

YOUR ULTIMATE REGISTRATION SOFTWARE SELECTION GUIDE

How to choose the best online registration software solution for your business.

What you'll find in this eBook:



How the right online registration software can increase your organization's income!



A comprehensive list of features to look for in an online registration software.



Effective strategies for evaluating registration and application management software to suit the needs of your business.



How to evaluate the price of online registration software and choose the best one for your organization.



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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Whether in the non-profit business world, education, summer camps, conferences or anything that demands a client onboarding process, your profit is one of the most, if not the most important thing. That's why you want to find ways to generate more income without changing everything you do.

Additional income is what allows you to offer your clients better programming and more value and basically allows you to focus on your organizations 'mission' instead of just surviving.

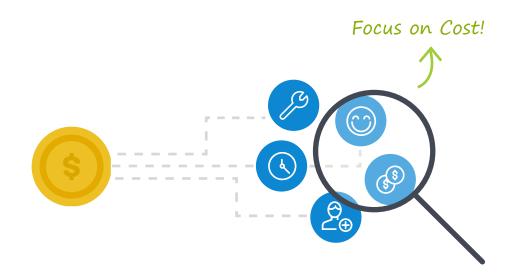
Choosing the right online registration system (which is basically the sales engine for your organization) – will boost your profit with very little effort from you!

Is the old saying "You get what you pay for" true for registration software today? Do you really need to spend a fortune and steer clear of cheaper systems to get what you need

for your organization? Unfortunately, many small and medium sized businesses think this is true and either spend way too much money on a software that they really don't need or worse, spend no money and just put up with what they have.

Start focusing on *cost* and not on the price.

The first thing you need to do is stop thinking about "price" and start thinking about the cost of a system. The price is the actual money you use to pay for the software. This can be a monthly price you pay or a one-time fee (which is never really one time, but I'll explain later) that you pay in order to get and use the software. The cost obviously includes the price but frankly it is the most insignificant part of it.





The cost of a software includes:

- The price you pay for the online registration software.
- ✓ The time you invest to get it up and running for your business.
- ▼ The effect it has on your turnover.
- The effect it has on your cash flow and profit.
- ✓ The effect it has on your productivity and that of your employees.
- ✓ The effect it has on the time it takes you to onboard a new client – time is money!
- ✓ The effect it has on the satisfaction of your clients.

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

When evaluating the cost as opposed to the price suddenly things look very different. It could be that a totally free system actually costs you more in the long run than a system that you pay a one-time fee of a few thousand dollars for or a system you pay for monthly to use. It's possible then that one system can cost less for business A than for business B as well, since the effects on price, cost, cash flow, etc. will vary according to each

individual business. That is why you need to assess the various factors for your business. This can only be done when you look at the true cost of a software, not just the price of the software.

Little details to look for when you want to increase your income.

The price of a system is fixed of course, but the 'cost' is in the details. Different software companies 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 which improves their cash flow and allows them to focus on other tasks – like marketing, onboarding even more new clients, etc. It has also helped them get organized so they don't miss out on collecting money when it's owed to them.



Examples on how the correct system can boost your income.

- Implementing payment plans. This allows an online registration system to automatically charge the user according to their order choices. This will allow you to plan your cash flow without constantly contacting your clients and reminding them about upcoming payments.
- Enabling the system to embed into your website. This can lower your abandon rate by up to 27% which is a major income generator.
- Short application processes that are tailored to the client's specific situation will lower your dropout rate by 32%. If clients are so confused by your long application or confusing flow they will abandon it half completed, never to return which means no money for you and wasted time and effort converting them initially!
- Lowering your support emails and phone calls by choosing a system that is intuitive, gives constant information to the client and ensures they go through a flow that is tailored for them. This can lower your expenses by a full employee salary since it can potentially free up to 20 hours a week. This translates to you and your staff focusing on other areas that can generate even more income!

BOOST YOUR INCOME WITH THE RIGHT SOFTWARE!



27%

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



32%

Less drop rate with a shorter and customized application process.



20 Hrs

of emails and support phone calls saved every week.



PART 2: HOW TO CHOOSE A REGISTRATION SOFTWARE THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU

Choosing the best online registration software can be complicated. 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 is: Do I need an online software solution for my registration needs?

While the answer to this question will be different for every organization, I'd be hard pressed to find a business where the answer was no.

Online is the right answer for almost every business because...

- V
- Your registration process will be available 24-7.
- ✓ A smart registration process will net you more completed applications and will cut down on administrative costs of a paper or manual system.
- You will get paid faster and that will help your cash flow and overall profit.

3 Steps to Choosing the Right Software



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

If you are already thinking about going online, you probably need to go online. But if you are still on the fence, ask yourself the following questions:



- 1. Does my current registration process create problems for my clients? If so, what are they?
- 2. Do I spend a significant amount of time fielding calls and emails from clients confused or frustrated with my registration process? If so, what are the main complaints I receive?
- 3. Am I constantly waiting for payments and important forms and documents to come in via email or snail mail? If so, which forms seem to be the biggest culprit?
- 4. What about my registration process currently is not living up to my expectations that has me seeking out an online, automated solution? What incident prompted me to seek another solution?



Step 2: Decide what features in an online and automated software you really need. This will help you narrow down what software is a good fit for you.

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.

Then start looking for a software that offers solutions for those specific issues. In general, the solutions will automate the task that you are currently doing on a manual level.

Example

If you know 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 meaning users can pay during their registration process. 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 space for clients to pay you.

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



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

Finding software options doesn't have to be hard. Don't forget that Google is your friend! Do a google search for "online registration solution" or "online registration system" and see what pops up. You can get more specific and search for something like "online registration system for camps" or "online registration system for courses" as well.



Ask to see a demo!

Visit the websites that come up and compare, see what resonates with you. A demo allows you to get a sense of what each software can do but more importantly will educate you 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 which is crucial.

Check out your competition

Look at 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 good option that will work for your needs as well.

Word of mouth.

Word of mouth is great too, since so much of business these days is conducted via recommendations on social media and online in general. If you are a member of a LinkedIn group in your field, post a question to the group and see what they say! 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 probably know your field and might be a good match for your needs.

The major things to consider are:



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.

The most important thing is to compare! Setup times to see demos, read testimonials, ask your friends, consult with your team about their thoughts. Don't pick out the first system you find and don't select the system based on the colors of their website.

Take into account that no two software's are alike even if they seem to be. Look at what you are getting from each software and the specific features they offer and figure out what you value most, second, third, etc. 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. Another option might suit you better once you really understand what you need and what you can live without.



PART 3: SOFTWARE PRICING MODELS

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



1. Fixed One-Time Pricing

This is probably the least used pricing model out there. 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 to do so. Obviously for a dynamic organization this isn't very cost effective.

Who is this option good for?

This model can be a great option 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. This is a risky move though since you never know if you will change in the near future!

This is normally well suited for an organization that is not client-oriented, or if the registrants really want to register no matter what ie you aren't competing for business. These organizations are usually bureaucratic, large and/or have the money for the large down payment and for later costs associated with changes.

2. Price Per Applicant

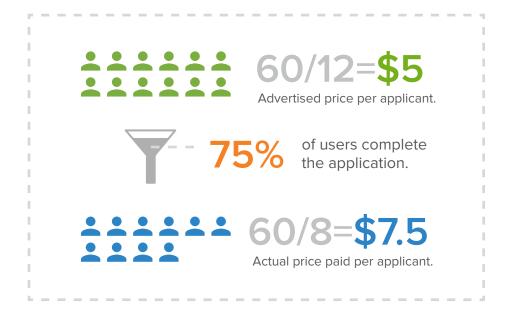
There are many registration software companies that use this pricing model. You pay a fee, usually between \$2-10, for every applicant that registers. This can be great since you 'pay' for what you get. If no one registers to your event or program you will not pay anything. Note that normally this pricing 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 so watch out for this hidden cost.



Assuming that every applicants is a paying customer then basically part of the profit you make from each confirmed applicant 'pays' for the cost of your 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 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.

In order to really calculate the cost per applicant you will need to know your conversion rate and then calculate from there. A pretty good conversation rate for completed applications is 75%. When payments come into the picture if 60% of your registrants will make a payment. This means that if you are paying \$2 per applicant (which is considered low, normally the model is \$5 per applicant for most softwares in this category) then if you are not taking payments you will actually pay \$2/75% (your 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% (your completed applications) = \$3.33 per applicant. If you go up to \$5 per applicant you will be paying \$6.67 or \$8.34 per applicant. That's a lot, no!?



Who is this option good for?

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





3. Price Per Administrator

This is the model most organizations prefer and not just because it's the model Regpack uses. This is the model that 90% of the companies in the industry 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 pay less and bigger organizations that need 10-20 admins pay more.

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 good option for any size organization since the price basically changes according to your needs and will grow proportionally to the growth of your organization. There are event systems out there that allow you to add and remove admins on a monthly basis as well which allows you to really control your costs since you do not need to pay for admins annually and can change it up as your needs evolve.

In peak registration time you can add admins and during your off season you can remove them. This obviously makes these online registration systems really budget friendly.

The main draw to the price per admin model is that you do not have a large down payment to make. You can alter and change the process as you wish, 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 of it!

Who is this option good for?

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 the amount of clients and their costs.









Price Per Administrator

Price Per Applicant

Fixed One-Time Pricing



PRICE PER ADMINISTRATOR

- Price per administrator is the most common pricing model.
 It's preferred because it's a good deal no matter the size of your company.
- Smaller companies need less admins and bigger companies need more. So smaller companies with a smaller budget, pay less. Simple!
- Pricing increases only as your business grows, so you can easily control your costs!



- A straightforward model that has you paying a small amount for each applicant that registers, usually \$2-10.
- With this model you pay for your applicants. This can be fine when you have a small event, but can be pricey if you have many applicants.
- This model makes it hard to budget for software because it's contingent on how many people do or don't register. This can be good for a small or seasonal organization.



- Fixed one-time pricing is probably the least used pricing model for software.
- This is usually a high upfront cost with additional fees when you want to make a change.
- This option can work well for an organization whose needs never change, and that is not a client-oriented business.



PART 4: PRICE VS. COST OF SOFTWARE

When evaluating an online registration system you should evaluate the overall cost of the system and not just the price tag for the system.

The difference between price and cost 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 is how using the system actually affects your bottom line.



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 pay to your vendor each month. This is pretty simple to understand and its simplicity is the main reason most people refer to that as "the cost" of a system. But it is not your actual cost. The cost consists of...

- 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. A totally free system actually costs you more than a system you pay a one-time fee of \$5,000 for or a system you pay for each month.



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.

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 which is a huge red flag since it will reflect badly on your reputation and will also cost you in the number of people that complete the 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, which is a huge problem for you!

A system that does not integrate seamlessly with your website is costing you 27% in potential clients!

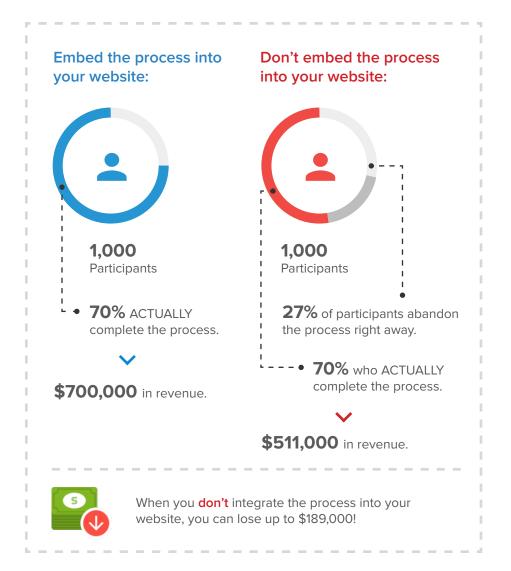
Just to help you calculate, let's say your program price is \$1000 per applicant and you get 1,000 people clicking on the application link. Let's also say that only 70% of the people that start a registration actually make a payment (after all, your registration process is a conversion funnel so it would be wrong to assume that everyone that starts actually makes a payment). That means that from 1,000 people you generate \$700,000 in profit.

Since you did not integrate the system into your website, out of the 1,000 people that click the link, 270 will leave right away. Then out of the 730 remaining, only 70% actually pay you, which means your actual profit is \$511,000.

You just LOST \$189,000! That's a lot of lost business and that will actually snowball in other areas. Do you think it will cost that much to integrate the process on your website, as opposed to sending them to a 3rd party? Your webmaster or software



company that offers website integration may charge \$50 or even \$500 (which they should not) for the 5 minutes it took them to integrate the system onto your site and this saves you \$189,000!



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

Your online registration process is your onboarding process and the last step that a client does before paying you. This is your conversion funnel and the most important part of the funnel.

In order to visualize this idea think of a different conversion funnel: buying a shirt. When you buy a shirt you initially evaluate the type of shirt you need, then the style you want, the color you want, the brands you trust or know, 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 online registration software takes care of.

When someone is coming to your program or event, they cannot order everything you offer. By this I mean, a 5 year old 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. So the registration system needs to make sure that you are offering the user what matches their needs and eligibility.

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 is not as simple as taking out your credit card and paying. In order to onboard a client, 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, etc.

Depending on your organization and your programs there might be additional information that you need. 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, not the other way around.

Also, because 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 find the information they need to complete the application.

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 this? Of course, since now after each applicant completes the initial process you need to get back to them via email or phone to 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 collects this information.

Let's return to the example of having 1,000 applicants on your program. You will need either 10 people for a month of work 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 for you. This costs you approximately \$60,000 a year. That 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 really costing you \$60,000 a year.

Let's compare the \$60,000 you spent 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. In order for that system to actually be equal to the cheaper system you will need to pay an extra of \$5,000 a month. No registration system out there costs that much.



So the cost of saving let's say \$50 a month on the system you selected is actually costing you \$4,950 a month or \$59,400 a year.

Here's the math:

	Software Price	Applicants	\$60,000/YR Employee	\$ Actual Cost
Regular software	FREE!	1,000	\	\$5,000
The RIGHT Software!	\$50	1,000	×	\$50

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 all that jazz. That can bring the overall cost up much higher! 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 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 a system.

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

#	Туре	Price
1	You do everything yourself – set-up the questions and technically build it.	FREE
2	You work off a template and change it.	FREE
3	You send what you need and a project manager does what you asked for (ie the tech 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.	\$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 other responsibilities. So it's not really 'free' anymore is it? Same with altering a template, maybe this takes a few days less.

So if you selected on of the FREE options you have some



learning and setting up to do, right? Let's assume you are really computer savvy and know everything there is to know about registration and programming. With that assumption doing all this will take at least two weeks. That is an estimated cost of \$2,500. So "free" is not so free anymore.

Let's look at option #3...

You send what you need and a project manager does what you asked for (basically just doing the technical side of the process). You pay \$150. Great! Works for everyone and you just saved \$2,500 – \$100 = \$2,350. Or not. 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 building the system in an optimal way.

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 \$1,250 (a week's work) + \$150 = \$1,400. So, \$150 vs \$1,400.

Let's look at option #4...

Here the project manager is doing everything for you. They are adding their knowledge into the process and making sure that everything flows correctly for your specific needs. 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. Let's assume you spend 10 hours (overall) on this process. This costs you \$250 (your time) + \$350 (price paid) or \$600 total.

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, so bear with me. That will cost you in lost clients and lost business and can go much higher, but isn't really something to calculate in a concrete way. Below I have only calculated your direct costs.



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

#	Туре	Price	Cost
1	You do everything yourself.	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.	\$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.	\$350	\$600

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 knows best what will work and what won't for your specific case. Amazing!

Where do I begin?

In order to figure out out WHAT you need from a new system and then begin calculating your cost for the system you need, start 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.



Figure 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 process.

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.

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 aren't a problem for you to begin with. 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 meaningful to you.

Don't forget the time you spend learning the system in the first 3-6 months!

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. This is normal, but every software has a learning curve, so take that into account.

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 since this will minimize the learning curve a great deal.
- Make sure you get a training session from the company and 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 probably 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?" so the person on the other side of the line can show you how it can be done for your specific situation.
- Make sure that the company offers you support when you need it. Most software companies will want you to send them a specific example to the problem you are facing so they can better help you.
- Consider making the switch during an off time in your year so you have ample time to play with the system and get comfortable and also so you impact your 'urgent' work the least and everything business wise can continue to run smoothly.



Now...Calculate the time you save using your new 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 what you need.

Are you saving 1 hour a day of manual input, data entry etc. for ONE employee? How much does that employee make in an 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 you pay now for registration AND also what those employees might accomplish with their 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 and make your organization look sophisticated and 'together' to clients.

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... but a good software should improve these numbers too!)

This increase in revenue might pay for the system itself and the time you need to implement it!! You won't know this however, until you do the math, so please do!



PART 5: 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.

Then decide what features you would like most in a new software. Then, shop around! Do demos, read the white papers, and ask questions! 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 at the best price. Don't just choose the software based on "general features", choose it based on features you need and will be using daily. Compare the time (and money!) you are spending to accomplish registration related tasks now (from marketing to invoicing to communication) and compare that to the cost of a new 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, and gets registration right!

Find a software that offers as much customization as possible as well. Software today has the ability to morph and bend to the needs of the user so an out of the box solution isn't always your only option. 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, and is possible to find on a budget!

