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# THE STRATEGIC

## EVENT PLANNING PLAYBOOK

## A GUIDE TO INCREASING EVENT REVENUE

The purpose of this interactive playbook is to help you put together a race strategy that will help you increase your event revenue throughout the participant journey.

- 
- 2 Introduction
  - 3 Registration Strategy
  - 4 Team & Group Registration Strategy
  - 5 Pricing Strategy
  - 6 Sponsorship & Partnership Strategy
  - 7 Communication Strategy
  - 8 Merchandise Strategy
  - 9 Race Day Strategy
  - 10 About Us
  - 11 Connect With Us

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The endurance event landscape is constantly evolving, and for this reason it is critical that event organizers have both short and long-term strategies in place to constantly improve events year-on-year, provide a quality participant experience, and generate the revenue needed to ensure profitability.

### IT'S TIME TO CHANGE THE WAY WE THINK ABOUT EVENTS.

The participant journey has become an extended interaction between participants and the organization behind events. This playbook provides you with an in-depth overview of how you can monetize these interactions in order to increase your event revenue through various channels.

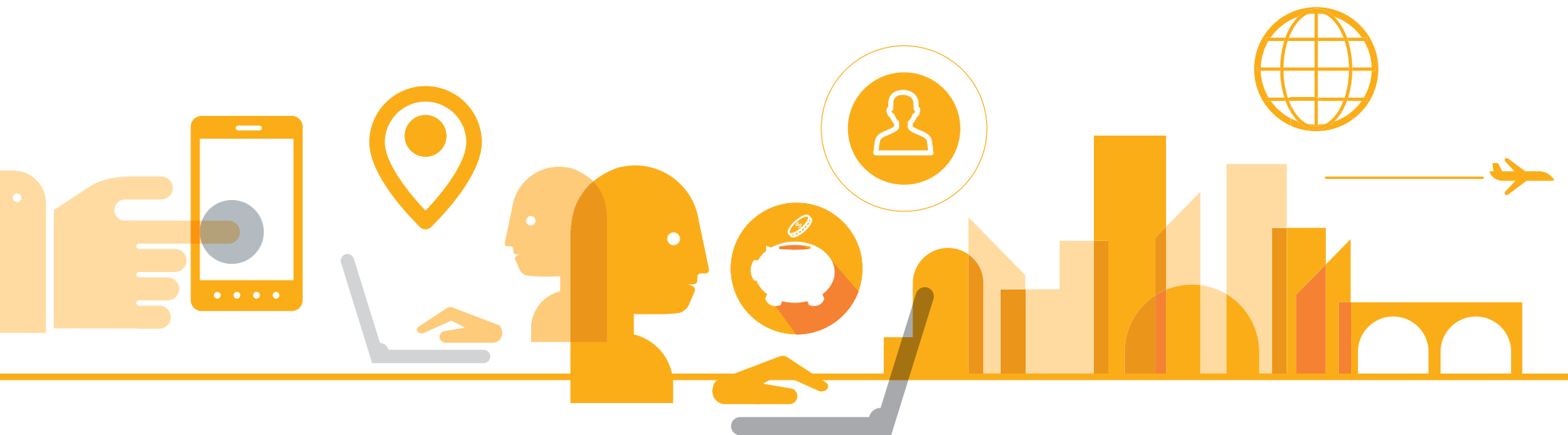
### WHAT'S YOUR KEY DIFFERENTIATOR?

What is your unique selling point, and how can you capitalize on this? The fundamental step to deciding the actions you can take to increase your event revenue is to conduct a SWOT analysis. (That's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats).

List out the strengths your event has and the opportunities you can create from this.

For example, if your participants love your branding, merchandise is an excellent way to engage with them and spread the word about your brand, in addition to creating an extra stream of revenue.

This will also allow you to identify negative factors that could affect your event's objectives, such as: your marketing and promotion technique, level of expertise (e.g. first-time event), event budget, etc.



A pre-defined target allows you to work on a detailed marketing plan, which is designed and targeted to achieve your registration numbers. For example: If you have a small event, it can help you position it as exclusive.

Set your registration targets early on in the event planning stage

## EXTEND REGISTRATION DEADLINES

Registration deadline is an old concept, applicable when registrations were primarily offline and the organizers needed time to collate the registrants' data to finalize the logistics.

Online technology brings the opportunity to register last-minute participants, without it affecting your planning and, more importantly, extending the customer's ability to decide about their participation.

In fact, the organizer should extend the registration deadline until the last day. By implementing the tiered pricing system, this creates an additional commercial advantage.

## CATEGORIES

From hardcore competitors to I-just-want-to-finishers, the who, how, and why of participation has evolved. Although it may seem that performance has been diminished, this is not necessarily the case – in addition to attracting the competitive, races are also reaching out to a broader audience of participants such as, families and experiential consumers. Over the past three years, we have seen a tremendous rise in female participation for running events, with **women dominating more than 60% of the market.**

### So what does this mean for you?

Do not abandon your core audience, but consider making room for some new players. In the event planning stage,

investigate the potential to expand your offering by adding categories to your event. For example, a mini-mile for kids at a running event, or a women's only wave to race day.

Small adjustments can be made to your logistics so that you can offer race day childcare, set up family zones or even open your finish line shoot, so that mom or dad can be the hero that runs across the finish line with their kids.

Adding waves to your event, so that your core competitors can head off first and those who want to have fun and enjoy the challenge can leave at a later stage. This can also allow for extra capacity.

## COST ON RACE DAY

It is recommended to increase the cost of registration on race day. You can charge up to double your normal registration fee for those registering on race day. There are two main benefits of doing this:

1. Builds habit among your participant base to register earlier (helping you with cash flow and logistics planning).
2. Decreases your logistical cost of having volunteers manage on-spot registrations as well as your administrative cost for race numbers, timing chips, etc.



ACTIVE Works Endurance's team functionality helped British Military Fitness increase the size of each team created and substantially contributed to **an increase in revenue of 150% over 3 events.**

Did you know that ACTIVE Works Endurance enables team captains to **pre-pay for multiple spots**, ensuring that they have secured places for other team members **without having their details?**

### TEAM & GROUP REGISTRATIONS

Encourage registrants to enroll their family and friends for the event by offering group discounts to any individual who registers at least four other participants during the same transaction.

You are essentially giving an incentive to your loyal participants to market this event within their circle of influence. This can significantly help you increase your registration numbers.

Team and group entry options are a great way of increasing revenue for your event. Your team captains are essentially a part of your marketing machine, rallying up their friends and colleagues to join their team at your event.



## PRICING STRATEGY

Taking the time to set goals around registration and revenue numbers is vitally important and should take place before each event is launched. Reach out internally to team members who may have insights and ideas that can impact your goals, in addition to researching external competitive and market standards.

Your pricing strategy should be orientated in creating urgency to give participants a reason to register immediately, rather than leaving them to sit on the fence. Cost incentives and limited capacities are the primary reasons people register early for an event.

Tiered pricing can be an effective promotional tool if you clearly communicate the discounts of registering early as well as the subsequent price increase(s) for the event.

## TIERED PRICING EXAMPLE:

Registration Fee: \$20  
Total Capacity: 1000

Normal Scenario	Revenue
1000 registrations * \$20	\$20,000
Tiered Pricing Scenario	
Early Bird (Cap at 30%) 300 registrations * \$16	\$4,800
Normal Price 550 registrations * \$20	\$11,000
Late Entry 250 * \$30	\$7,500
<b>Total Revenue From Tiered</b>	<b>\$23,300</b>

## Example: Brighton Marathon

Brighton Marathon wanted to increase their revenue without substantially growing participant levels.

By implementing a staggered pricing structure, we were able to create urgency **and increase their revenue by 18%** with only a 3% increase in registrations.

Because ACTIVE Network works with **over 10,000 endurance events annually**, we have insight into what works and what doesn't. We work closely with you to examine industry averages and trends, acting as valuable external resource to help build your best pricing strategy.



## EVENT SPONSORS

Identify potential sponsors and create a concise sponsorship proposal that outlines the benefits of sponsorship. Decide what type of sponsorship would best suit your event. Will you conduct your sponsorship deal on a barter basis, such as the provision of a service in exchange for product placement or promotion on your marketing materials, or will it be a straight forward financial arrangement?

Remember that it is always in the shared interest of event sponsors to promote your event along with the organizer. Be bold in requesting access to their databases or placing information on their marketing collateral to promote your event.

### Here are a few ways to leverage sponsor promotion:

1. Have a write-up, along with an 'enter now' button on their website
2. Have the event QR code or registration link on their marketing material
3. Leverage their PR contacts and campaigns. Remember to include links to your registration page on all communications.

## EVENT PARTNERSHIPS

There is potential to partner with organizers of similar events, which happen at a non-competitive time (if your event is in fall, then partner with an event in spring).

The biggest advantage of doing this is to build a shared database, which can be used to promote events of similar experiences.

## CHARITY PARTNERSHIP

Charities and endurance events have had a long-term relationship for some time; however, these relationships are not fully utilized by either organization.

### Benefits to Charities:

- Access to a different demographic. For example, if you are a charity looking to attract a younger female demographic, you should partner up with an experiential event organizer such as a paint run or night time glow run. These types of **experiential events tend to attract about 70% female audience**, with the majority of them between 18 and 35 years of age.

- Increased fundraising for your cause during the registration process. A third of fundraisers inspire their friends and family to start fundraising too\*.
- Increased exposure on event communications, event website and on race day.

### Benefits to Commercial Event Organizers:

- Access to a dedicated audience database. Get your charity partner to send email invites to their database of fundraisers on your behalf.
- Volunteer support on race day.
- Tap into your charity partner's connections to leverage better deals on items for race day or race packs. E.g. bottled water, goody bag items, etc.
- Utilize your partner's PR machine to get the word out about your event and your fundraising efforts.

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Did you know that **62% of family and friends take part in the same event as the original fundraiser?**\*

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\*Source: JustGiving 2014

Did you know that ACTIVE Works Endurance **captures all incomplete registrations** so that you can send targeted messages to them enticing them to complete their registration?

## EMAIL MARKETING & REMINDERS

During the participant journey you have a number of touch points with your customers. You need to consider how you will engage with consumers and the processes you have in place for turning a potential into a participant.

You should engage with past participants and anyone who has signed-up to receive emails regarding your event(s). Provide engaging content, event updates and promotional offers.

**Create a standard email format to send to your database, which should include:**

- Integrated social media buttons
- Call-to-Action Register Now button
- Basic details about your event (e.g. time, date, venue)

It's vital that any email marketing you conduct is mobile optimized. Based on four years of statistics, Litmus recently announced that mobile opens comprised 53% of opens in 2014; 500% higher than 2011.

Plan out the timing and topics of the emails you want to target your database.

**It is worth incorporating the following themes as part of this:**

- Launch of your event registration (or to announce early bird offer)
- Announcing price changes, e.g. the end of early bird, price hikes, etc.
- Encourage people to bring a friend or start a team

**You should also email:**

- Registration confirmation(s)
- Reminders for incomplete registrations

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Example: Milton Keynes Marathon

**Emailed all existing 2,500 participants, two months before close date, with a refer a friend offer.** Customer question was added to the registration form and a report run after the event to confirm numbers of people referred. This resulted in **an additional 300 entries!** Easy to implement and manage using inbuilt reporting and email tool.

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Running events have seen an **increase of approximately 72%** in online merchandise sales since 2012.

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“Being able to sell merchandise (glow lights, glow sticks, face paint, etc.) within the registration path has been really incredible. We sell more through this channel than we do on event day.”

Dan Hill  
 Founder & CEO - Electric Run

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### MERCHANDISE

Most race organizers offer an array of merchandise on race day. While this is a great way of increasing your event revenue, it can also cause some issues with cash-flow and stock.

We recommend that our organizers add merchandise to their registration process where possible.

Think about offering limited edition event t-shirts, an option to upgrade a race t-shirt to technical t-shirt, options for engraved medals, bike/wetsuit rental etc. Hoodies sell extremely well at Obstacle Courses and Mud Runs. T-shirts generate significant extra revenue for running events of all kinds. It’s vital that you do some market research before you decide on what merchandise you’re going to offer.

When looking at increasing event revenue, merchandise is usually the first thing that comes to mind. Depending on the type of race you’re organizing there could be other sources of income for your event such as:

- Food Stations
- Travel Packages
- Parking
- VIP Experiences
- Spectator tickets
- Training Plans & Sessions

## ON-SITE REGISTRATION

Your race day activities will play an instrumental role in increasing participation on the day, in addition to getting participants involved with your next event. The main considerations you should make include: processes for taking on the day registrations, onsite activities and kicking-off your next event.

ACTIVE's On-Site app has been designed to increase efficiency by allowing you to easily register newcomers, take cashless payments, access merchandise information, check-in participants and assign bib numbers. By making this process a breeze, you will be able to capture last-minute participants, in addition to delivering fantastic service overall.

Head over to the Apple store to download the free app to:

- Enter new participant details quickly and securely
- Take payments using your devices camera to quickly scan card details
- Check-in registrants instantly via QR Code or name search
- Assign bib numbers
- Mark waivers as signed
- Access registrant merchandise purchases
- Easily share newcomer details with your timing provider by emailing spreadsheet of updates

## SPONSORED ACTIVITIES

Explore the activities that you can engage sponsors and partners in, from event photo sharing to family activities. Depending on the type of event, you may wish to include the following to your onsite activities:

- On-the-day photographs for post-event sale or social sharing. If you have the budget to fund a photographer or a sponsor willing to pay in return for their logo being placed on the images, free photos for social sharing can massively increase engagement.
- Partner sample stalls and pop-up shops. These offer your participants a wider on-the-day experience, while also adding value to your partnerships.
- Family and spectator activities. Add to the on-the-day experience with catering, bars or family activities as appropriate to your event. In some cases, such as with caterers, you'll be able to take a commission of sales which will add to your revenue stream.

Example: Social Sharing Stats, 2014

4,830 photographs were taken during an obstacle course race with 1,600 participants. The photographs were offered to the participants for free resulting in 9,796 Facebook referrals from 664 photos, driving 9,081 unique visitors and 1,825 tags.\*

*\*Stats from AWOL Adventure*

Did you know that our online race registration software and race management tools are the best in the endurance industry?

They're designed to help you get more participants, manage event details with ease, and build loyalty.

With over 10 year's experience in the endurance industry, we have unique access to insights and market trends that help our event directors reach their event goals and improve the participant experience year-on-year.

SEE WHAT OUR CLIENTS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT US

SELECT YOUR LOCATION TO FIND YOUR CLOSEST OFFICE



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