



Subscriptions and Credit cards



The Challenge

Collecting membership fees on time is a key factor to our member retention. There has always been a problem in ensuring that members renew at the beginning of the next membership period. If the member delays their renewal by several weeks or even months, getting them to continue their membership requires a great deal more effort the larger the amount that is overdue.

Our previous systems included a paper chase of payments from the member to the membership secretary and then on to the treasurer. This would entail a delay while the membership list was updated by the Treasurer. The updated membership list would then be returned to the membership secretary, who would then have to find the time to chase up those members who were still outstanding on their dues.

We needed a solution that:-

- Gave the membership secretary and treasurer access to membership data and the ability to update the same information
- Was available to the membership secretary and treasurer whenever was convenient
- Was simple to use
- And can help with chasing up the members

Project Details

“We need a solution that is fast and easy to use by busy people”

Our club has around 420 members at any one time. This is not a large number but is bordering on the size where it becomes necessary to have a system other than an EXCEL spreadsheet to control the finances and membership.

As a result of this type of process, the major form of receipts the club has to manage is membership fees. These may be paid monthly, quarterly or annually depending on the choices made by the club members. We do this to help ease the burden on the budget for some of our members.

We produce a monthly diary of events on paper and also list these on our website. Members can book into events on the website but may not pay since they have to hand their money and cheques to the event organiser and not the club. Even the few larger committee organised events that we hold (e.g. Christmas Party) always have a lead organiser who collects the money.

We will collect payments in cash, but we are looking to get members to pay online. We were very aware of the expense in setting up an online payment system and wanted one where the cost upfront would not be a burden on the club. In short we did not want a large entry fee for the new improved subscription collection system.

Whilst we mainly wanted to improve the membership management, we also wanted to solve another set of problems; one of which is communication. Ideally we wanted to improve the speed and accuracy of communications between the club and the members. To achieve this, we looked for components in the system that could do this for us. To help with collecting renewal subscriptions, we needed to be able to e-mail members



Connecting Communities

Credit Cards for small groups

during the period prior to their renewal date. We also wanted to send e-mails to members that had not renewed to encourage them to rejoin.



We also wanted to provide our event organisers with a tool to help them manage their events. These members are the primary driving force in our club and devote a lot of time to making sure their events attract the attention of the membership. For this, we looked for an integrated events system that would also provide a method for the organisers to e-mail to the whole membership or just those that have booked for a particular event.

In short, once we had resolved the subscription payment method issue, we had another wish list we also wanted to include.

Conclusion

“and a solution that most importantly meets our budget”.

We went for the one solution that did not put pressure on the clubs limited budget. The fee is based on the number of members in the group which makes it much easier for us to set our subscription rate. We estimated we pretty well broke even after the first three months. This was about the same amount of time it took us to clean our name and address data and familiarising ourselves with the system.

We then took the bull by the horns and went for the credit card payments for renewals. This has been a real success for us. Again the charges have been modest for us and the number of members renewing on time basically has exceeded our most optimistic expectations.

So we have a solution that is marginally more expensive than free, but which in return allows us to know where we are on membership numbers at any time. We now know quickly who has lapsed and can sort the problems out as they arise. This means that our retention rate has improved significantly.



Visit our website at
www.activityforum.co.uk
For more information on ActivityForum contact

Roger Panton
01256 533188
Roger@activityforum.co.uk

