

# What to look when selecting a Race Timer

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As any race director knows, directing a race can be a monumental task. From considering insurance needs, to identifying a course, ordering T-shirts, etc. a surprising amount of effort goes into each stage of planning for a successful event. While there are several pieces to put into order, the race timer is the most important hire that a race director makes for their event.

Generally the race timer is providing the start/finish line setup, so the image they portray will be the image your runners associate with your event. Equally important however is quality of service. Nothing can turn a great event the wrong direction quicker than not having race results, or even worse, having results that are incorrect.

As with all important components of the race process, good communication is key. So ask a lot of questions. Including:

## **Question #1 – What do you provide for start/finish line setup and structure?**

If you are looking to provide a big race look and feel, and your timer shows up with a timing map and two cones, this will not be a good first impression for you or your participants. Additionally, if your start line is separate than the finish definitely discuss this with the timer.

## **What are your read rates? .....Is not Question #2**

The hardware and software that the timer uses is very important, but don't ask the vendor how good they are, ask them for references. A good suggestion is to ask for referrals from races similar to yours.

## **Question #2 – Can you provide some references from races similar to ours?**

If you host a 200 runner 5k for your food pantry, it is not relevant how your timer did at the 5000 runner event at last year's Turkey Trot. The support, communication, staff, and equipment needs will be drastically different depending on the size of the race, so finding a company that can scale appropriately is a rare find. Most timers are either built for big races over 1000, or for smaller community events under 500, so it's important to get feedback from someone who was in your shoes.

## **Question #3 – What do you charge?**

Pricing can be overwhelming. Since timers provide so many different setups and services (see question #4) it can be hard to compare. Generally, the timer will charge a base fee, followed by a per runner charge. Most timers follow a one-size-fits-all approach and have the same setup and equipment for each race, but ask your timer if they have a scale-able setup applicable for your event. Ask for a proposal outlining the services they will provide, and definitely get a quote from multiple timers for comparison.

#### **Question #4 – Can you send me a timing proposal?**

All professional timers can easily send a contract outlining the services they are providing and all fees associated with their service. Additional costs that should be outlined could include travel expenses, costs of providing bibs, additional clocks, equipment at a split point or separate start line. Be sure to have a good understanding of all fees involved to make a good comparison.

#### **Question #5 – How do you post results?**

All timers now have access to instant results and searchable online results, and generally runners are expecting this. Ask your timer if you can get a results link that you will be able to post to your website or facebook page.

#### **Question #6 – What other bells and whistles do you provide?**

This may or may not be essential based on the goal of your event (low costs vs. lots of frills), but most timers now offer finisher photos, results kiosks, and finisher emails. This may be an additional cost, but consider the value added by these runner perks when comparing costs.

#### **Question #7 - How long did it take them to answer my initial call/email?**

One very important component to remember is that you're hiring a timer to make your life easier. You do not need 24/7 instant access, but ease of communication – both in timeliness and in professional interaction is a valuable item to consider when selecting your timer.

#### **Question #8 (FOR ME) – is this timer just another vendor, or a partner to help me enhance my event?**

A good timer will come in and produce good results. A great timer will have you walking away from your event feeling like you impressed your runners and developed a partnership with a timing team that you trust and that cares about giving you and your participants the best service and technology possible. Hiring a timer is a considerable expense for an event, but a great experience with a great timing company will leave you requesting to resign them for next year the second your race is over.