

Home :: News :: Article

## The Racer's (and Registrar's) Best Friend

Written by: Marshall Pruett  
9/12/2006

We take for granted the role technology plays in our normal lives these days. In [racing](#), the bastion for all things new, pioneering, and brutally efficient, we expect the pinnacle of technology to be developed, used, and cast aside for the next wave of innovations.

Or at least that's how we hope it would be.

At the pro racing level, and more so at the club racing level, gaps in the rollout of technological or software aides for competitors have been filled by a variety of companies and products, but at Infineon Raceway last weekend, one of the most simplistic but "hey,

Organizers write and publish details of their events for their members to register through.

why didn't I think of that" [tools](#) was deployed for the first time.

Partnering with [www.Motorsportreg.com](#) for free event registration for their members, the San Francisco Region of the SCCA, the largest SCCA region in the country at nearly 5000 members, took the bold step by embracing something new, but that "something new" is a no-brainer.

No more paper registrations, stamps, envelopes, lost or late entries. And it's free.

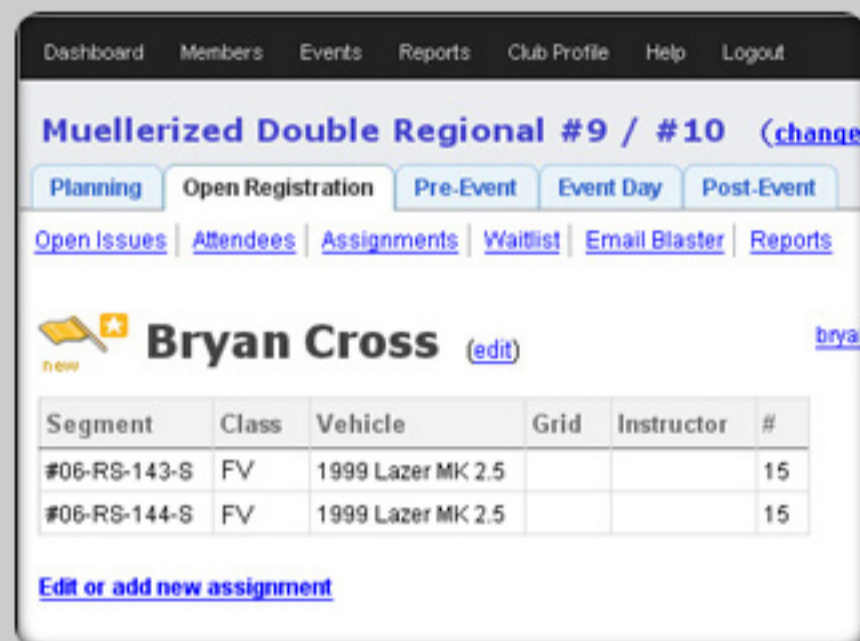
Uh, Houston we have a problem. Why would we use paper, stamps, and envelopes if we don't have to?

As most [racers](#) or organizers can attest, the manual event entry process is one of the few things that haven't been streamlined or automated, so the nice touch of offering a "one click" solution for drivers and teams to register and pay for events is long overdue.

For the sake of simplicity, think of Motorsportreg.com as the "Evite" of racing event registration and organization. For those that have planned parties using Evite, it makes the coordination of any gathering simple enough to where it nearly runs itself. They don't cost a thing, but just as Evite has become a fixture in their world, one can only hope people adopt what Motorsportreg.com is trying to do for racers and organizers.

Michael Smith, San Francisco SCCA Regional Executive was more than happy to see the adoption of the system. "The Infineon on-line entry process went great. I got lots of positive comments regarding our members having the ability to do on line entry and the ease of the design. The start up went really smoothly."

Motorsportreg.com Founder and Principal Brian Ghidinelli, an amateur SCCA Spec Miata [racer](#) himself, gave some insight as to why he started the site: "I use computers every day and have a background in web design and software design, so really, I first made this site and software with an eye to making my life easier. It wasn't originally planned to be something big; I used to drive in a ton of AutoX events, HPDE events, driver schools, and anything else I could afford, but got tired of having to be my own secretary to stay on top of all the paperwork going back and forth for registration, payment, etc."



Organizers use a specialized interface for managing entries and events.

What's odd is that the majority of racing clubs and organizations continue to rely on paper, populating all the event info into spreadsheets, processing credit card number or checks, only to then email all of this information to their registrars and volunteers.

In essence, there are hundreds of clubs nationally that do this labor intensive process themselves by starting with paper, and then doing loads of data entry to turn that paper into an electronic format to make it useful.

But why?

"Change is hard" offered Ghidinelli. "It requires overcoming an old and accepted way of doing things, even if that way is a huge pain. New volunteers (the majority of racing or driving clubs are made up of volunteer workers) are trained in 'the way it's always been done' and so years go by without change or modernization. It's like some people that refuse to embrace email because they've always hand-written their letters. That's fine, and it's still a valid format, but in the interest of time savings and ease, most of us use email because of its speed and efficiency. That's all I've done here with registrations and event management."

The management side is the secondary benefit—where drivers or entrants can register and pay through their PC, clubs and organizations have all their event entries, processing, payments, and entry listings processed and fed to them when those entries come in.

"That's the real benefit here," Ghidinelli affirmed. "If driver 'X' registers for an event, he or she can build a profile that has all their data in it—car model, class, number, color, transponder number, medical info, emergency contact, and so on. When they register, all that info automatically populates for that event, and when they're done, the organizer can log into the site and see how many entries they have, in what classes, all the personal medical and contact info, and any other fields they want their members to fill out for them.

"All of that info is online and is accessible by tabs in a spreadsheet type format, and converts to a variety of Microsoft formats for them to email or print and use. This isn't rocket science."

The San Francisco Region has been a great pilot program to work with so far—it seems some of the hesitation from smaller regions or smaller clubs for the online registration move has had more to do with no one wanting to be the first to take the leap.

"Our average customers are volunteers with too much to do and not enough time. As the largest SCCA region in the country, "SFR" is unique in that they have full-time staff. SFR has two of the best spokespeople a region could ask for in the front-office duo of Sherry Grantz and Colleen Worthington, and they have been instrumental in the quick adoption of MotorsportReg.com among the drivers. Their endorsement has been huge."

The feedback and reaction Ghidinelli got from drivers and the registrars seemed to match the enthusiasm of the region officials. "It was a huge success from our point of view. With only four weeks to promote online registration, 40% of all registrations came through MotorsportReg.com. After the first few events, most clubs receive more than 90% of all entries through MotorsportReg.com.

"The real metric for us is the number of customer inquiries and those have been very few and far between. Quiet customers are happy customers! It means they're coming to the site, getting registered and going back to their lives. No envelopes, no stamps, no faxing. Hopefully they're spending that extra time preparing their cars!"

The use of the site and service has been in place for some time with smaller clubs, so while the adoption of Motorsportreg.com by the San Francisco Region is a big step for Ghidinelli and his staff, they've had long and existing relationships with plenty of small and medium-sized organizations. "We've been very effective at explaining our value and demonstrating our success with the BMW Car Club of America, The Audi Club, the Porsche Club of America and other car clubs around the country. We can help any club, no matter how small, because the software doesn't care if you're a club of ten or ten thousand. I tell all of the clubs that call me the same thing: 'It's a free tool! Use it!'

There are some more racer-friendly upgrades and additions to the site planned over winter—all things that lend themselves to the ease and simplicity Ghidinelli's committed to. "We're currently preparing to launch customizable home pages for clubs and working on better handling cancellations and refunds after an event."

As more tools like this one get developed to help the club racer, AutoX driver, enthusiast, organizer, club owner, or volunteer, the more fun and administration-free one's driving passion becomes. That's nothing but a good thing.

As Ghidinelli said (for all you organizers and club owners out there): 'It's a free tool! Use it!'

**Boards:** To discuss this article, click [here](#)

[Return to SCCA](#)

## FEATURED NEWS

**MOTOGP: Hayden and Rossi Take Title Showdown to Motegi**  
American Nicky Hayden will attempt to hold off the advancing Valentino Rossi this weekend at Motegi, the scene of the third-to-last MotoGP round.

**CUP: NASCAR Midweek Notebook**

Gordon to bring new car to "Monster Mile."

**F1: Suzuka Out Next Season, Aims for '08 Return**  
Fuji to host Japanese GP in '07.

**GRAND-AM: Carpentier Eyes Full-Time Ride in '07**  
Canadian tested with SAMAX team at Daytona this week.

**WSBK: Hollywood Ending for Steve Martin**  
Australian veteran Steve Martin, in spite of sharing the name of the American comedian, is 100% serious about his racing.

## OTHER NEWS

**NASCAR**  
**Formula 1**  
**Champ Car**  
**IndyCar**  
**Road Racing**  
**American Le Mans Series**  
**Grand Am**  
**SCCA**  
**Drag Racing**  
**Rally / Off-Road**  
**Oval Racing**  
**More Racing**  
**Karting**  
**Industry**