

HighEdWeb

Acteva Helps Increase Conference Attendance by 30%

CHALLENGE

A one-man gang becomes overwhelmed putting out fires

SOLUTION

All-inclusive resource shoulder's the burden by consolidating data

RESULTS

30% growth in attendance with Acteva's professional solution

Background

Established in 1999 with representatives from six colleges and universities in New York State, the Higher Education Web Professionals Association (HighEdWeb) has grown to more than 700 members from public and private educational institutions from across North America and the world. HighEdWeb is an organization of Web professionals working at institutions of higher education. Their mission is to advance Web professionals as well as technologies and standards in higher education.

In 2004, HighEdWeb joined forces with the Program Committee from WebDevShare, a successful international conference for Web development in higher education. Their joint efforts led to the first combined conference in the fall of 2004. This union immediately transformed the group into an international organization. The conference outgrew its original space requirements and decided to move to downtown Rochester for HighEdWebDev 2006.

Steve Lewis, HighEdWebDev Co-Chair, who also serves as Web Manager at a campus of a large New York state university system, notes the 2005 conference included representatives from 35 U.S. states and four countries from as far away as Brazil and Egypt. To accommodate the 20 - 30% growth that was anticipated for the 2006 conference, Lewis required an all-inclusive, user-friendly registration solution as he would be the primary event registration organizer.

"Our registrations have increased, it has saved an incredible amount of time in house, and will no doubt save more time at the conference. During the conference, I imagine it will save a lot of stress, too."

Steve Lewis

Conference Co-Chair,
HighEdWebDev

Business Challenge

A one-man gang becomes overwhelmed putting out fires

In the first few years of the conference, they had been using a functional solution for event registration through another University but Lewis knew upgrades were needed in many areas. Lewis couldn't afford to waste time putting out fires – returning phone calls, processing orders and handling customer service-type issues. "I just became overwhelmed. I knew we needed to have a new registration system up very quickly," says Lewis. He adds that it was also essential to have a bona fide service and support team to provide a road map for success and help walk him through the process.

As Conference Co-Chair of the 4-day conference, Lewis decided they would need nothing less than an efficient, business-grade solution with a customizable registration page, as well as flexible registration and payment options for attendees. "Basically, we were looking for professional help to handle the details of the registration process so we didn't have to spend the time doing it ourselves and worrying about registrations," says Lewis.

Lewis notes that, although technically proficient as an engineer, his skills alone weren't enough when trying to register participants from various locales. "Due to our typical workload - too few people and too much work - it is no small irony that this did not leave us with a successful registration experience." He adds that they also experienced a variety of technical glitches that slowed down the registration process and reduced their operational efficiency. "As you can imagine, it became time consuming and stressful trying to correct registration errors at the beginning of the event."



Acteva Solution

All-inclusive resource shoulder's the burden by consolidating data

An evaluation process began in the summer of 2006 and, after reviewing other online registration options, Lewis chose Acteva and his new, customized Web page was up and running within minutes of creating his account. "We're now utilizing several booking options," says Lewis. "We offer Early-Bird pricing to only some of our attendees, and track that through inspection. We also have several workshops held simultaneously before and after the conference, which attendees can pay extra to attend."

Lewis also used Acteva's Promotion Code functionality as a means to selectively choose which attendees, such as conference presenters, workshop presenters and double presenters, would receive a discount as determined by Lewis – 25% off, \$100 off, etc. – at the time of registration. "In the past we had a very rigid definition in terms of what we could offer," says Lewis. "We could only use a dollar amount and the Promotion Code provides the option of using a percentage. It's a lot more powerful than before." Lewis adds that perhaps the greatest benefit of adding Promotion Codes is they reward those who "make the event happen" with their various contributions. "Using Acteva's solution, the committee members and the presenters were able to register at a special discounted rate."

Lewis says attendees were also offered multiple payment options this year, including paying either by check or credit card. "Real-time credit card processing was a key differentiator for us and something we really needed," says Lewis. An additional benefit was that registrants could mail checks directly to Acteva, where they would also be processed. "And whether they pay by check or credit card, it's all taken care of," he says. "Getting approval for our own merchant account would have been a huge, time consuming process. Instead, Acteva handles everything for us."

In addition, Lewis also decided to include an optional questionnaire/survey on the registration page. This pre-event survey tool is yet another customizable feature offered by Acteva. Meal preferences, an optional dinner, special accommodation requests and other attendee data – such as whether one is a past attendee – can be custom-tailored in the questionnaire. "We wanted to get a rough head count of who would be staying at hotels vs. commuting," says Lewis. "It allows us to communicate with the hotels and ensure the event runs as smoothly as possible."

Results

30% growth in attendance with Acteva's solution

In regards to how HighEdWebDev's registration and payment process has changed since last year, Lewis notes several quantifiable results. "Our registrations have increased, it has saved an incredible amount of time in house, and will no doubt save more time at the conference. During the conference, I imagine it will save a lot of stress, too."

The conference will likely grow in attendance by 30% in 2006 to more than 400 attendees and HighEdWeb is looking forward to using Acteva at future conferences and events. "Leaving registration to the professionals at Acteva seems like a winning long-term strategy to me. We put on this conference in addition to our normal duties at the university and we don't have time to contribute to creating and testing a registration solution. I consider myself and my team to be a technically proficient group but it was in our best interest to put it all in Acteva's hands." For Lewis, Acteva's technology and professional customer service team has alleviated both the labor and anxiety previously associated with organizing the conference. "We now have problem-free registrations since we began using Acteva. You've been able to meet our needs and even go a step further," Lewis concludes.

Experience that counts

Acteva is the trusted leader in online event registration, ticketing and payment management services. Since 1998, over 12,500 customers have used Acteva to manage more than 215,000 events and process more than 3.4 million registrations. Acteva's customers include Bausch & Lomb, Pfizer, SAP, Girl Scouts of America, Whole Foods, Craigslist Foundation, Lending Tree, and thousands of small to large-sized businesses and organizations.

CUSTOMER PROFILE

Location: Rochester, NY

Primary Event: HighEdWeb Annual Conference

Industry: Higher Education

Products Used: Acteva Plus

Attendee Focus: IT & Web Development Professionals

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