



A Bit of Relief, Registration Costs Hold Steady

Registration costs for trade shows and conventions are likely to remain near current levels in 2008. As registration companies increasingly provide both lead retrieval and registration services, there is room for negotiation for show managers interested in using both technologies.

The current estimated range for a show with fewer than 5,000 attendees is \$3 to \$5 per person (presuming no use of lead retrieval). Economy of scale brings the cost down to \$1.30 to \$2 per person for a show with more than 20,000 attendees.



Clark Williams

Most registration companies have no plans for price increases in 2008; those that do plan to raise rates say the increases will be minimal. "If anything, prices are flat or going down, due to competition and improved efficiency and productivity," said Clark Williams, president of CompuSystems in Broadview, IL.

Adding Lead Retrieval to the Package

Arnie Roberts, president and CEO of Palo Alto, CA-based SMART-Reg International, said show managers continue to negotiate lower rates. "They're looking to save in every way." And competition remains intense.

Williams said lead retrieval is



Arnie Roberts

a big factor in determining the overall pricing for registration, but says rate increases would reduce demand.

More Details and Features Requested

Several companies said tech-savvy clients have higher expectations today and are asking for more detail, more features and Web-based solutions for their registration-systems.

"Automated tools for lead capture drive better results from exhibiting," said Debbie Baxter, president of Showcare in Ontario, Canada.



Jeff Cooper

The Effect of Rising Fuel Prices

Registration companies expressed some concern about rising freight costs tied to high fuel prices. Shipping at the least expensive rate typically is too slow and results in too much downtime for the equipment. And registration companies are hesitant to rent equipment locally unless they have a solid relationship with a provider that can guarantee the equipment will be available and will work properly.

Advances in RFID

One trend already apparent is that advances in technology are helping to bring down the cost of RFID, said Jeff Cooper, president and CEO of Expo Logic in Broomall, PA. That has resulted in more requests to use RFID for attendance and session tracking, he said.

"We see the technology improving in accuracy and declining in price,"

Baxter said.

RFID systems also can help reduce costs when used instead of tickets for some events, Roberts said.

Another widening trend is the use of matchmaking software.

"Shows are looking for a hook to prove their value and this is another way of doing that," Cooper said.

But the increased demands result in higher project management costs. Registration companies must invest more in training employees to improve productivity and enable them to meet clients' needs.



Debbie Baxter

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AVERAGE COST OF REGISTRATION SERVICES

Shows less than 5,000 attendees: \$4
shows of more than 20,000 attendees: \$2
Projected rate of increase for 2008: 0%
Projected rate of increase for 2009: 1.6%