

Girl Scout Council Improves Efficiency with New Registration & Reservations Solution

Simplified registration and streamlined administration deliver benefits throughout the Council

About Girl Scouts of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois

Formed in April 2007 by combining four councils, the Girl Scouts of Eastern Iowa and Western Illinois (GSEIWI) serves around 20,000 girls. Council headquarters is located in Bettendorf, IA with Iowa service centers in Cedar Rapids, Dubuque, Waterloo and West Burlington. The council operates one urban program center in Rock Island, Illinois and four camp properties in Iowa that offer resident camp, troop camp and out-of-council rentals.

The Challenge

The council sought to simplify managing registrations and reservations in three major areas:

- **Property and equipment rentals.** Each of GSEIWI's properties is available for overnight and day-use rentals. In addition, each location offers different scheduled activities in different seasons including archery, ropes courses, swimming and ice skating as well as equipment rentals for sports and outdoor cooking. The council didn't have a centralized process for groups to book lodging, day use, activities or equipment, and customers made arrangements with the council office, a service center or rangers at a property site. Forms and payments often arrived separately, without information about which staff member spoke with the customer and what arrangements had been discussed. The council maintained a reservations spreadsheet but with several people at different locations taking reservations, it was difficult to ensure that the spreadsheet was up to date.
- **Equestrian programs.** The council's popular riding program at Camp Liberty is available up to nine months of the year, offering a variety of arena- and trail-ride options with different times, requirements and costs. GSEIWI sought a solution that supported their schedule and allowed customers to view the available space in each program before beginning a registration. In addition, the council wanted the flexibility to modify bookings to accommodate unique situations, like splitting large troops into two simultaneous sessions.
- **Camp registration.** GSEIWI's previous online system failed to meet their needs for gathering data and processing payments. Registrations were delayed as staff re-entered registration data and waited for additional paper forms to be returned by mail. Processing delays made it difficult to know the availability of camp sessions.

In addition, the council wanted easier reporting, improved email communications and support for tiered pricing across all of their offerings.

The Solution

Before beginning the evaluation, GSEIWI developed detailed requirements to ensure that the selected vendor would address the greatest number of challenges. The council reviewed information from eleven companies and narrowed the field to two candidates. After a rigorous evaluation, the council chose Doubleknot.

Benefits

In 2016, GSEIWI relied on Doubleknot to handle registration for more than 70 different summer camp programs. Hillary Blevins, Research Analyst, credits Doubleknot for enabling the council to successfully manage the increase in registrations. Says Blevins, "This past summer, we increased our camp numbers 50 percent, from 800 to 1200. We wouldn't have been able to accommodate that influx of registrations in the old system. With Doubleknot, we were able to handle 50 percent more resident camp registrations in the same period of time."

Doubleknot's features reduced administration at the council and simplified registration for families. Says Blevins, "It's an easy process now to sign up for camp sessions, pick the right pricing tier, apply for financial assistance if needed, enter camper information, request transportation, order a T-shirt or care package and even make an additional donation."

The council also benefits from these Doubleknot features:

- **Easier facilities management.** Doubleknot delivers flexibility to set booking windows, offer tiered pricing and manage availability and rental periods for individual assets as well as groups of related assets. To simplify managing assets like non-winterized buildings that can only be rented in certain seasons, the council created an administrator-only asset that “contains” all of the facilities that have the same availability schedule. To set the winter blackout period, the council simply assigns the blackout dates to the administrator-only asset, which automatically applies the same dates to each related asset. As a result, blackout dates are applied consistently and easily.
- **Improved payment processes.** Says Blevins, “We like the ability to require payment upfront for any facility or event. We don’t have to follow up to locate missing payments—if the customer doesn’t pay for it, then they don’t have the registration or reservation.” The council also uses Doubleknot’s payment schedules, which allows a customer to place a deposit at the time of registration and automatically sends billing reminders (or late notices) for the outstanding balance.
- **Discounts and promotions.** With Doubleknot, the council makes it easy for scouts to apply Cookie Rewards as discounts on camp and event registration. The council also uses discount codes to apply financial assistance and support the Very Important Camper (VIC) retention program, which offers discounts, early registration and special patches for girls who sign up early to return next summer.
- **Administrative pricing flexibility.** Doubleknot’s support for adjusting balances and applying discounts provides the council with flexibility to serve different groups. When an out-of-council group like a school, a nonprofit or a private event rents a facility, staff can easily adjust the reservation and pricing to accommodate the group’s requirements.
- **Comprehensive communications.** In addition to issuing receipts for new registrations and reservations, Doubleknot automatically generates and sends a new receipt when a customer makes a payment and when the council applies a credit, changes a reservation or otherwise adjusts a balance. Support for sending email to any group of current or previous registrants makes it easy to share information and promote new events. Staff can even send messages to people who match the criteria for a saved database query at the time that the message is sent.
- **Reporting:** Doubleknot’s dozens of standard reports and a custom report writer provides the council with tools to locate, manipulate and share any information in the database. “The reporting is very easy,” says Blevins. “In the past, I’d spend hours formatting and converting Excel data before I could even start analysis for the report. Now, we can get the information that we need upfront.” And, the council can create new reports, customize existing reports and save queries to meet the needs of any department; for example, equestrian program volunteers can receive a weekly report with information about the groups who will arrive on the weekend.

Quantitative Results

To determine Doubleknot’s effectiveness, Blevins evaluated administrative processes before and after the Doubleknot implementation using a modified Takt Time model (originally developed to monitor efficiency in production environments).

According to Blevins, “Implementing Doubleknot reduced our overall process time and cost for reservations and registrations by 58 percent, allowing us to shift that time to focus on improving customer service and systems in additional areas and ways that were not possible with previous systems.”

Blevins attributes the improvement to the automation or elimination of time-consuming steps like manually generating and sending receipts; following up on payments; ensuring that mandatory forms are completed and combining registration and reservations information from different sources into a single spreadsheet for reporting.

According to Blevins, “We’ve met our goals for ROI because we’re saving more than Doubleknot costs. It’s been a good HR decision, because we’re applying the time we save to other areas and projects. Having so many Girl Scout councils using Doubleknot is a testament to the product.”

About Doubleknot

Dozens of GSUSA councils rely on Doubleknot’s property reservations and event registration solutions. To learn more about ways that Doubleknot can help your council, contact David Mimeles at (408) 971-9120 x203 or DMimeles@doubleknot.com.