

# 1. Introduction

## My Story and Why I Wrote This Book

Sports events have always fascinated me—not just the finish lines, the cheering crowds, or the medals—but the precision, strategy, and effort behind organizing a single moment that might last seconds for the participant but takes months to build.

My journey started in Beirut, Lebanon, where I had the opportunity to be part of one of the region's most respected running events: the Beirut Marathon. I entered the world of event registration by chance but stayed by choice. Over time, I learned that registration is not merely administrative work—it is a critical discipline that holds the weight of the entire event.

Today, I work at **Suffix Event**, managing registration for over 30 events annually across Kuwait, with growing operations in Saudi Arabia and Qatar. My experience spans various sports—running, obstacle races, motorsport, equestrian, triathlon, and padel—each with its own challenges, but all sharing one truth: success begins with registration.

This book was born from countless real-life scenarios—some stressful, some inspiring—and the recognition that many in our industry still treat registration as an afterthought. I want to change that. Whether you're an event organizer, sponsor, federation, timing company, or marketing agency, I wrote this book to give you practical tools, proven strategies, and behind-the-scenes knowledge to elevate your event's performance and participant experience.

My goal is to turn what's usually considered the “backend” of events into a core, strategic pillar—and hopefully inspire a new level of professionalism in how we think about registration.

## A Global and Regional Perspective on Sports Events

Around the world, sports events are no longer just races or competitions—they're platforms for storytelling, community engagement, city branding, and economic impact. From the Boston Marathon to UTMB, from the Olympic Games to Red Bull stunt races, sports events are now part of culture, tourism, wellness, and even diplomacy.

In the GCC region, this momentum is accelerating. Governments are investing in sports not only as part of national vision strategies—such as Saudi Vision 2030—but also as a tool for improving public health, increasing youth engagement, and boosting non-oil economies.

We've seen international events like the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar, Formula 1 in Jeddah and Abu Dhabi, and marathons in Riyadh, Dubai, and Doha. But there's also a surge in community-level events: obstacle races, cycling festivals, school competitions, corporate wellness runs, and more.

Despite all this growth, many events still face common issues:

- Low show-up rates despite strong registration

- Late check-ins and long queues
- Weak data that doesn't support marketing or sponsorship
- Pricing strategies that don't align with the market
- Poor communication with participants before race day

And more often than not, these problems trace back to one thing: **registration**.

## **Why Registration is the Foundation of a Successful Event**

Registration is the moment when a person makes the decision: *"I'm in."* That simple action marks the start of their journey—and yours. It's the bridge between marketing and operations, between interest and commitment. A strong registration process isn't just about collecting names; it's about:

- **Capturing clean data** to help logistics, timing, and customer service
- **Segmenting participants** by categories, levels, and demographics
- **Driving early revenue** to fund operations and reduce risk
- **Enabling personalized experiences** such as targeted communication or loyalty rewards
- **Building trust** through a smooth and secure registration flow

In short, registration is the **heartbeat** of every sports event. Without it, the event cannot breathe. It's the first experience a participant has and often the most overlooked in planning. A poor system creates confusion, damages your brand, and leads to costly manual work. A great system enhances your efficiency, improves the participant journey, and opens new opportunities for revenue, engagement, and growth.

In the pages ahead, I'll share:

- How to set realistic registration targets and pricing
- How to communicate with participants and manage expectations
- How to align registration with your event's policy, marketing, and sales
- How to use data to attract sponsors and partners
- How to avoid the most common mistakes and technical pitfalls
- And much more—from manual planning to automated systems

This isn't theory. It's the playbook I've used—and continue to refine—for real events in real markets. It's designed to help you build smarter, faster, and more impactful sports events—starting with the foundation: registration.