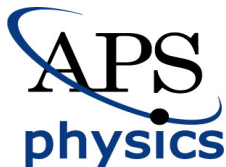




“70% of the pre-registered conference attendees registered over the Web using Association Anywhere. The self-service Web component was convenient, secure and allowed attendees to register and pay by credit card in real-time – with no staff intervention and far fewer data entry mistakes.”

Focus:
Self-service Event Registration



Customer:

American Physical Society
(APS)

HQ Location:

College Park, MD

Website:

<http://www.aps.org>

Challenge:

Automate event registration

Solution:

Association Anywhere

Benefits:

- Lowers costs by eliminating manual data entry
- Improve customer service
- ROI within 12 months

Association Anywhere Automates Event Registration for American Physical Society

When the American Physical Society, based in College Park, Maryland, was reaching its hundredth anniversary, they planned a special annual meeting for their centennial year. In prior years, the annual meeting was regularly attended by approximately 5,000 members and nonmembers. At this centennial annual meeting, over 10,000 attendees, more than double the prior year, were expected. To manage this large volume of registrants, the APS sought software to help automate event registration.

Goals

APS had two goals for the Web registration system. The first was to provide better customer service to their members, allowing them to register via whatever method was most convenient to them, whether by US Mail, fax, phone or online. The second, to handle an expected two-fold increase in the number of registrations without increasing staff headcount or hiring temporary help.

The Solution

APS evaluated three options:

- Email-based solution - Build a form on their Website that would email registration requests to the staff.
- Separate database solution - Build a form on the APS Website to capture information into a temporary database that would then later be loaded into the production database.
- Association Anywhere - Integrated with the APS Website, Association Anywhere would provide a self-service mechanism for capturing all registration details in real time, eliminating manual data entry.

After evaluating the options, APS chose Association Anywhere for several reasons. While all of the options provided the ability for the members to register at their convenience over the Web, only the “self service” option allowed APS to handle more registrations without increasing staff. Any option that did not use the production database in real time would have required additional handling by staff to review and potentially re-key data.

The self-service application shows which functions have space available and

Case Study

which ones are full, in real-time which eliminates callbacks to registrants when choices are full. By providing a step-by-step wizard on their Website that guides the registrant through a series of questions, the registrant is empowered to register for the event and pay by credit card – all in real time.

What is more, confirmation notices are provided immediately online, as well as emailed. The registrant immediately has in-hand a confirmation notice to bring on-site, or to submit to his or her employer for expense reimbursement. Registrants also have the opportunity for members to update address, phone and email contact information.

To mitigate potential risks, Association Anywhere was set up to:

- Authenticate members, using name, address, and membership information.
- To automatically validate the data before storing it in the production database.
- Check credit cards in real time and prevent registration from completing until the card is authorized and approved, preventing credit card number typos and callbacks for declined cards.
- Promote the Web registration system via every avenue possible, including all promotional materials, the membership publication/newsletter, broadcast email to the members, and promotion of the registration Website address on the printed registration form.

The Results

With the pilot test, there was an unexpected 13% boost in registrations. This was attributed to the convenience of the impulse buy, as members browsing the Website for information about the event were able to register immediately.

For the annual meeting, 70% of the pre-registrants registered over the Web. This meant that 70% of the

registrants entered their own data into the database, with no re-keying by internal staff. The number of staff required to handle registrations actually decreased, while the number of registrations processed doubled. It is true that “many hands make light work.”

Data entry into the membership database was much cleaner, with fewer errors than in previous years. This was attributed to the elimination of human errors in computing the incorrect price on registration forms, in trying to decipher poor handwriting and in poor or unreadable faxes.

Additional staff time was saved, because the shopping basket computed the correct price and authorized credit cards in real time, which eliminated callbacks and follow-ups. There were shorter lines at registration check-in since fewer people had a balance due, and therefore quicker sign-ins without need for money changing hands.

Return on Investment

APS saw a complete return on its investment within the first year. While part of the ROI was attributable to the increase in sales, the bigger return on investment was based on the lowering of costs:

- Doubled the transactions handled but did so with fewer staff. The attendees did the data entry work themselves when they registered.
- Eliminated costs of time for callbacks on bad credit cards or follow-ups for short payments and registration form inconsistencies.
- Eliminated mailing costs by putting the confirmation notices online and email.
- Lowered number of customer service calls handled for common questions such as, “Did you get my registration form yet?”
- In addition to the hard numbers, there were many added intangible benefits, especially in the improved customer service:
- Attendees could register for the event at any time that was convenient for them, 24 x 7.



About ACGI Software

ACGI Software is the trusted leader in Web-based association management software. Our flagship application, Association Anywhere, integrates with an association's Web site and business applications, automating administrative and financial operations, enhancing communication and reducing operating costs. It gives association executives the tools they need to engage members, empower staff and make insightful decisions. Founded in 1996, ACGI is based in Columbia, Maryland.

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