

# Race Director's Guide

RacePenguin.com | 614-595-7286

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## How to Use This Guide

Great races depend on clear communication and cooperation between the race director, timing company, rental vendors, government authorities, and participants. This guide is designed to aid in facilitating that communication. It is intended to provide ideas, guidance, and a framework for thinking about your event. Let your own creativity run wild. RacePenguin will proudly do what it can to support your best ideas.

This is not a legal document and does not directly impart responsibility on any person or organization. It is to be considered as an informational resource only.

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Please do not hesitate to contact RacePenguin directly using the contact information below.

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## **Index**

1. RacePenguin's Services
2. Your Responsibilities
3. Race Budgeting
4. Event Management Techniques and Ideas
5. Timing Systems
6. Sponsors
7. Permitting and Certification
8. Payment, Fees, and Collection

## 1. RacePenguin's Services

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### a. What we bring to your event:

- i. Quiet Generators capable of supplying all of the power we need
- ii. Timing System (See Section 5 for More information)
- iii. Tents and Tables sufficient to cover our own needs.
  1. Check out the resources tab on our website for more information about area vendors who we have worked with successfully in the past.
- iv. Finish line trussing structure
  1. Stage light trussing capable of spanning up to 32 feet.
  2. Branded event fencing used to create a finishers shoot and for crowd control
- v. Personnel sufficient to operate our systems and manage our equipment
  1. This does not include course management or registration unless you have specifically arranged otherwise.
- vi. Race day Registration
  1. While we are happy to accept large numbers of race day registrations, it is important that you communicate clearly with our team regarding expectations for the number of participants who may register on race day in order to insure sufficient staffing and equipment
  2. We help organize and lead but you are responsible for providing volunteers to operate the registration table.
    - a. We recommend about 4 registration volunteers for every 75 people you expect to register on race day in addition to packet pickup personnel.  
Fewer if they will not be handing out shirts
- vii. Credit Card Processing Capabilities
  1. Dependent upon cellular service availability
- viii. PA system - (600 watt two speaker)
  1. This system works wonderfully for events up to 250 - 300 people. If you expect more than 300 participants, you may want to consider renting additional sound systems.
  2. We have a generic playlist available that we believe generates excitement but if you would like to provide your own it must be provided on an mp3 player with a stereo mini jack cable.

## b. What Our Team Does on Race Day

- i. It is important to keep in mind that RacePenguin staff have a lot to do to prepare for your race. Setup equipment, check systems, and enter race day registrations to name a few.
  1. Unless otherwise agreed upon you will be responsible for providing enough people to run the registration table, guide participants on the course, man water stations, etc.
- ii. Our timing crews do not require any assistance from you to provide timing/results for the race.
- iii. RacePenguin Crews are well dressed, professional, and kind. We are used to the stress of race day and view it as our responsibility to help you manage those stresses.
  1. If you have any concerns on race day, be sure to discuss these with our team. It is likely that they have encountered a situation like yours in the past.

## c. Bib & Chip Delivery & Preparation

- i. RacePenguin provides bibs, with the chip attached at the time that is agreed upon (packet pickup or race day)
- ii. RacePenguin chips are disposable and therefore do not need to be collected after a race.

## d. Event Marketing

- i. Columbus Race Calendar ([columbusracecalendar.com](http://columbusracecalendar.com))
  1. All RacePenguin events are automatically listed and promoted on ColumbusRaceCalendar.com
  2. Each event will have a Facebook event created
  3. Each event will receive at least one Facebook post and Twitter mention
  4. If you would like to offer a coupon code to aid in promotion to the general public you may do so and it will be shared through the above mentioned channels
  5. Additional marketing support such as "featured race" status is offered as an add-on service
- ii. RacePenguin provides a great deal of intellectual support regarding growing participation and improving the overall experience for your participants.
  1. Registration System using Its Your Race Platform
    - a. Coupon codes, Teams, Unique Fields
    - b. Live results integration and photos
    - c. Team and individual fundraising options
  2. RacePenguin provides a highly customized race website.
    - a. Course maps
    - b. Schedule of events
    - c. Registration verification
    - d. Photo gallery
    - e. Videos

### 3. E-Mail Communication

#### a. Newsletter

- i. RacePenguin delivers a consistent monthly newsletter to everyone who has signed up for an event we support. This tactful and elegant email is designed to keep the Central Ohio running community up to date regarding the various race options available. Your race is included in this list at no additional charge.

#### b. Pre-Race Email

- i. The Wednesday prior to your event, we will deliver an email to all registered participants providing race day details. You will have an opportunity to review and make changes to this email in advance

#### c. Post-Race Email

- i. Within a few hours of the completion of your event, we deliver a follow up email similar to the pre-race email that contains links to results. And a thank you to your sponsors.

### e. What RacePenguin is typically not responsible for

- i. It is important to understand RacePenguin's role in helping you produce your event. Timing a race is a difficult and intellectually challenging task and we focus on getting results right before all else. There are some things that we typically do not do unless specific arrangements are made otherwise:
  1. We are not the Race Director
    - a. This means that you will always ultimately be responsible for a safe, fun, and efficient event.
  2. Our focus is on Race Results (timing)
    - a. We can provide guidance regarding volunteers, visual improvements, branding, and sponsor deliverables but are not ultimately responsible for these items on race day.
  3. We are not an equipment rental company
    - a. If you need tables, chairs, port-a-potties, lighting, power generation, etc. there are numerous resources in Columbus for procuring what you need. We are happy to work alongside you and your organization to help you rent what your race requires.
    - b. Be sure to review the list of vendors we have prepared under the resources tab of our website.

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## f. Event management (as an add-on service)

- i. RacePenguin offers a complete event production service
- ii. Many of the tasks required for a successful event are completed by RacePenguin
  1. Things like: permits, shirts, awards, course marking, lead cyclist, porta pots.
- iii. Additional staff and resources are dedicated to your event as necessary
- iv. This service is comprehensive. For an exact listing of the deliverable items and details on how we would work together with your event, contact our team and we can provide detailed documentation.

## 2. Your Responsibilities as Race Director

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### a. People

- i. It is a good policy to overestimate the number of people you will need on race day. Here are our recommendations for the number of people who should be located at a given position.
  1. 3 people per 75 race day registrations expected
  2. 2 for awards
  3. 3-5 for course preparation
  4. 1 for each turn along the course

### b. Safety

c. Event marketing (RacePenguin offers a great deal of assistance see section 1d)

### d. Registration & Packet Pickup

- i. Running Stores in Columbus
- ii. Race Day Packet Pickup Procedures
- iii. Race Day Registration Procedures

### e. Course Planning

### f. Insurance

- i. You must be insured. We can help you obtain insurance for around \$250. You must request this as we assume you are covered unless otherwise notified.

### g. Communicating with authorities

### h. Permitting - See section 7

### i. Non-Timing related equipment

### 3. Race Budgeting

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- a. Revenue
  - i. Think carefully about how much you are charging participants. Keeping in mind that you are putting a great deal of effort into your event and do not underestimate a participant's willingness to support your cause.
  - ii. Charging too little for your event can lead to difficulty in earning enough revenue to meet your budget.
  - iii. Likewise, charging a large amount for your race will lead participants to expect a greater level of service including better swag and food.
- b. Variable Expenses - expenses incurred per participant
  - i. Bib & chip, Medal, Shirt, Food.
  - ii. Be sure to match your registration fee with the level of service you plan to provide. Higher registration fees typically lead participants to expect more from your event but also communicates a greater level of quality.
  - iii. Visit [www.racepenguin.com/partners](http://www.racepenguin.com/partners) for a list of some of our favorite race vendors.
- c. Fixed Expenses - expenses incurred regardless of the number of participants
  - i. Tents, tables, hydrant tapping, permits, timing.
  - ii. Keep in mind that the location of your race can greatly impact the fixed costs you will incur. Metro parks, and bike paths are significantly less expensive than open roads or downtown areas.
- d. Residual Income
  - i. Sponsors can often be as, if not more, important than the revenue earned from registrations. See section 6 for more ideas on sponsor deliverables and an example of a sponsor letter.
  - ii. Consider contacting other race directors to join forces. Earn an extra few hundred dollars by offering to place marketing materials for their race into your pre-race swag bag.
  - iii. Consider offering food trucks or brewing companies the opportunity to sell their wares near your finish line in return for a percentage of their revenue.

### 4. Event Management Techniques and Ideas

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- a. Awards
  - i. It is better to do one thing well than several things poorly
  - ii. Be clever
    - 1. Bandannas, Ribbons, Handmade items, and many other creative ideas are much less expensive than customized finisher medals or other traditional awards and often have a superior emotional effect
- b. Course Planning
  - i. The Course Matters
    - 1. Reduce sharp turns
    - 2. Plan to dedicate at least one volunteer to each major turn
    - 3. Marking is critical, make sure that it is clear to participants where to turn BEFORE they reach the turn.
    - 4. A lead cyclist is a great idea. Once the first person has taken the correct path all others typically follow.
  - ii. Signage and Cones



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1. City courses can require a significant amount of road signage and cones. Be sure to work with local authorities to determine their requirements for street closure signage
    - a. Columbus Police can be very helpful in this regard.
  2. Columbus' best resources for a large number of cones is Paul Peterson Company
  3. Take a great deal of care when placing cones and signs as small errors can lead participants off course
- iii. City of Columbus Rules - see section 7
1. 15-day paper notice is required for every home and office along the route to be affected on race day.
  2. Police approval is required prior to posting your course.
  3. Get your date request into the city as early as possible.

## 5. Timing Systems

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- a. How they work
  - i. Ultra High Frequency Radio Frequency Identification is an incredibly robust method of identifying an object without being able to see or touch it.
    1. Attached to the back of each participant's bib is a very small computer chip and antenna. When a signal from timing station flows through this chip, a tiny capacitor powers the chip and encodes a return signal with the number that matches the number on the bib. The timing station receives this number and becomes "aware" of the bib's presences
- b. Accuracy
  - i. The systems used by RacePenguin are extremely accurate. As the chip approaches the finish line the strength of the returning signal is measured. As the chip passes under or through the timing station, the signal strength peaks at exactly the moment that you cross the finish line. This is the time that the computers assign to your number. The result is a finish time accurate to within 1,000<sup>th</sup> of a second
- c. Things to know
  - i. It is important to let the timing company take the lead at the start of the race as systems must be turned on and activated at specific times related to the race start.
  - ii. Understand the difference between chip time and gun time
    1. Chip time = the time between when the person crosses the start line and when they finish
    2. Gun time = the time between when the gun goes off and when the participant crosses the finish line.
    3. In most cases gun time is the official time used by USATF and other governing bodies. We use chip time for rankings in order to provide everyone an equal comparison unless the race is being reported to a governing body which requires otherwise
- d. Do's and Don'ts
  - i. Don't do anything that will damage the chip in the bib like roll it up or fold it
  - ii. Wear the bib on the front to ensure the most accurate read
  - iii. Do use four safety pins for the purpose of stopping the bib from flipping up into your face

## 6. Sponsors

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- a. Sponsor Deliverables - Adding Value
  - i. Sponsors are often the most significant financial benefactor to a race. It is important that you clearly communicate the value that you are offering
  - ii. RacePenguin does a lot to help in this regard
    - 1. Website logos
    - 2. Custom Results Kiosk tickets
    - 3. Results text message with sponsor name
- b. [Sponsor Letter Example](#)

## 7. Permitting and certifications

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- a. Working With The City of Columbus
  - i. Columbus - <https://www.columbus.gov/2016RacePlanningGuide/>
    - 1. At the link above, you will find a comprehensive guide to producing events in Columbus. To Summarize:
      - a. Email the city special events coordinator with basic information about your event including the date and location to make sure that there are no major conflicts.
      - b. Review the race event application found at the site above
      - c. Pay for the permit plus any parking meter closure or fire hydrant usage
    - 2. The city as well as police can be very helpful with finding a great location for your event. Taking the time to build a relationship with them will help your race succeed smoothly
- b. Course Certification
  - i. We can certify courses per USATF guidelines for a fee of about \$250. The process is exceeding complex but verifies that your course is exactly the length that you stipulate
  - ii. Courses that are too long or short WILL reflect poorly on you the race director. Therefore a great deal of care should be taken to insure that the length is correct. Especially for a 5k where a few yards can easily be the difference between a personal record and an average day for many runners.
  - iii. Certifications are good for 10 years. If you plan to use the same course over time, certification is a good idea.
- c. EMS/Police
  - i. The City of Columbus, and most other city governments will require that you obtain Fire and EMS approval as well as police approval for your event.
    - 1. Fire/EMS, will require that you have a "plan" to deal with emergencies. Typically this plan is as simple as insuring that course marshals know to call 911 but can be more complicated for longer races. Outside of the City of Columbus, it can be a good idea to request the presence of a local EMS team. Not only will it help participants feel safe but it can help protect you from a liability perspective.
    - 2. Police are very helpful when coordinating a course plan. They can and will help you find a route that is both cost effective and safe. Take the time to speak with the CPD officer who would be covering your event.

## 8. Payment, Fees, & Collection

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- a. If you are in need of an online registration page, RacePenguin provides one at no additional cost.
  - i. We collect online registrations and distribute the funds to you within 5 days of your event.
  - ii. Should you need access to registration proceeds prior to the date of your race, we can distribute net proceeds in your account upon your request. Checks take 3-5 days to arrive.
- b. Booking
  - i. We ask for a booking fee for each event that we time. Typically this amount is 50% of the fixed portion of your timing contract although, differing circumstances allow for flexibility.
- c. If you are operating your own registration system, we will send you an invoice for any bib/chip fees due within 5 days of your event. The invoice is due 30 days later.

**Racing is a special thing. It brings people together, builds community, and supports great causes. By producing an event, you are making a difference. Be proud.**