and workflow. In order for that system to actually be equal to the cheaper system you will need to pay an extra of \$5000 a month. No registration system out there costs that much. Period. If you find one that does, let us know!

So the cost of saving let's say \$50 a month on the system you selected is actually costing you \$4950 a month or \$59,400 a year. (How we did that: \$60,000 minus the \$600 annual saving when selecting a system that cannot fit into your process).

Note that I have not added the calculation of training your team on the new process, loss of clients due to the unintuitive process and so forth. That can bring the overall cost much higher!!!

Last cost consideration: the cost of building the system and altering it in the future when your business processes change.

So we have seen the cost integration and also the cost of selecting a system that cannot work according to your process. Now to the actual building and then altering the system in the future.

Let's do a little exercise: what is easier, writing a welcome letter to your applicants when you are in front of a blank page (or screen) or working off a template that one of your co-workers created? Or maybe editing a letter a copywriter setup for you?

I don't know about you but for me editing is a lot easier. Also, maybe you just don't have the time to take care of every single detail for every single applicant for every single program.

Now that we have established that if some professional can do the heavy lifting for you and you only need to customize it is easier and better, let's look at the four main structures and options that are out there for system setup.

We have listed the options and also the estimated price you will see for such services on the market today:

Options for System Setup

#	Type	Price
1	You do everything yourself – set-up the questions and technically build it.	FREE
2	You work off a template and alter it.	FREE
3	You send what you need and a project manager just does what you asked for (basically just doing the technical side).	\$150
4	You send what you need and a project manager that is knowledgeable in your field goes through the process, makes suggestions and then builds it. From that point you can make your own alterations.	\$350

When doing everything yourself, you need to do research to learn what works best, understand the abilities of the system you selected, etc. This takes time and manpower away from normal responsibilities. So it's not really 'free' anymore. Same with altering a template, maybe a few days less. Though if you really need to cut what you are paying and your time or your teams time is not worth anything, this might work. This also works when you have a very simple process and you do not mind your users needing to select things that should be automatically selected for them.

So if you selected on of the FREE options you have some learning and setting up to do. Let's assume you are really computer savvy and know everything there is to know about registration. With that assumption doing all this will take at least two weeks. That is an estimated cost of \$2500. So "Free" is not so free anymore, right?



Let's look at Option #3:

You send what you need and a project manager just does what you asked for (basically just doing the technical side). You are paying \$150 for this and do not need to take care of all the technical side of things. Great! Works for everyone and you just saved \$2500 – \$100 = \$2350, right? Wrong! Note that this option includes only the technical side of setting up everything in the registration system. In this option the project manager will not make suggestions, will not offer to change questions around and will not put in their years of knowledge in order to make sure you get more completed and accurate applications. So you still need to do all the work regarding selecting the questions and so forth.

Furthermore, an online registration is different than a paper registration just like an online newspaper is different than an actual physical paper in how people interact with it. It is not enough just to throw the "paper application" online. You need to alter it according to the new medium. In this option the project manager is not doing this step for you. Hence you will get less completed applications and will need to contact clients and users regarding their application. Time wasted, revenue lost...

In order to actually calculate option 3 we can assume the technical side takes you 3-4 days to master. So you still have all the work regarding the questions and structure. That will take you a week at least so this option is actually costing you \$1250 (a week work) + \$150 = \$1400. I wonder which is better for your bottom line \$150 or \$1,400. With \$1,400 you can go on a fun trip with your family and you will also have the time to do it since you saved so much time.

In option 4 the project manager is doing everything for you. They are adding their knowledge into the process and making sure that everything flows correctly. Basically you are outsourcing the build process to a professional that does this day in and day out. The cost for you is sending the information to the project manager and then going over and sending any changes to them in an email or maybe through a phone conversation. Let's assume you spend 10 hours (overall) going over the process the project manager sends you and then giving them your comments. Hence this is costing you \$250 (your time) + \$350 (price paid) = \$600

In these calculations I have not added the cost of creating a bad system (if you select option one or two) or one that does not fit into your needs. That will cost you in lost clients and lost business and can go much higher. I have only calculated direct costs.

Let's have a look at the table again, now with the costs listed:

#	Type	Price	Cost
1	You do everything yourself – set-up the questions and technically build it.	FREE	\$2500
2	You work off a template and alter it.	FREE	\$2000
3	You send what you need and a project manager just does what you asked for (basically just doing the technical side).	\$150	\$1400
4	You send what you need and a project manager that is knowledgeable in your field goes through the process, makes suggestions and then builds it. From that point you can make your own alterations.	\$350	\$600

Now things look very different, right? The cheapest option is actually costing you the most and the so called most “expensive” option is costing you the least. And this is not taking into account what a project manager can do for your conversion rates, completed applications and cash flow since they most likely create a system similar to your system once a day and know exactly what works and what does not! Amazing!!!

Where do I begin?

When figuring out WHAT you need from a new system and then begin calculating your cost for the system you need, begin by outlining the following information:

- ✓ Figure out what forms or questions do you need included in your new process.
- ✓ Find what is redundant and alter accordingly.
- ✓ Figuring out what solutions your new system can give you and how it is best to utilize them for your needs.
- ✓ Time spent on changing materials that your clients or participants receive, links or information on your website and other social media pages and just generally changing the marketing materials for your program.

This isn't super time consuming and you only do it once, but it does take a few days to really evaluate your process and your information and translate it over to the new system. The more complex your process or the more the system is or isn't user friendly, will also impact the time you need to set it all up. In

theory though, moving to a new system will 'save' you cost wise in other areas making this step worth the investment.

What you should be looking for to minimize cost:

If you are spending a week on trying to translate your current system into your new system you are spending somewhere around \$1500 minimum on this (assuming the person that is working on this costs around \$60K a year). That's a lot! You want to minimize this as much as possible. The way to do that is to make sure that the system you select will have a project manager working with you that knows your field and has worked with it in the past. That way you will most likely be able to just send them your current process and they will do the "translating" for you. Wow! \$1,500 saved :)

You should also make sure that the online registration solution you select is giving you the solutions to your problems and not solving things that have nothing to do with your case.

That way your project manager will be able to tell you which features to use and which are not relevant for your case. This will save you a lot of time learning all the abilities of the system you selected and will allow you to focus on the features and abilities that are relevant to you.

Don't discount the time you spend learning the system!

The first 3-6 months of using a new registration software are the months you will be learning how to use it best and how it can allow you to do the things you need to do (and hopefully a lot more and a lot faster). Every software has a learning curve, that is just the way it is.

Furthermore, the more abilities the software offers the more you will need to learn. An online registration software is a business software that is built to save you time and also bring you more clients and money. Therefore these applications normally offer a lot of different options.

What you should be looking for to minimize cost:

- The most obvious thing to look for is an online registration system that makes sense to you. That during the demo you view online or with a sales rep the concepts and ideas just seem “right” to you. That will minimize the learning curve a great deal.
- The second thing you need to make sure is that you get a training session with one of the company reps. Make sure the training session is on your specific system and situation and

not a general training that just goes through all the abilities of the system (80% of which you will not use). When coming to the training session try to have questions ready regarding “How do I do this?” and “How do I do that?” The person on the other side of the line should be able to show you how it can be done for your specific situation.

- Make sure that the company gives support and in what form (email, phone, articles etc...). Then try it out (if possible before the training session). That will help you understand what information you need to give them in order to get the best and fastest results. Most software companies will want you to send them a specific example to the problem you are facing. Sending support issues like “It is not working” or “An applicant was not able to complete the application” will just get a reply of “Can you give us the following information regarding this case:” with a long list. They need to be able to see the problem in order to help you. Trying the support out with a question will help you understand how to get the best results out of them.
- Consider making the switch during an off time in your year so you have not only ample time to play with the system and get comfortable but also so you impact your ‘urgent’ work the least and everything business wise can continue to run smoothly.

- Time to take care of issues, bugs, etc.
- There are always some hiccups and things to smooth out when you move to a new system.

Things you need to do in this stage:

- Go through the process 3-5 different type of applicants will go through in your online registration system. Note down any problems, glitches, etc.
- List any conceptual changes you would like to make.
- Go through the process again after making the changes and find anything that looks wrong to you.
- Finalize the process you want your applicants to go through after all hiccups and changes are made.

Calculate the time you save using the system.

Depending on the system you choose, try to guess how much actual manual time it will save you and what that time is worth.

This is the BIGGEST part of evaluating a software that fits your needs specifically.

Are you saving 1 hour a day of manual input, data entry etc. for ONE employee? How much does that employee make per hour? Or will your new system save 1 hour per day per week of 5 different people. Compare this to the cost of the system AND what they can do in that new found time (how much revenue can they generate with more time towards other tasks)?

No matter what system you pick, it will automate your payments and make management of receiving payments on your end much smoother. This means you'll probably see MORE profits even if nothing else changes (like the number of programs you offer and the attendance you get for those programs) and this increase in revenue might pay for the system and the time you need to implement it!! You won't know this however, until you do the math!

Consider ALL of this, and really look seriously at how your employees and you spend their time and how a system can optimize your workflow!

PART 6: CONCLUSION

When looking for an online solution, my biggest piece of advice is first truly identifying the challenges you are facing with your current process and what aspects are most important to you

Then my second advice is shop around! Do demos, read the white papers, ask questions. This way you will educate yourself about what is out there, what is possible, and most important what you need!

Your goal should be finding a software that automates your individual process as much as possible. Don't just choose the software based on "general features", choose it based on features you need and will be using. Compare the time (and money!) you are spending to accomplish registration related tasks (from marketing to invoicing to communication) and

compare the cost of a system. Most likely, spending money on a software solution for your registration is WORTH it but only if you find the right system that is optimal for your organization and your budget.

Find a software that offers as much customization as possible. Software today has the ability to morph and bend to the needs of the user. And this ability shouldn't come at a premium! A company that offers a product that can be tailored to your needs and work within your business model seamlessly is a great feature to look for!

