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ShoWorks, There's an App for That!

Jamie M. Davis

Oregon State University, jamie.davis@oregonstate.edu

Laurie Rice

Oregon State University, laurie.nelson@oregonstate.edu



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ShoWorks, There's an App for That!

Abstract

The county fair is a large part of the traditional 4-H program. The ShoWorks 2012 update includes an app for iPads that allows staff to use volunteers in new ways, recruit new volunteers, and significantly reduces post-show data entry time. Using technology greatly increases staff efficiency and organizational ability, a requirement during the packed schedule and quick turn-around times of county fair.

Jamie M. Davis
4-H Youth
Development Agent
Jamie.Davis@oregonstate.edu

Laurie Rice
4-H Youth
Development Program
Assistant
Laurie.Nelson@oregonstate.edu

Oregon State
University
Lakeview, Oregon

Introduction

County fair is a traditional part of the 4-H Youth Development Program. It allows members to publically showcase their skills, recognize their accomplishments, and build friendships (Diem & Rothenburger, 2001). County fair participation develops life skills and provides opportunities for positive youth development (Arnold, Meinhold, Skubinna, & Ashton, 2007). County fairs' ability to develop life skills and increase developmental outcomes in youth affirms the importance of Extension staff and faculty allocating time to facilitate youth events at county fair.

Many youth look forward to fair. Extension staff and faculty spend a good part of the year planning and preparing for fair. The successful facilitation and management of events, specifically county fair, and other 4-H shows and contests require a high level of organization. ShoWorks, a commonly used fair management software program, increases efficiency of fair management by reducing staff labor (Smith, 2009).

Background

In 2012, Lake County Extension Office experimented with using technology to increase efficiency. A packed schedule and quick turn-around time makes county fair a natural place to look for ways to streamline procedures and increase efficiency. This office uses ShoWorks to manage all 4-H and FFA exhibits entered in the county fair.

In 2012, ShoWorks released an update to their 2009 software. An app for iPads is one of the highlights of this update. The app allows clerk sheets from the ShoWorks 2012 desktop software to

be downloaded on the ShoWorks iPad app over wireless Internet. Even while at fair, volunteer clerks input class placings and ribbon awards directly in ShoWorks clerk sheets on the iPad. These results can then be uploaded, over wireless Internet, back to the ShoWorks 2012 desktop software, where results can be edited and finalized by staff.

Implementation

The county-based Extension office upgraded to the ShoWorks 2012 software. Staff members first focused on learning the newly upgraded software during a spring 4-H contest. A trial of the iPad app was held at the county 4-H horse show, held 1 month before county fair.

The app's strengths and weaknesses became apparent during the trial run. The app's strengths are: ease of use, a significant reduction in post-show data entry, results available sooner, and reduced paper waste. These strengths led to a decision to use the app at county fair.

The ShoWorks app has two major limitations. First, changes cannot be made to clerk sheets after they have been synced to the iPad. Second, there is no option to indicate special awards like Grand and Reserve Champion. These limitations are of minimal concern during livestock shows, where class changes are infrequent, compared to static classes and special awards that can be entered easily at a later time.

A training to acquaint volunteer clerks was held 1 week prior to the county fair. The training included test classes for each of volunteer clerks to become acquainted with finding the correct class sheet in ShoWorks iPad app, entering ribbon results, and saving the results. The use of new technology encouraged a variety of people to volunteer to clerk at fair, including volunteer clerks from previous years and new volunteers who were comfortable with using iPads.

Technology Requirements

ShoWorks 2012 desktop software and wireless Internet are required to use the iPad app. The wireless is used to download clerk sheets from the ShoWorks desktop software to the iPad and to upload the results back from the iPad to the ShoWorks desktop software. It is important to note that wireless Internet is not needed during the inputting of results stage.

There are a number of items to consider when selecting an iPad to use for clerking shows and contests. In the event wireless Internet is not available, select an iPad with cellular data capabilities. However, this will increase the cost of your iPad (from a basic Wi-Fi model) and add the additional costs of a cellular service plan. These plans range in price from \$20 on up, but may be purchased on a month-to-month basis.

Any generation of iPad will run the ShoWorks iPad app. The iPad must be running an iOS 3.2 operating system or later. The ShoWorks iPad app requires minimal storage of 2.1 MB. The number of iPads required is based on the number of shows or contest running simultaneously. One iPad is required for each show or contests. There is no limit to the number of iPads that can be registered to a ShoWorks license.

Impact

Volunteer clerks entered class placings and ribbons awarded for all 4-H and FFA livestock classes. This saved an estimated eight to 10 hours of staff post-show data entry time, allowing Extension staff and faculty to spend more time supporting 4-H members and volunteers. In addition, this efficiency resulted in a quicker turn around on creating the market sale order, publishing fair results, and calculating premium payouts. It also significantly reduced paper waste, allowed the program to use volunteers in a new capacity, and attracted new tech savvy volunteers.

Volunteer clerks provided post-fair feedback on using the ShoWorks iPad app. Every clerk indicated the app was easy to use and recommended using this technology in the future.

Clerks shared about their experience clerking with an iPad. Specific results are as follows:

- I thought the whole system worked well.
- The whole thing went well, the iPad was easy and fun to use and I had no problem with it.
- The classes I helped with went smoothly and there were only a few entry changes. Everyone worked well together and any mishaps were resolved quickly.

Plans for Future

Thanks to increased efficiency and positive feedback from clerks and staff, ShoWorks 2012 and the iPad app will be used to manage all future 4-H contests, shows, and county fairs hosted by the county-based Extension office. In addition, a number of other counties across the state and some 4-H departments of the state fair will use the ShoWorks iPad app this year.

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