5 Pro Tips for Your Guest Check-In Area

Event Check-In: Last minute detail or critical element of event success? In a world where first impressions mean everything, we think the latter!

Does anyone remember studying *"the halo effect"* in sociology 101? This theory asserts that first impressions lead to an overall bias as to how follow up experiences are perceived. It's a fancy way of saying that first impressions count, and pave the way to guests enjoying (or not enjoying) an entire event. *Talk about a lot of pressure!* For this reason, the importance of a smooth guest check-in cannot be underestimated. With over 20 years of event experience, Steve Feder, founder of CheckIn Tech, shares with Event Journal his 5 tips to make guest check-in areas both inviting and seamless:

1. Don't Overwhelm Guests – Throwing around copious amounts of staff and signage isn't always a fail-safe check-in approach. When possible, ensure that 1 smiling human being greets guests when they arrive, (versus a "Welcome" sign on an easel). A little personal warmth goes a long way!

2. Meet Guests at Eye Level – Greeters sitting behind traditional 6-foot tables should be reconsidered. There are times low banquet tables are unavoidable, but try using high-top tables instead. This allows greeters to meet and check in guests, eye to eye, and facilitates a more personable interaction.

3. Consider Your Ratios – Use the 100:1 rule. For every 100 guests, assign one individual to check them in. If check-in is more involved than simply looking up a name, then adjust this ratio. The appropriate ratio will yield an optimal check-in time of under 5 seconds to avoid long lines.

4. Avoid Alpha Order Check-In – Do you still use the old "A-F, G-L, M-P, Q-Z" signs that funnel guests to their respective check-in lines? This antiquated approach has been supplanted by more efficient, high-tech options, such as tablet check in. Typically, folks use alpha order when they need to distribute assigned name tags or guest materials. But we have a better solution for that too … *read on!*

5. Embrace Two-Step Check-In – One stop check–in is perfect for a seated formal event or cocktail reception. However, when name tags or materials assigned to specific guests are indicated, consider enlisting a two-step check-in process. It will speed things up and eliminate lines. Instead of handing out name tags and materials when a guest checks in, split the two procedures up. First, check the guest in using tablet technology. You can even use a service like CheckIn Tech (shameless plug). With tablet check-in, you eliminate the need to send guests to specific tables to check in. Instead guests approach anyone free with a tablet. Once guests have been verified and checked in, they proceed into the event and stop at a second table. This table has name tags and labeled materials displayed outwardly in alpha order. Guests help themselves, with a staff member on hand to assist. If someone can't find their name tag or were added at the last minute, send that guest to a help desk where a name tag can be printed. This two-step system dissolves the stress and chaos associated with name tag check-in.

Remember, the event check-in area is THE introduction to your event! Consider the above tips and don't minimize the importance of creating a positive first impression.