

Software for Sports Facilities - The Top 6 Features to Get Your Games Going

A common challenge owners face is how to expand programs without cutting current ones, increasing cost, or sacrificing what little free time is left. The answer lies in technology—there are web-based software systems that have been created precisely with sports facilities in mind to help automate routine tasks, increase participation and generally keep you organized. Before your eyes gloss over at seeing the term “software,” have a quick read about how the right system can help grow your business affordably and save you a heck of a lot of time. You can decide for yourself from there.

Here are the top 6 software features your sports facility needs to get your games going:

1. League Management and Scheduling

An excel sheet with multiple tabs or (even worse) a laminated wall calendar covered in handwritten scribbles and sticky notes will not cut it as a master schedule for all the moving parts of your sports facility. To get a 360 view of all league activities and keep a grasp on what’s happening where, you need a software system that arranges your leagues and updates them to a master calendar. Link each player with each game, each game with each league, and each league with the master calendar. With the right application, you can:

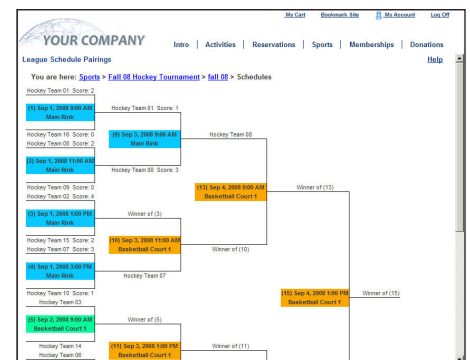
- ▶ Configure and customize league structures, types, names, descriptions, start and end dates, and no-play dates.
- ▶ Reserve facilities for each league and assign players to teams and officials to games.
- ▶ Use validation rules to ensure an even allocation of games and prevent team and site conflicts as you build out your schedule.

It’s also important for your software to be *flexible*. Last-minute changes and additions are the nature of the business and your system should absorb them and respond instantly. Swap or delete games, players and sites with the click of a mouse. Input game results and keep your hyper-competitive players happy with instant calculations of team rankings and statistics.

The bottom line is the software you select should have functionality for league management and scheduling that makes you feel like Bobby Fisher moving pieces around a chess board.

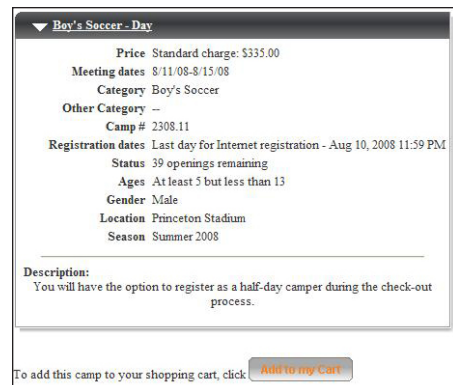
2. Online Registration

When you make programs available online, your customers get 24/7 access to registration. Your facility management software should allow participants to easily search and register for programs online. And not just individual activities—online registration should encompass facility reservation, team registration, and anything else that requires a sign up or payment. All registration pages should be customizable by you, without having to bring in some fancy HTML expert. Add images, include as much detail as you want, ask unlimited questions, change font colors... whatever bolt of creative genius you’d like!



Once you find a system that accommodates your participants, make sure online registration integrates with the administrative “back-end” you and your staff will be handling. Transactions should be viewable and traceable across all sites, in real-time, within completely secure channels. Transfers and refunds should be performed without hassle. Give instructors, coaches and officials special login privileges to print rosters and attendance sheets, as well as send email updates and confirmations to players.

A robust online registration system will automate and centralize all of the information that flows in and out of your facility doors.

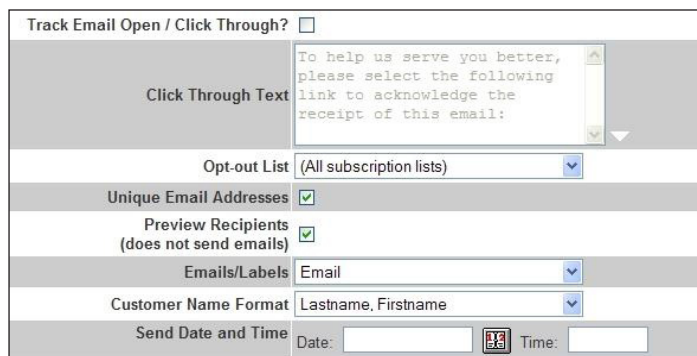


3. Email Communication Tools

We mentioned email communication above, but it is important enough to warrant its very own paragraph. A software system with a built-in email communication tool can make good use of that giant database of registrants who have participated in your programs. Your email tool should be able to segment everyone who registers online, dropping them into custom lists based upon criteria you choose (gender, age, activities, etc).

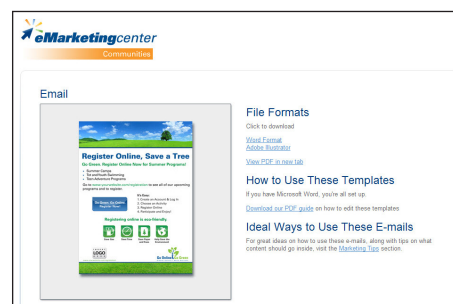
From there, you can inform your participants about the latest news, schedule updates or discount offers, tailoring the content so it is specific to their interests.

The email tool should also include reports on email opens, click-throughs, and any resulting registration activity so you can evaluate and adjust email content. The next thing you know, *participation will increase* because more people are aware of what’s going on, and *relationships will grow* because you regularly communicate relevant information to your participants. Not to mention, you save yourself a bundle by reducing printing costs for informational sheets you used to send via snail mail. Save a tree—send an email.



4. Marketing Services

Like Russian nesting dolls, your software system should have multiple layers of functionality that fit inside each other comfortably. A layer often overlooked is *marketing support*. Besides providing technology, what can your software company do for you? Do they have a way to reach out to a larger pool of participants, helping you find more customers? Do they provide you with tools to promote your new services or programs? Look for an established company that offers resources to help grow your programs with exposure to new participants (online advertising, access to new email lists, partnership opportunities) as well as provide you with tools to support the participants you currently have (marketing tips, video tutorials, graphic templates). It’s a two-way street and your software company should do more than just provide you with technology—they should stick around to make sure the technology is being put to good use.

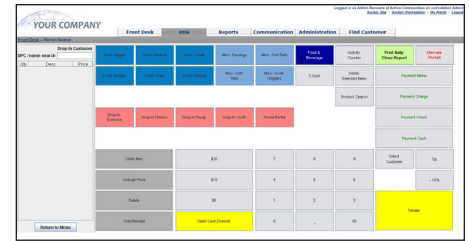


5. Point-of-Sale Integration and Inventory Tracking

In addition to registration, sports facilities like yours have additional revenue streams. These need to be *integrated* with the rest of operations so financials can be traced through concession stands, pro-shops, and drop-in facilities. Point-of-sale (POS) functionality which supports cash, credit, or check orders is a critical part of a software system.

The POS system should:

- ▶ Include a friendly touch-screen interface that can be customized with buttons, layouts and colors so it is as simple to use as Baby Einstein toy.
- ▶ Be flexible to pre-set prices and quantities, improving the speed and accuracy of your cashiers, as well as allowing for the configuration of new pricing and weekly promotions.
- ▶ Print and email receipts in a snap, or void transactions completely.

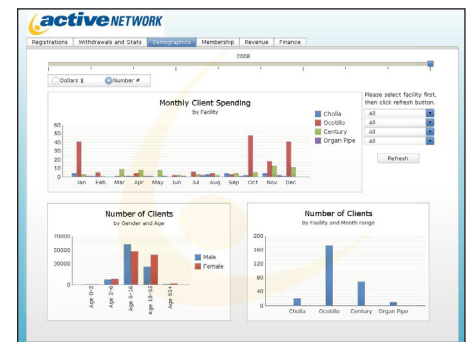


As sales are processed, inventory should automatically update, ensuring you have real-time reporting of everything in stock. When your inventory drops below a level you specify, you will receive an automatic email notification reminding you to reorder. All revenue should be assignable to accounts, with purchases tracked by customer or company.

6. Reporting

With the right software system, you will have all registrations and revenue moving in one direction towards an organized central database. Next you need to take an in-depth look at those two elements so you can break down what's working and what's not. Reporting will allow you to *identify new revenue opportunities, uncover trends, understand facility usage and plan new programs.*

Your facility management software should include standard reports, as well as allow you to customize those reports to drill down into details. Pull financial reports on POS transactions, daily cash close-outs and an overarching general ledger account. Download league and roster reports with addresses so you can contact players by postal mail or email. Automatically generate reports on dates and times you choose (every Friday at 5 p.m.) and email the report to a list of people you specify. The more reports offered by your software system, the better. If you can thoroughly analyze the data within your sports facility, you will have a better understanding of all operations and make better management decisions.



After reading all of that, let's cut straight to the chase—incorporating software into your sports facility makes sense from a revenue, operations, and “I can't take any more stress” standpoint. The chance to increase participation and improve day-to-day efficiency is worth the shot alone. Give it a chance and compare for yourself how much a difference the right software for your sports facility can make.