Registration Report
Greg Wood
gregwood1@comcast.net

The first big decision we made with regards to registration was how to handle it. Because we were in relatively "good times" we never really considered doing it ourselves. So in December 2006 we began to look into costs and contracts with companies that would handle the registration (Paul Anderson actually made these inquiries as I was not Registration Chairman at the time).

Two companies were identified – one by AAPG (Exgenex) and the other by Western Leisure (Vision Event Productions), whom we were contracting with for overall convention services. At that point in time, Paul and the committee had determined to base the bidding on an attendance of 400 professionals, and offering about 18 products/events.

These 2 companies were a good contrast. Basically:
- Exgenex – for about $4,000 they send you 2 computers and a printer, they provide a base registration website that can be customized, and they provide name badges and holders.
- VisionEP – for about $11,500 they design and manage the registration website, they handle payments, they provide the name badges and holders, and they provide a person to handle onsite registration during the convention.

The costs would actually be closer if you opted for Exgenex to handle all payments and provide an onsite person. But it seemed liked VisionEP was geared to handle all aspects of registration so we contracted with them. This was a Great Choice and I would Highly Recommend them.

We signed the contract with VisionEP in early March. Our contact person was Ashlyn Donatelli. She created the following timeline (which helped us keep things on track):

2007 Event TIMELINE AAPG

ACTION ITEM	Target Date	Staff
Meeting to review all materials and information, assess overall layout of form	28-Mar	Ashlyn/Paul/Greg
Get hotel information from Paul/Greg	10-Apr	Paul/Greg
Website ready for internal review	23-Apr	Ashlyn
Spell check/content review performed on all paths, pages and emails	24-Apr	Ashlyn/VEP Staff
Logo/design information provided by client	25-Apr	Paul/Greg
Revisions made to website	25-Apr	Ashlyn
Review revisions	25-Apr	Ashlyn
Agenda provided by client or account exec	10-May	Paul/Greg
First Draft of website ready to show to client	16-May	Ashlyn
Client to review	16-May	Paul/Greg
Meeting to review changes/edits to first draft	17-May	Ashlyn/Paul/Greg
Revisions made to website	23-May	Ashlyn
Website ready for internal review	23-May	Ashlyn
Spell check/content review performed on all paths, pages and emails	23-May	Ashlyn/Nicole
Revisions made to website	25-May	Ashlyn
Second Draft of website ready to show to client	28-May	Ashlyn
Meeting to review any remaining changes/adjustments	28-May	Ashlyn/Paul/Greg
Final changes made	29-May	Ashlyn
Final review internally	30-May	Ashlyn/VEP Staff
Final review by client	31-May	Paul/Greg

Website design took several iterations between Ashlyn, Paul, and me. The registration website went live on June 5. The webmaster for the UGA, Bill Case, had already created a site for the convention, and the link on that site was activated on June 5. We continued "tweaking" the site (to clarify or simplify or add/subtract information) many weeks after it was launched.

Some of our registration decisions included:
- Early Bird incentive – We decided to encourage early registration by providing a gift to those who were registered on/before a cutoff data of Aug 17. The gift was the CD version of the new Central Utah Guidebook. Early on we had discussed the possibility of pre-registration only, i.e. no onsite registration. Although we decided we could not do this, we thought the idea of the CD would help to encourage early registration. We had 221 register as early birds.
- Exhibitors – Exhibitors registered/paid directly to our exhibitor chairman. Their booth purchase included being registered as a convention attendee (see exhibitor report) and we wanted them to be able to sign up for any of the extra events that were offered. Consequently, we sent VisionEP the list of exhibitors and they entered them into the system. We informed the exhibitors that they could go online to register for the extra events. Because the exhibitors registered as a company they needed to also give us names. In several cases, they changed their booth people and would email us – which we forwarded to VisionEP.
- Volunteers – Student volunteers received convention registration. But we only registered them onsite working with the Volunteer Chairman.
- Cancellation Policy – A clear cancellation/refund policy is needed. We provided full refund (minus a $25 fee that VisionEP charged us) up until the official opening of registration – Sunday at noon.
- Payments Methods – some people would want to register by regular mail and pay by check. VisionEP agreed to handle this assuming not many people would do this. In the end, 63 people registered with a check payment. This is more than we anticipated but did not result in extra handling costs.
- Lodging - We would not handle hotel registration through our website but had made arrangements for a block of rooms at Snowbird and gave instructions on how to book lodging by phone and/or email.
- Wait Lists - Wait lists were created for the 3 field trips and the 2 short courses. All 5 of these events hit their attendance limits. It was critical to log in the date of attendees' registration so that first-come wait-listed folks could fill cancellations.

Some of the adjustments to our online registration included:
- Judging – We added a check box to know if the attendee would be willing to be a technical paper judge.
- Field Trip Capacities – We identified the attendance limits of the field trips and short courses so that they were automatically shown as "FULL" on the website when their limit was reached.
- Changes in the overall look/feel/functionality of the site.

A weekly update report (Excel spreadsheet) was created by VisionEP and emailed to me on each Wednesday. By regular tracking of these numbers we were able to make adjustments such as adding a second session to a popular short course and allowing all of the waitlist folks (4) to attend a "FULL" short course.

As the convention neared we received a number of changes/cancellations/questions that went directly to VisionEP. They took care of simple problems and would contact us for decisions on special situations. Many of the questions could be answered directly by consulting the printed program. So VisionEP suggested (which we did) that we email a digital copy of the program to all registrants about 1 week prior to the convention. <u>All of this would have been overly time-consuming for me personally, and I would again recommend using a registration service if possible</u>.

We decided to do the traditional "bag-stuffing" on Thursday evening prior to the convention. A pizza dinner and snacks were provided. We had a total of 18 committee folks and others that participated. We actually stuffed envelopes rather than bags. The convention backpacks were being delivered directly to Snowbird, so we decided to fill envelopes with name badges, appropriate tickets, etc. This took about 3&1/2 very tiring hours. We used 10"x13" envelopes to make it easy to slide in a full sheet of paper. VisionEP mailed the name badges and plastic holders of all registrants and sticky name labels that we could put on the outside of the envelope. We also decided to insert the paper programs and CDs of abstracts into the backpacks at the registration desk at the time of registration. This pack and the stuffed envelope would then be given to the attendee upon "Checking in".

Tickets for events and Ribbons for badges were also my responsibility.
- Tickets - Western Leisure offered to print them. We made drink tickets for the opening social (ice-breaker), the Oktoberfest dinner, and the closing reception. The drink tickets also served as the admittance to Oktoberfest which created a little confusion as we had not clarified this anywhere. We also had tickets for the all-convention luncheon (Monday) and the tram-ride luncheon (Tuesday). We continued to sell tickets at the registration desk until we sold out.
- Ribbons – we came up with 7 categories: Exhibitor, Judge, Presenter, Session Chair, Committee, Volunteer, and Candidate. Once we submitted a count (generated from the different chairs), Western Leisure took care of making them – from a website service.

During the convention, we staffed the Registration Desk with 4 people during busy times (Sunday 12:00 – 4:00; Monday 7:00-1:00). Otherwise, we had 2 or 3 people. We used the Registration Desk to also be the place where Judges received/returned their forms and received a gift for their efforts. The Registration Desk was conveniently placed in front of a large, lockable coat closet where we were able to store items.

Onsite Registration was actually a little higher than anticipated – about 29 people. Between the onsite registrants and changes/additions for preregistered attendees, having an onsite person provided by VisionEP was extremely helpful.

If I had to do it over again:
- I would hire a Snowbird Staff person to be an "information booth" at the Registration Desk. All kinds of questions came to us – about half of them were "where to find what and how to get there". We were only semi-literate about these.
- I would create a "temporary holding" and a "lost and found" place just to accommodate these situations.