

# RACE DIRECTOR'S GUIDE



RacePenguin, LLC

## 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 and 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.

[racepenguin.com](http://racepenguin.com)

614.595.7286

[info@racepenguin.com](mailto:info@racepenguin.com)

PO Box 12141, Columbus, OH 43212

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# 1. RacePenguin's Services

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## a. What We Bring to Your Event:

- i. Quiet Generators
  1. Capable of supplying all the power that we need
- ii. Timing System (see section 5 for more info about our timing system)
- iii. Tents & Tables
  1. Enough to cover our own needs
- iv. Finish Line Truss Structure
  1. Stage light truss capable of spanning up to 32 feet
  2. Branded event fencing used to create a finisher's shoot and for crowd control
- v. RacePenguin Staff
  1. Knowledgeable personnel who can manage and operate our systems and equipment
  2. This does not include course management or assistance at registration
- vi. Race Day Registration
  1. While we are happy to accept registrations on race day, it is important to communicate clearly with our team regarding your expectations for the number of participants who may register on race day in order to ensure enough staffing and equipment
  2. We will 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 volunteers assisting with packet pickup (fewer if they will not be handing out shirts)
- vii. Credit Card Processing Capabilities
- viii. PA System
  1. Our 600-watt, 2 speaker system works wonderfully for events up to 250 – 300 people, but if you expect 300+ participants, you may want to consider renting a sound system
  2. We have a generic playlist that we believe generates excitement, but if you would like to provide your own, it must be 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 our staff has a lot to do to set-up for your race
  1. You are responsible for providing enough volunteers to race day registration, guide participants on the course, ensure that water is set out at water stations, etc.
- ii. Our staff does not require assistance from you to provide timing/results for the race
- iii. Our staff will be well-dressed, professional, and kind
- iv. We're used to the stress of race day and view it as our responsibility to help you manage those stressors
  1. If you have any concerns, be sure to discuss them with our team, as it is likely that they have encountered a similar situation in the past

c. Bib Delivery & Preparation:

- i. We will provide you with bibs at the agreed upon time (packet pick-up or race day)
- ii. RacePenguin chips are disposable, therefore they do not need to be recollected after the race

d. Event Marketing:

- i. RacePenguin can provide a great deal of intellectual support regarding increasing your participation numbers and improving the overall race experience for your participants
  1. Custom registration page created through Run Signup
    - a. Coupon codes, team registration, fundraising options, and custom questions
    - b. Live results integration and photos/video
  2. Custom race page featured on RacePenguin's website
    - a. Pricing schedule
    - b. Packet pick-up information
    - c. Race day schedule of events
    - d. Direct link to registration
    - e. Direct link to results and finish line photos/video
  3. E-Mail Communication
    - a. Newsletter
      - i. Through Columbus Race Calendar, we deliver a tactful and elegant bi-monthly newsletter to everyone who has participated in an event that we've supported – the newsletter is designed to keep the Central Ohio running community up-to-date regarding upcoming races \*your race will be added to this list for no additional charge
    - b. Pre-Race Email
      - i. The week of your event, we will deliver an email to all registered participants providing race day details, which you will review in advance
    - c. Post-Race Email
      - i. The week following your event, we will deliver a follow-up email to all participants containing a link to their results and photos/video

e. What RacePenguin is Not Responsible For:

- i. We are not the race director
  1. You are ultimately responsible for a safe, fun, and efficient event
- ii. Our focus is on timing
  1. We can provide guidance regarding volunteers, visual improvements, branding, and sponsor deliverables, but we are not responsible for these items on race day
- iii. We are not an equipment rental company
  1. If you need tables, chairs, port-a-potties, lighting, and/or power, there are numerous resources available in Columbus – we are happy to assist you through the process

## 2. Your Responsibilities as Race Director

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- a. People
  - i. It is a good policy to overestimate the number of volunteers you will need on race day
  - ii. Our recommendations for the number of volunteers at a given position:
    - 1. 3 for every 75 race day registrations
    - 2. 3 – 5 for course preparation
    - 3. 1 for each turn along the course
    - 4. 2 for handing out finish line medals
- b. Safety
- c. Event Marketing
- d. Registration & Packet Pick-Up
  - i. Secure a location – there are lots of running stores in Columbus
  - ii. Outline race day registration and packet pick-up procedures
- e. Course Planning
- f. Insurance
  - i. You must be insured – we can help you obtain insurance, but you must request this, as we assume that you are covered unless otherwise notified
- g. Communicating with Authorities
- h. Permitting
- i. Non-Timing Related Equipment

## 3. Race Budgeting

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- a. Revenue
  - i. Think carefully about how much you are charging participants – you are putting a great deal of effort into your event, do not underestimate a participant's willingness to support your cause
  - ii. Charging too little can lead to difficulty in earning enough revenue to meet your budget
  - iii. Likewise, charging too much can lead participants to expect a greater level of service
  - iv. Match your registration fee with the level of service you plan to provide
- b. Variable Expenses
  - i. These expenses are incurred per participant – bib and chip, medal, shirt, refreshments, etc.
- c. Fixed Expenses
  - i. These expenses are incurred regardless of the number of participants – tables, chairs, tents, hydrant tapping, permits, timing, etc.
  - ii. The location of your race can greatly impact your fixed costs – 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
  - ii. Consider contacting other race directors to join forces – earn a little extra money by offering to place marketing materials for their race into your 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 & Ideas

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- a. Awards
  - i. It is better to do one thing well versus several things poorly
  - ii. Be clever – bandannas, ribbons, and other creative ideas are 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 – plan to dedicate at least 1 volunteer to each major turn
    - 2. Lead cyclist – having someone lead the participants is a great idea since once the first person has taken the correct path, all others typically follow
  - ii. Signage & Cones
    - 1. City courses can require a significant number of road signage and cones – be sure to work with local authorities to determine the requirements for street closure signage
      - a. Columbus Police can be very helpful in this regard
      - b. Columbus' best resource for cones is the Paul Peterson Company
    - 2. Take a great deal of care when placing cones and signs out on the course, as small errors can lead participants off course
    - 3. Marking is critical – make sure that it is clear where to turn BEFORE the turn

## 5. Timing System

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- a. How It Works
  - 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 bib is a small computer chip and antenna – when a signal from the timing station flows through this chip, a tiny capacitor powers the chip, encodes a return signal with the number that matches the number on the bib, and the timing station receives the number and becomes “aware” of the bib's presences
- b. Accuracy
  - i. The systems we use are extremely accurate – results are accurate to within 1,000<sup>th</sup> of a second
  - ii. As the chip approaches the finish line, the strength of the return signal is measured – as the chip passes through the timing station, the signal strength peaks at exactly the moment a participant crosses the finish line, which is the time that the computer assigns to the number
- 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. Chip time is the time between when a participant crosses the start and when they finish
  - iii. Gun time is the time between when the gun goes off and when the participant crosses the finish
    - 1. 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 with an equal comparison, unless the race is being reported to a governing body, which requires otherwise

- d. Do's & Don'ts
  - i. Don't do anything that will damage the chip on the bib like roll it up or fold it
  - ii. Wear the bib on the front of your body 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
  - 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 can do a lot to help in this regard – we can add sponsor logos to your event page on the RacePenguin website, create finish line photos with a sponsor logo overlay, etc.

## 7. Permitting & Certifications

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- a. Working with the City of Columbus
  - i. A comprehensive guide to producing events in Columbus can be found here:  
<http://www.columbus.gov/Templates/Detail.aspx?id=66721>
    - 1. In summary, you need to email the city's special events coordinator with the basic information about your event including date and location to make sure that there are no major conflicts, review the race event application, and pay for the permit (plus any parking meter closures or fire hydrant usage)
    - 2. The city and the police can be very helpful with helping to find a great location for your event and find a route that is both cost effective and safe – taking time to build a relationship with them will help your race succeed
      - a. A 15-day paper notice is required for every home and office along the course that may be impacted by the race
      - b. Police approval is required prior to publicly posting the course
- b. Course Certification
  - i. We can certify courses per USATF guidelines for a fee of about \$250
  - ii. The process is complex, but verifies that your course is exactly the length that you stipulate
  - iii. Courses that are too long or short will undoubtedly reflect poorly on the race director – a great deal of care should be taken to ensure that the length is correct, especially for a 5k where a few yards can be the difference between a personal record and an average day for many runners
  - iv. If you plan to use the same course over time, certification is a good idea, as it remains valid for 10 years
- c. EMS & Police
  - i. The City of Columbus and most other city governments will require that you obtain fire, EMS, and police approval for your event
    - 1. Fire and EMS will require that you have a “plan” to deal with emergencies
    - 2. Typically, a “plan” can be as simple as insuring that the course marshals know to call 911, but can be more complicated for longer races
    - 3. Outside of the City of Columbus, it can be a good idea to request the presence of EMS – this will help participants feel safe and can protect you from a liability perspective

## 8. Payment, Fees, & Collection

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- a. If you need an online registration page, we will create one for you at no additional cost
  - i. We collect online registrations and will 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 request (checks take 3 – 5 days to arrive)
- b. Booking
  - i. We ask for a booking fee for each event that we time
  - ii. 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 and 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.***