



## Count Me In Best Practices For First Year Clients

Our Client Services staff has helped hundreds of organizations in North America and Europe over the past five years successfully migrate from paper based registration to online registration.

This experience has enabled us to develop a list of Best Practices that address organization and online registration marketing, internet adoption, staff and constituent orientation and training proper set-up of registration forms, new revenue generating practices and helpful tips to help your organization increase its visibility, participation and constituent satisfaction while streamlining operations.

### I. Best Practices for Promoting Your Organization and Online Registration

Most organizations disseminate information about their programs through a combination of several different types of media and mediums. We recommend providing your constituents with information that enables them to initiate and complete an action. This includes researching, registering and paying for a program without any third party support.

Your objective is to publish and maintain accurate information on your website on an ongoing basis while concurrently driving traffic to your website from every other source. Adoption of this approach will make your organization's website the universal focal point of current information and cut down on phone calls, separate emails and in-person visits.

There are sixteen best practices that will facilitate your organization's migration online by directing your constituents to your organization's website and changing their behavioral patterns. We recommend that you use the following as a checklist

**Activate Your Website Early:** Activate all portions of your Count Me In website, including program, donations, sponsorship, volunteering, and "About Us" pages as quickly as possible. Don't wait until just before the registration season. Make the pages interesting by including images and useful text, without cluttering up your site.

**Home Page of Website:** Prominently highlight online registration as the most visible piece of information on the home page of your website. Include the VeriSign logo on the homepage so registrants are confident their credit card payment is submitted securely.

**Other Websites:** Arrange placements of announcements and links to your website on school district and local school websites, chamber of commerce sites, television, radio and newspaper websites and websites of other sports organizations. The more visible your online registration announcement and links are the better.

**Online Directories:** If you are drawing from a large geographic area or are competing with other organizations then the visibility of your website within the major search engines is vital to your online marketing success. Inclusion in the following directories helps maximize website visibility across many major search properties.

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[www.dmoz.org](http://www.dmoz.org)

The Open Directory Project maintained by a global community of human volunteers is the most comprehensive directory on the web. Based on the spirit of the Open Source movement Open Directory is supported on the concept of 100% free submission and retrieval. Open Directory supplies directory information to some of the largest companies on the Internet including Google, Netscape, AOL, Hotbot and more. To submit your website for free, follow these steps:

1. Go to: [http://dmoz.org/Kids\\_and\\_Teens/Sports\\_and\\_Hobbies/Sports/Track\\_and\\_Field/](http://dmoz.org/Kids_and_Teens/Sports_and_Hobbies/Sports/Track_and_Field/)
2. Click on “Suggest Url”
3. Follow submission steps

[www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com)

The Yahoo submission program helps reach millions of users, powering search results for top portals such as Yahoo!, AltaVista, and AlltheWeb. To suggest your site for evaluation by an editor, follow the process outlined below:

1. Go to: [http://dir.yahoo.com/Recreation/Sports/Cultures\\_and\\_Groups/Youth/Organizations/](http://dir.yahoo.com/Recreation/Sports/Cultures_and_Groups/Youth/Organizations/)
2. Click on “suggest a site”
3. Follow the steps for submission.

The submission review/publish process can take a few weeks, submit you directory listing requests as early as possible.

**Phone Message of Organization:** Change your organization’s recorded phone message to direct callers to your website. Example: “Our organization is now using online registration for all programs. To register (your child), volunteer, sponsor or donate, please go to [www.mysc.org](http://www.mysc.org) for all information. That’s [www.mysc.org](http://www.mysc.org). You can register online 24 hours a day 7 days a week from home, office, a library or any Internet connected computer!”

**All Printed Materials:** All printed materials including stationary, press releases, banners, flyers, signs, notices, email signatures, license plate frames, key chains, t-shirts and other merchandise should include your organization’s website address. Direct the public to your website instead of your phone number. This will cut down on phone time and provide your visitors with access to the information they need at their fingertips when they need it. Display flyers and signs at sporting goods stores, local merchants, community clubs (Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs, etc), fields, schools, and other community facilities.

**Newspaper Article:** The pre-season is a great time to get your local papers to carry a story about your growing organization and its expansion of online services. Make it easy for the reporting staff by providing helpful facts, and action photos. The article can include text to the effect of:

*The Mercerdale Youth Soccer Club will be starting its 24<sup>th</sup> season this year. Since inception, the club has grown from 40 kids in 1981 to the largest youth sport in our community with more than 1,500 kids and 300 adult volunteers.*

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*The club provides instructional, recreational and competitive opportunities for kids ranging in age from 5 – 19 and also has x adult teams that play in our area. “Our club is the fastest growing and most successful youth program in our area,” said current board president, Alexi Laylass.*

*This year the Club is streamlining operations by adopting a comprehensive online registration, secure payment and organization management solution. This solution will save parents, volunteers and coaches time by enabling parents to register and pay online at their convenience 24 hours a day 7 days a week. Coaches and staff will also benefit from the powerful team building, games scheduling and communications tools that will help all the Club’s participants play more and administrate less.*

*The Mercedale Youth Soccer Club offers something for everyone. If you are interested in registering your child, volunteering or sponsoring a team, check out the Club’s website at [www.mysc.org](http://www.mysc.org). Registration for fall season starts this Tuesday.*

**Radio Announcements:** Local radio stations are happy to air public service announcements on a regular basis in order to maintain their positive status with the FCC by operating in the public interest. It is surprisingly easy to get stations to air your organization’s online registration announcement. Simply contact the station’s Program Director and / or Public Service Department and provide them with a scripted public service announcement. Here’s an example of such an announcement

*Soccer playing families take note. Registration for the Mercedale Youth Soccer Club fall season will start on June 1<sup>st</sup> and end on July 15. The club now provides convenient online registration for all program, camp and event registrations. To register your children and to volunteer go to their website and follow the easy to use registration instructions. The Mercedale Youth Soccer Club website address is [www.mysc.org](http://www.mysc.org). That’s [www.mysc.org](http://www.mysc.org).*

**Television Feature Story:** If your organization is a sports related community group (soccer, little league, lacrosse, etc), contact the Program Directors of your local television stations regarding their filming a story about your organization. Be sure to plan ahead! Contact the station at least six weeks before your registration season starts, instead of waiting until the season starts (when it’s too late for helping to promote online registration), invite the television crew to film one of your competitive team’s preseason games or practices. Make sure you provide background information that will help them script the feature piece. This information should include reference to online registration and multiple references to your website address. Make sure the television station includes a link to your organization’s website from their website for a mutually agreeable period of time.

**Post Cards:** Post Cards that are either mailed or distributed are a great way to get the word out about your organization’s move to online registration. Here’s a sample:

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Add Club Logo

## Mercerdale Youth Soccer Club

# Register Online Today!

We've eliminated paper registration forms and in-person sign up's by enabling you to register your kids online at your convenience, 24 hours a day 7 days a week from any computer with Internet access. Online registration will save you and our staff hundreds of hours of administrative time while also enabling our coaches, staff and volunteers to use powerful club management tools for rosters, schedules, communications and reporting.

Open registration is May 4 – June 30 for kids ages 5 – 19.

[www.mysc.org](http://www.mysc.org)

**Flyers Sent Home with Kids:** With your local schools' permission or permission from local businesses, you can send home or post flyers. The flyer should include the information outlined above in the post card. You can supplement this information with additional text, photos, etc. Signage at schools on marquis and reader boards should be coordinated with circulation of the flyers.

**Sign Boards / Sandwich Boards and Banners:** Get the message out by promoting online registration on busy street corners, school reader boards, road overpasses, and adjacent to sports fields. This messaging should include the name of your organization, the website address and either a "Register Online Today" or Online Registration Starts (Insert Date) headline.

**Directory Listings:** Whenever your organization is featured on a directory (Rotary, Chamber of Commerce, telephone or other community resource, make sure to include and highlight your website address. It is absolutely more effective than promoting your phone number!

**Don't Settle For The Initial Promotion Of Your Organization's Online Registration:** Now that you've mastered how to promote and market your organization, use the same approach to solicit team sponsors, donations, volunteers, etc. You can also use these marketing practices to remind constituents about upcoming registration deadlines. Here are a few expanded examples:

**Public Service Radio Announcement (Team Sponsorship):** *The Mercerdale Youth Soccer Club is a 24 year old organization that provides instructional, recreational and competitive opportunities for the kids in our community. Each year local businesses help to support our club by sponsoring a team.*

*Show your support today by registering as a team sponsor. It's fast and easy and can be done online at [www.mysc.org](http://www.mysc.org). That's [www.mysc.org](http://www.mysc.org). Sponsoring a team is a great*

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way to advertise your company in our community while showing your support for the youth in our community.

**Public Service Radio Announcement (Volunteer Registration):** *The Mercedale Youth Soccer Club needs your help. The Club has been serving our community for the past 24 years and has helped more than 30,000 kids learn and play soccer.*

*The success of the club is only possible through the tremendous volunteer spirit in our community. Moms, dads and other adults are needed as coaches, board members, staff volunteers and team managers. No previous experience is necessary. Registering to become a volunteer only takes a couple of minutes. Just go to the volunteer link on the club website and follow the instructions. No prior experience is necessary. The Mercedale Youth Soccer Club website is [www.mysc.org](http://www.mysc.org). That's [www.mysc.org](http://www.mysc.org). Help us help the kids.*

**Public Service Radio Announcement (Reminder):** *There's only xx days/weeks left to register your children (to volunteer / to sponsor a team) in the Mercedale Youth Soccer Club's Fall season. Registering is fast and easy, so do it today. Go to the MYSC.org website; click on the appropriate link and follow the instructions. It's that easy. You can do it from home, the office, the library or any other computer connected to the Internet. The website address is [www.MYSC.org](http://www.MYSC.org)*

**Email and Mailing to Previous Participants:** Use the power of your mailing list to email and mail online registration notices to your greatest supporters. Your Count Me In Client Services staff can show you how to send out branded emails. After your first registration season, sending out organization-branded emails is quick and easy and only requires a couple of clicks of your mouse button. In addition, use the Count Me In reporting tool to easily create mailing labels for envelopes or post cards!

**Online Registration Contest:** Drive additional registration traffic to your website by entering the first 100 registrants into a contest for reduced or waived registration fees, equipment voucher (gladly provided by your local specialty retailer) or tickets to a local pro game.

**Online Registration Narrated Tutorial:** Count Me In provides a narrated online registration tutorial that can be linked on your website for use by those constituents who are intimidated with the computer and/or Internet. Make sure the registration tutorial is prominently displayed on your website.

## **II. Common Mistakes That Undermine The Online Success Of Your Organization**

The Count Me In Solution has been specifically designed to help you manage all aspects of your organization - from online registration and secure payment, to risk management, team building and communications. Effective use of this solution requires the inclusion of all participants.

Prior to online registration, your organization most likely utilized a combination of paper registration forms, mailings and in person sign-ups. A small percentage of your constituents will

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initially prefer to sign-up as they have in the past. Part of your responsibility in migrating online is to provide leadership to these hesitant constituents by showing them how to register online.

**Promoting Online Registration Too Late:** Don't procrastinate setting up or promoting online registration. Your Count Me In Client Services staff are available to help expedite the Best Practices production of your online registration site and programs. Publish this information to your website as quickly as possible. Remember, program information can be published to your website before your online registration period begins.

**Paper Registration Forms:** Use of paper registration forms undermine the effectiveness of your online registration and management solution and shifts data entry responsibility back to your staff. Prominently highlight your online registration capability in your organization's flyers. If you have an organizational meeting, provide a handout explaining the 1-2-3s of online registration and volunteering that your constituents can bring home. Do not accept written registrations.

**Registration PDFs:** Do not provide a PDF registration form on your website. Given the choice, some constituents will print, complete and mail/fax the PDF. This creates more work for your staff and deprives your constituents of use of the powerful online family account features available to them during the year.

**No Internet Access or Computer?** If registrants do not have regular access to an internet computer, suggest they use one at the local library, local school, Boys and Girls Club Tech Center or other public source. Constituents do not need an email address to register and pay online. Many organizations conduct "walk-up" registrations at a local school or computer lab where parents can easily register online.

**Intimidated With Online Registration?** If constituents contact you and tell you that they are intimidated with online registration, don't accommodate their request to take the registration information over the phone. Politely direct them to the Count Me In provided narrated Online Registration Tutorial on your website. This will walk them through the steps to register online.

**Worried About Online Payment?** Secure and encrypted online registration and payment are two of the features of your Count Me In Community Solution. Participants can opt to "Pay in Person" via cash or a check as an alternative to paying online. They can mail in or drop off payment which can then be entered into your Count Me In Admin Tool.

**In Person Sign Up:** Having an in person sign-up is not necessary but if your organization feels strongly about supplementing online registration with In Person Sign-Up, don't locate the sign-up where there are computers with internet access. Use a school tech center, public library or other local resource as your venue and have the constituents use the computers to register online under your supervision. Have copies of the aforementioned Online Registration handout available.

### **We Are Here To Help**

Your Count Me In Client Services staff has helped hundreds of organizations embrace online registration. If you have questions, we can help. Contact us at [support@countmein.com](mailto:support@countmein.com) or call 425 638-9020.

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