

5 Myths About Online Registration – Getting the Real Story

Hushed whispers behind taped hands. Knowing looks shot back and forth through the chalky air. That's how rumors get started, so we're here to help you get the real story. Not about break-ups or make-ups, but about something much more glamorous—online registration. Alright, maybe it's not as interesting as the interpersonal dramas that play out next to the pommel horse, but online registration is certainly much more important to the success of your gymnastics business. There are several common misconceptions about online registration that may distract you from bringing a better system to your gymnastics facility. Read about five online registration myths below to make a decision based on fact instead of fiction.

Myth #1: “I do offer online registration. I provide a PDF on my website for people to fill out and fax or email back to me.”

► **Reality:** Authentic online registration should be performed completely online within one system. That means *no printing, no handwriting and no repeated entry of information*—in fact, no data entry by you or your staff at all. (Yep, we said it. No data entry!) Your participants should log in through the internet, fill out an online form, add payment information, and click submit. The payment will be processed via secure channels and routed directly to your bank account. Registration information funnels into a central database you can access 24/7, while real-time class capacity numbers and waitlist options are displayed online to your participants. At this point you still haven't lifted a finger, but you may want to inch that index digit upwards to run some reports with a few clicks of the mouse. Automatically generate reports on class lists, attendance history, revenue or any other combination of data you'd like. The time you'll save and the visibility you'll gain by using an online registration system will make you wonder how you ever ran the business without it.

Myth #2: “If I offer online registration people will register for classes above their skill levels.”

► **Reality:** Whether it's someone wanting a challenge or simply not paying attention to the class description, we're sure you've seen participants join the wrong class. You can keep control over the registration process with an online system that allows you to *set class pre-requisites*. When gymnasts register, their information is verified against the requirements to ensure the classes are appropriate for them. The system essentially acts as your own personal bouncer, checking IDs before he lets anyone in the door. You can be confident that you won't have Joe the Beginner next to Nastia Liukin, or a 6-year-old in a 10-year-old class. Set it and forget it.

Myth #3: “If I offer online registration I will lose the personal touch.”

► **Reality:** Interactions with gymnasts and parents will actually *increase* if you adopt an online registration system. For one, the time spent locked away like a princess in a tower shuffling papers and typing in data will now be spent out of the office and on the gym floor. Face-to-face conversations will be more common and topics will revolve around new classes and techniques instead of late payments and due dates. Secondly, you'll have time to improve your email communications with gymnasts and parents. With all information in a centralized database, you can create lists from that database and add true personal touches by contacting specific groups for specific reasons. Use your lists to send customized welcome emails, special offers, birthday wishes or class reminder notes. And don't forget that online registration is convenient for your participants as well—saving time is something valuable you can offer them.

Myth #4: “It will be too time-consuming, expensive and stressful to switch from my current system to something better.”

► **Reality:** Online registration is *affordable* when it is Web-based because there is no hardware to buy. You don’t have to install or update anything; the system provider handles that and the latest version of the software will automatically be made available. You only need a computer with Internet access—log in at any time and the program will unfurl before you, ready to go. You won’t need a technology department, or even one of those Geek Squads, when using online registration that is built to be do-it-yourself. Plus, with firewalls and electronic security certificates, the security of your customers’ data will be many times greater than storing slips in filing cabinets! It will be quick, easy and cheap to incorporate a new online registration system into your gymnastics facility.

Myth #5: “I don’t think my customers are computer savvy enough to use online registration.”

► **Reality:** If you’re expecting online registration to be a trend that burns bright and fades out, like Crocs, think again. Transacting online has become commonplace and *people now expect the option to be available*—whether it’s from banks, stores or activity organizers. Your customers are probably much savvier than you give them credit for. For most parents and gymnasts this will be a familiar process, but you can also distribute FAQ documents and step-by-step guides, or hold demo sessions at your gym to make sure everyone is comfortable with the process. Whether a pro or a novice, your customers will be able to easily register online.

Dispel the rumors and don’t be fooled by old wives’ tales—online registration will be the best thing to happen to your gymnastics facility since the double layout. Using online registration will save you a stackload of work, allowing you to make better use of your time building the value of your business.