



Speaking volumes

Failte Ireland - Making mole hills from
event management mountains.

An event management software
system that has cut 80% of
administration efforts



BACKGROUND

Fáilte Ireland is “responsible for the provision of practical and strategic support to help develop and sustain Ireland as a high-quality and competitive tourist destination.” Put simply, it puts on a lot of events targeted at foreign tour operators in order to bring more tourism to Ireland. Currently they put on more than 250 events each year. And when you consider a target market of both businesses and trade services, spread all over the world, you can imagine a lot of invites, a lot of organising and a lot of planning. To help with this, the organisation was using a simple legacy event management system managed by a team of people who spent a lot of time updating records, doing admin and wasting a lot of time and money directing their communications to people who may or may not be interested in listening.

CHALLENGES

Fáilte Ireland came to us with the need for a system that would allow them to get rid of the repetitive, inefficient processes that their staff faced on a daily basis, allowing them to be much more focused on the creative, strategic side of event management.

WHAT WE DID

Although the company’s legacy system was slow and inefficient, it gave us a clear head start. Along with the feedback we received from our workshops, we were able to easily interpret the functionality that the team was missing and quickly define the processes needed. This clarity allowed us to have the entire system designed and built inside one month. But like all good software companies, we didn’t stop at producing what Fáilte Ireland thought they needed.

By watching their working processes, the challenges and the problems their staff faced every day, we were able to create an intelligent software solution with the flexibility to remain an essential tool for years to come. This was necessary considering the number of events and their varying levels of complexity needed for each one. From simple breakfast meetings, to week long, multiple location conferences, sometimes with the requirement for multiple meeting scheduling, this system had to be designed to save labour on a number of levels:

By forcing event participants to create and manage their own profiles on line and specify the kind of events they are interested in, we were able to transfer the responsibility of profile management to the participants themselves, instantly cutting the number of calls Fáilte Ireland received everyday from local companies who wanted contacts changed, or profile descriptions updated.

Because the purpose of the events was to encourage trade between two businesses, one-to-one meetings often had to be set up for every one of the hundreds of participants. This used to involve the incredibly complex method of trying to match the companies that could be mutually beneficial to one another. This software programme uses the profile settings specified by participants upon sign up to match businesses together for 15 or 30 minute meetings throughout the course of the event. It then allocates tables, prints labels and creates a timetable for each participant.

For last minute participants and people on waiting lists, Fáilte Ireland have the ability to see and move people through to the registration stage, and thanks to the in-built extra places latecomers can be easily retrofitted into the process.

Quotas for participants can also be established, ensuring that a diverse range of participants are in attendance.

Sub events such as evening dinners can also be arranged and paid for within the system and the incredible diversity of the system allows even for dietary requirements to be anticipated and catered for.

The whole system is compatible with the company’s current financial system, meaning that payments can be paid directly into their accounts without any manual processing. A variety of pricing codes can also be set up. Or should the participants prefer, invoices can be generated as pdfs and emailed directly.

Communications - both internal and external are easily managed with a newsletter and email facility.

IMPLEMENTATION

Creating an all singing, all dancing software solution is all very well, but it’s no use if the staff aren’t able to use it. As with every software solution, we took a great deal of care in the training process to ensure that every member of staff had the ability and enthusiasm to use the system to its full potential. In addition to one-to-one tuition, we produced a range of remote training aids and process reminders for part-time staff and new recruits. By reducing what used to be an enormously complicated process to a simple set of 11 processes, which can each be tracked according to time and user, we estimate the new system has cut 80% of our administration efforts, allowing Fáilte Ireland to employ fewer people doing less repetitive and more rewarding work.