



# SQLSaturday Event Planning Guide

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## What is a SQLSaturday?

It's a one day free training event that targets SQL Server professionals. It's held on a Saturday because many IT professionals have a difficult time taking time off from work for training. Training sessions are conducted by members of the community, sharing tips, tricks and techniques that they have learned and want to share. So far the events have been in the well known conference style—multiple tracks with multiple speakers per track—but that is certainly not the only possible format.

We also see SQLSaturday as fulfilling two useful goals for local user groups. The first is a membership drive and awareness builder. The second goal (for years 2 and later) is as a fund raiser, hoping to make a profit from the event that can go back into the group general fund for users in bringing in speakers and paying for pizza.

*SQLSaturday is a trademark of the Professional Association for SQL Server but we will license its use to any group that agrees to conduct the event to our standards.*

## What are the standards for a SQLSaturday?

- It has to be held on a Saturday! This is to make sure that everyone has the chance to attend without trying to get a day away from the office.
- We prefer that attendees register at no charge but a lunch fee of up to \$10 is allowed.
- If the event is sponsor-supported, we will treat sponsors with as much care as we do our attendees and make every effort to see that they get a good return on their investment (*so they'll sponsor us again the next time!*).
- We will build and manage these events as a team of volunteers—no one person heroics.
- We will encourage local SQL Server professionals to speak at the event.

## What is involved in hosting a SQLSaturday?

At a high level, the single biggest requirement is one person who has the drive to make the event happen! Without a strong person driving the event the chances of it failing are much higher. Looking beyond that, here are the key ingredients to a successful event:

- Agree to adhere to our rules of the road for the event.
- Find an event venue that is free or very low cost.
- Find speakers for the event.
- Find sponsors (if you decide to use the sponsor-supported model).
- Find volunteers.
- A lot of logistical stuff.

In practice finding the venue is often the toughest part of the event. Volunteers can be found from your local user group and from the attendees themselves – *just have to ask!*

We'll give you as much information as we can about how to make all of those steps happen.

## **What support is provided by PASS?**

For starters, we provide your own branded SQLSaturday.com site as a sub-site of the sqlsaturday.com domain. Here are some of the features:

- Registration services including a wait list if registration exceeds capacity.
- Online submission of abstracts by speakers.
- Online sign-up of sponsors.
- Complete admin tools, including the ability to set the schedule, email various portions of the list (attendees, speakers, volunteers, etc), change the text on the front page, and more.
- Event automatically listed on the main page of SQLSaturday.

Our goal is to standardize and reuse the web site to make it easier for you to focus on the tasks that can only be done by **you**. The current web site is the result of lessons learned from dozens of events.

We're pleased to provide the following additional support, all things that we believe will reduce the workload of the event organizer without taking away any of the unique value that *you* bring to the event:

- We host and develop the SQLSaturday.com web site.
- A sqlsaturday.com email address for 'official' correspondence.
- List of previous event sponsors as well as letting those sponsors know that you are the event lead.
- List of previous speakers that might be interested in speaking at your event.
- A customized SQLSaturday logo, plus button images for speakers and sponsors.
- We will accept checks and credit card payments on behalf of your event and disburse those funds to you in 3 payments (2 prior to event and 1 post event). Note: there is an average of 4% merchant fees on credit card charges, no fee for checks – *we make no money on these transactions.*
- We post your upcoming event on all PASS channels.
- Available for coaching and discussion as needed.
- If you are accepting sponsors, we will participate as a sponsor based on the sponsorship levels/benefits offered and on your expected number of attendees.

## **What are your responsibilities?**

Put simply, you own the event and you responsible for planning, delegating, executing, and all those other words that go with that! We'll do everything we can to help, but it only works if **you** run the event and put your imprint on it.

We've got a basic timeline later in the document which provides more (if perhaps not yet enough) detail but here are the big items:

- Identify one person that will "own" the event (preferably the group leader) and two people that will serve as backup and as a steering committee as a minimum.
- Establish a goal for attendance (sometimes based on venue if you only have x seats).
- Find a site for the event and secure a locked in date – ideally the location is provided at no cost or with a minimal fee (*up to \$500 is generally manageable*).
- Find a site for the speaker/volunteer reception on Friday night.
- Find a site for the after-event party on Saturday night.
- Recruit and select speakers, build final schedule, notify all of acceptance/rejection.
- Select an "official" event hotel within 5 miles of the event and try to obtain an event rate.
- Work on obtaining at least \$2,000 in sponsorship funds via local and national sponsors (this is the recommended approach but it is possible in theory to proceed without sponsors).
- Provide an address for delivery of books/other items from sponsors.
- Provide a blog update of event status weekly as well as email reminders via standard schedule (need to build).
- Select a lunch vendor that can flex on the final order count the morning of the event (or decide that everyone will bring their own lunch).
- Commit to status calls with us to confirm event is on track and to work through any problems.
- Adopt our guidelines for customer service and privacy.
- Look into purchasing insurance to cover your event.
- Make it happen!

## **What do we have to do to be eligible to conduct a SQLSaturday?**

We think you'll have the best chance of success if you're the leader of a moderately successful user group that:

- Has met at least three times in previous six months
- Averages 20+ attendees
- Has worked with at least two local sponsors

- Is actively interested in having a SQLSaturday
- Can count on 3-5 members for 4 hours work on event day

You'll boost your chances of success if:

- You have at least one additional active SQL group within 120 miles
- You have an active local INETA chapter for .Net
  - bonus if they have conducted a code camp
  - bonus if the SQL group has established a working relationship
- You have the support of nearest MS Developer Evangelist (usually requires just asking, we can help).
  - promoting via blog and MSDN Flash
  - sponsorship
- Event Leader works for themselves or for a company that will let them devote some work hours to event planning (*this is a definite plus!*)

If you don't quite meet those criteria, we can still talk. We're not looking for reasons to say no! We just want you to have a decent chance of success. Running an event is a lot like running a small business: you have to market it, sell it, and in general nurture it every day if you want it to succeed. If you can convince us you've got the drive to do that, we'll do what we can to help.

This is where we also have to work out realistic expectations of how many speakers, sessions, and attendees can be found for your event.

## **What should our budget be for the event?**

This is really hard, as a lot of the budget depends on attendance, and of course you can only spend what you actually take in from sponsors, so it makes the planning...challenging!

The single biggest expense you have is lunch if you want to provide it free. Cost for lunch ranges from about \$2/person for pizza to \$7 for a very nice boxed lunch. Options are to provide lunch, charge for lunch if they want lunch on site, or have them bring their own/go out.

The next biggest expense is shirts for speakers and volunteers. This is about the only real payment they get for their work and shouldn't be thought of as a nice to have. Don't cheat and get cheap t-shirts either! We have a source for good quality polos with embroidered logo for \$15/each. For an event the size of Orlando that means spending \$600 or so on shirts.

You're going to need lots of little incidental items: signs to the event, masking tape, attendee name tags, etc.

Our recommendation is to plan the event based on providing lunch, then adjust the type of lunch based on how much money you have. As a base number we'd recommend that you plan on raising \$12/per attendee as a minimum; \$20/attendee gives you first class funding. If you opt to charge for lunch or just have them bring lunch you can probably go as low as \$5/per attendee. The trick is to leave you some wiggle room. Don't promise a buffet and then have pizza! Start off with a best case plan for the budget and then revise your spending as needed.

Liquidity is often a challenge so asking sponsors to pay in advance is definitely important. None of us wants to be in the collections business and more importantly, things like polo's have to be ordered and paid for several weeks prior to the event.

### **How do we get sponsors?**

The first step is to build a sponsor guide. We have a sponsorship template built into the website that you can use – the sponsorship levels, values and benefits you provide in your web application form are inserted into your sponsorship template during the create event process and the result is an html file you can then edit. The sponsor guide needs to have all the details of your event (when, where, projected attendance, etc.) so it is important that you complete the web application form in its entirety so the required information is generated in your sponsor template. We typically use gold, silver and bronze – *your plan has to look professional!*

We'll give you a list of previous sponsors and let them know that you're an *official* event. You should supplement that with any local sponsors you already know, and definitely reach out to all the local staffing companies. The staffing companies have great lists of potential attendees and if they come aboard as sponsors will be all too happy to message to that list about the upcoming event.

It's up to you to contact them, show them your plan, and most importantly, convince them that you are a good risk and a good venue for showcasing their product. Especially for local sponsors, there is no substitute for meeting them for lunch and making your pitch. Think about it from their side: it's much easier to talk the boss into spending x dollars once you have seen the event owner in person and feel like they are credible.

We know what you're thinking: you don't like sales and don't want to do sales! Sure, some of us are better suited to it than others, but it's not as bad as it seems. The biggest point to remember is that sponsors are *always* looking for places to advertise their products and services. All you have to do is explain to them why you're conducting the event, your plan and progress so far, and what you can do for them if they sponsor the event. Listen to their questions, answer honestly, and learn where you can. If they say yes, good! If not, was the reason they said no because of the event structure, budget limits, or something else?

### **How do we find speakers?**

Depending on how vibrant the overall technical area is, this can range from easy to challenging. We suggest using all of these as sources:

- Any previous speaker at your user group. Speaking at a larger event is a natural progression for them, and they are known quantities.
- Any previous SQLSaturday speaker nationwide. Not many will travel, but even if you get one or two it's worthwhile, and they may also comment on the event in their blogs even if they don't attend (we will notify this list for you if you decide to use it).
- Local Microsoft staff. You don't want there to be too many MS speakers, but one or two can add some interest and credibility to the event.
- Any local SQL Server MVP, or .Net MVP's that focus on data access.
- Speakers at other SQL user groups within a 2 hour drive. Again, a regional event is a natural progression for them if they can find time/resources for the trip.
- Other local technical groups. Sometimes other group leaders will have immediate suggestions; sometimes it's more that they will contact their mailing list and you may get a speaker by proxy (a .Net developer mentions it to the DBA at work).
- People that are members of your user group, even if they rarely/ever attend. Often you'll find several experts that are good candidates, but may need prompting or even some coaching on speaking skills before they will join us. If you can get them, these are the ones you want!

**NB:** If you will have Microsoft speakers at your event and you plan on recording their sessions, Microsoft requires you to sign a speaker contract with them. You'll have to sign one contract per individual speaker – we're working on changing that at PASS to make it easier, but there are a number of legal technicalities still in the way. We'll let you know if and when we sort it out – until then, the SQLSaturday Team at HQ will be happy to provide the contract template to you upon request.

## How to market the event

Marketing the event is hard work, and often seems like a "chicken and the egg" joke. You have to obtain space before you can market the event, but getting the space requires making an estimate of the number of sessions and speakers you can find along with how many people you can reach that will actually show up.

Once the site is selected, the first marketing item is to find speakers. Until you can post a schedule or a good portion of one, the event is wishful thinking. Ideally you've contacted some of your prospects before booking a site to make sure you have some interest, and identified other people that will contact their own lists on your behalf (other user group leaders in the area for example).

Probably 90% of your marketing will be done via email, so it's important to start with a good base list. General guidelines for emailing frequency are:

Final week before event	Daily
4 weeks prior to event	Weekly
60 days prior to event	Bi-Weekly
More than 60 days prior to event	Monthly, or as something special occurs

Email messages need to be consistent, and our admin tools help you do that by putting a consistent header (customized to your event) and footer on each message.

We also allow you to view messages sent by all other events and if you want, just copy them over to use as a basic template. Emailing as noted above is absolutely key to the event—you can't be reticent about contacting your users!

It's also important to note that you may end up sending most messages twice; once to your event registration list and a similar mailing to your user group list. If you wish, you can load your user group list into the registration list with a status that indicates they are there for emailing only; if they register they change their status to attending. This is a nice way to consolidate your work.

Some other notes about messaging:

- Put the most important thing you have to say in the first paragraph.
- Try to limit each email to no more than 2-3 ideas.
- Always say thank you or something similar; nice to have a standard close.
- Keep the messages positive. Find something to celebrate (another speaker signed up, new sponsor, registration over x, etc) in each email.

## Being Sponsor Friendly

Sponsors are an important part of your event so it's important to set expectations – do what you can to help them be successful and to make sure you meet their expectations.

- **Good Communication.** Start by showing them your PDF sponsorship plan and then make sure they have reviewed how you plan to run the event and exactly what they will receive. Don't set wild goals for your event—far better to exceed your predictions than to fail to meet them.
- **Raffle Tickets.** Personalized raffle tickets have become the cornerstone of our events. They allow attendees to quickly interact with sponsors and they give sponsors a simple and effective way to collect contact information from attendees. We provide a report that will print these on either standard paper or micro-perfed paper from perforatedpaper.com.
- **SQL Stampede.** Similar to a bingo card, we use this to drive traffic to our highest donating sponsors and also noteworthy speakers. By using this as a raffle ticket for the 'big' raffle at the end of the day it will also drive a lot of traffic to sponsor tables.

## Timeline

We know we've got a lot of work left to do here but this is a pretty good starting point. While the 7 month timeline listed here may not always be needed, we recommend that you

give yourself at least three months to build and market the event—*any shorter and you will feel the pain!*

### **210 Days Prior**

- Set goals for attendance and sessions
- Decide if the event requires a room/area large enough to hold all attendees at once for keynote/closing talks
- Venue considerations
  - Parking
  - Room size appropriate for expected attendance and has AV support
  - Sponsor placement for good visibility/traffic/110v power
  - Breakfast/lunch location
  - Registration site
  - Overall traffic flow
  - If no keynote/close out sessions, where to hold raffles if being done
  - Cost—free is good, but sometimes paying for the venue may get a better location and better service
- Identify site for speaker reception
  - Typically want to provide appetizers, soda, drinks if possible
  - Ideal is site close to venue, but more important to pick a place that will be conducive to being able to talk/network
  - Make sure the place understands clearly what SQLSat is/is not paying for!
  - May require a credit card to hold the space
  - Depending on group size can be just done ad hoc; larger groups (15+) probably better to reserve
- Identify site for after event party
  - Optional, but most events have one
  - Look for a site that can handle the potential traffic flow on a walk in basis, often something with an outdoor bar area
  - Decide if SQLSat will provide appetizers and/or drinks, usually based on sponsorship, but usually won't have the sponsorship confirmed at this point
  - Nothing wrong with saying everyone buys their own
  - Again, make sure they understand who is paying for what, and who can have how much of what

### **180 Days Prior**

- Select venue & date (this is easier if it's the 2<sup>nd</sup> time—the 1<sup>st</sup> time it may take *months* to get locked in)
- Get web site open with general info about date/location/goals
- Open mailing list sign up
- Contact local MS evangelist about support
- Build and post event flyer

- Start light advertising
- Notify past/potential sponsors about upcoming event – no rates yet
- Open early registration for those on the mailing list
- Send message of when full registration will be open

### ***120 Days Prior***

- Open call for speakers
- Message via all available channels
- Build sponsor document and post
- Full registration is open

### ***75 Days Prior***

- Select good variety of sessions and assign to tracks
- If needed, contact site host to obtain more/less space based on tracks
- Notify speakers about selected sessions and allow them to register

### ***60 Days Prior***

- Start contacting sponsors
- Order speaker shirts (and for staff if you have the budget)
- Order/decide on source of event bags (can be donated by sponsor, or just use cheap bags from Sam's, if necessary)

### ***45 Days Prior***

- Continue advertising
- Send reminder email to anyone on the mailing list that has not registered (some may register with a different email address). *Note: space reminder email about 30 days after initial registration open message goes out... i.e. if registration opened 120 days out then this reminder email should be sent at 90 days out.*

### ***30 Days Prior***

- Generate invoices to sponsors that are set up to prepay
- Schedule meeting with site host to verify overall plan, if needed

### ***7 Days Prior***

- Confirm shirts on hand for speakers and staff
- Confirm reservation for speaker event and update headcount
- Reminder email to sponsors to have flyers and other stuff delivered to coordinating location
- Finalize printed program guide and send out for printing
- Print strip maps to after party to be handed out separately
- Reminder email to speakers about event and speaker event
- Confirm final room assignments

- Confirm all volunteers
  - Hours to work
  - Assignments
- Purchases
  - Bottled water and soda, estimate of 2 soda/1 water per expected attendee
  - Napkins/paper towels
  - Flatware (if needed, may come with food)
  - Sugar/Sweet & Low/Creamer for coffee
  - Styrofoam cups for coffee (if not provided with coffee)
  - Small plates?
  - Trash bags just in case

### ***3 Days Prior***

- Confirm volunteers for Friday

### ***2 Days Prior***

- Queue final email reminder for attendees to go out late Thursday/early Friday
- Confirm with site that setup can begin on Friday
- Confirm speaker event venue
- Print raffle tickets
- Print attendee badges

### ***1 Day Prior***

- Confirm final count for breakfast and place order
  - Who will pick up and who is the backup?
  - Coffee being handled separately?
- Confirm final count for lunch and follow up with vendor, count may have to increase on Event Day based on walk ins
- Stuff attendee bags
- Cooler or other storage for ice on hand
- Review sponsor table locations
  - Map out where each sponsor will be
  - Confirm tables, chairs, power for each
  - Set up Friday night if possible
  - Label each table with sponsor name
- Speaker event
  - Issue shirts
  - Map, final schedule and info about their room location
  - Contact for AV issues

### ***Event Day!***

- Post signs on nearby roads to assist attendees trying to find the site
- Post signs for registration
- Get the door greeter posted

- Check with all sponsors upon arrival
  - Issue them whatever being used for the Stampede cards
  - Questions/issues?
  - Make sure they are checked in so we have good lunch head count
- Get registration set up
  - Separate queue for already registered and walk in
  - May have some speakers that still need to pick up their shirts
- Get speaker room open and sign on door posted
- Establish the command center!
  - They own the raffle announcements
  - Any issues with AV
  - Speakers check in here
- Get food area set up
  - Coffee and associated items
  - Food
  - Napkins
  - Plates?
- Ice for soda/water
  - Who will handle this?
- Pick up breakfast – early!
- Make sure extra trash cans staged near food area
- Reconfirm lunch and increase count if needed
  - Review who will pickup/deliver
- Clean up breakfast about 11am and prep for lunch
  - Remove trash if possible
- Review the lunch feeding plan!
- Call to confirm estimated attendance for after party
- End of day raffle
  - Make sure to quickly thank sponsors by name
  - General thank you for speakers
  - Reminder about upcoming events and follow up email
  - After party – have someone with maps at the exits
  - The raffle!
- Clean up
  - Take down all signs
  - Pick up road signs
  - All food given away or disposed of
  - Registration area clean
  - Each classroom visited to make sure nothing left behind, trash picked up, whiteboards clean, projector turned off, lights turned out
  - Speaker room clean
  - Walk through to double check
- After party
  - Designate a couple volunteers to buy appetizers – fixed budget!
  - Nice if you give volunteers gift cards for the site of the party (or as a fallback, Starbucks)

- Make sure no one running a tab we have to cover

### ***2 Days After***

- Send initial follow up email with sponsor links, links to downloads, and heads up on coming email blasts
- Make sure online registration closed and final notes posted

### ***2-32 Days After***

- Send out email blasts
- Collect from anyone that still owes us
- Invoice any post paid sponsors
- Update this plan with notes for next time
- Thank you email to sponsors and reminder about tentative schedule for next year
- Thank you email to volunteers
- Thank you email to site host

### ***60 Days After***

- Close out invoices

## **Advertising Plan**

The key is to advertise in as many areas as possible and as often as possible without annoying people. In addition to PASS's assistance in advertising your event on sqlpass.org and in the Connector, you can try:

- **Constant updates** on the **User Group** and/or **SQLSaturday site**. Posts about venue selection, call for speakers, etc., all help contribute to overall exposure and help make sure you're communicating what is being done behind the scenes.
- **Blogs**. Especially once speakers are selected it's important to remind them to blog about the event and their upcoming session.
- **MSDN/Technet**. Work with local MS evangelists to try to get news about the event published once registration opens.
- **SQL Server sites**. Most of the larger communities will publish at least one notice about the event.
- **Other Chapters**. Makes a lot of sense to cross pollinate across SQL groups, but should also look at .Net groups for additional exposure.
- **Past Sponsors**. They will typically have lists bigger than the local Chapter and if they had a good event before are likely to help you get the word out.
- **Local Recruiters** (similar to past sponsors).

- **Get an event flyer done early** and converted to PDF; make it easy to find and *ask people to post at work*.
- **Post at local training centers and bookstores.**
- **Special mailings** to last year's attendees and local user group members.
- **Local newspapers** usually have a section for free events.

### **Volunteer Roles**

We have a spot on the registration form where attendees can check if they are interested in volunteering and in what capacity. When it's time to decide on volunteer jobs, the best approach is to offer them specific tasks and let them choose. A suggested approach is shown below.

#### ***Overall Coordinator***

This is the person that takes ownership of the event. Ideally they have a couple trusted associates to help carry the load but one person needs to own the event.

#### ***Registration/Command Center***

This will require a minimum of 4 volunteers: 2 to handle attendees already registered, 1 to handle walk-ins, and 1 person who just monitors all and tries to cross level volunteers and resources as needed.

#### ***Food***

This requires at least 2 volunteers to manage setting up, controlling access to the food and then doing initial clean up.

#### ***Set Up***

This requires 2-3 volunteers to get ice for the drinks, set up tables and handle miscellaneous morning tasks (usually needed for about 2 hours).

#### ***Clean up***

2-3 volunteers to make sure facility is returned to its original state (typically one hour or less).

#### ***Sponsor Support***

One person responsible for making sure Sponsors are set up and happy – important for first 2-3 hours of the day.

#### ***Announcer***

We recommend that this NOT be the Overall Coordinator. This volunteer will handle raffles, opening and closing ceremonies, etc.

## **Miscellaneous Notes:**

### ***Stampede***

- Have to make sure speakers on the list know that they are on the card, and let them know where to get the stamp/stickers/etc to mark the card
- Also make sure that speakers on the card aren't part of the check in team, which can cause a traffic jam
- People typically print these two up and cut them, so you can highlight different sponsors and speakers on each card
- Also need to make sure sponsors know what to do with the cards; this is challenging, most sponsors DO NOT read event related email so it's important to talk through this with the people who will be attending on behalf of the sponsor—often that's not the person that approves the money

### ***Greeters***

- Make sure greeters understand how the check-in process works and make them responsible for managing the lines
- They need to be happy & friendly!
- It's useful to give them a sign or other item to wave that clearly identifies them to arrivals
- Having the greeter closest to the check in line hand out bags during the morning rush is an effective way to keep those waiting in line distracted
- If the route from parking to check in is complicated, use signs and/or greeters to make it easy for attendees to find their way

### ***Prizes***

- Events seem to have standardized on having a 'prize desk' that handles prize redemption
- Typically they will be handling books and other small prizes, but as sponsors leave for the day (usually well before the end of day raffle) they will also be guarding the large prizes
- Best set up is to have the items on a table behind the prize desk person, and them sitting behind their own table; this keeps wandering hands away from the stack and also just makes things look organized
- Good idea to staff two people for this
- Be sure to label 'during the day' prizes and keep them separate from the 'big' prizes

### ***Packing for the Event***

- Reserve a UHaul at least 7 days prior, typically the 10ft model works best unless you will be transporting tables & chairs
- We recommend purchasing the UHaul insurance rather than rely on credit card protection (which doesn't always apply)
- You'll need a padlock for the truck
- And a hand truck (if you don't have one, often just as cheap to buy one at Costco that can be used as a cart too and then you have it for next time)
- Start by purchasing soda and water and loading in the forward part of the van area
- Have all the other items staged beforehand to guard against forgetting anything
- Try to complete the loading by noon on Friday; this gives you time to shower and change and also gives you time to think of things you might have forgotten

### ***Breakfast***

- Good to bring some fresh fruit
- Coffee (regular and decaf), sugar, sweetener, creamer, cups, stirrers
- Need to make sure you have a trash can at the coffee area
- Donuts
- Coffee makers and coffee in filter bags to keep clean up simple, extension cord and surge protector
- 4 Gals of fresh water, can be refilled on site

### ***Sponsor Signs***

- Need a simple sign to put on each vendor table
- And a way to identify the absentee vendor table
- Pre-print sheets for each raffle box (showing prize, if possible, but better if sponsor does this)

### ***Check In***

- Look at staff and volume, but plan to run at least two lines
- Be sure to divide the lines evenly, A-M and N-Z doesn't always work
- Critical to do a rehearsal with a couple key members prior to the event, they'll be responsible for making it work with the rest of the volunteers
- Maintaining an accurate count of attendees is the most important part of this, without it you can't call in a last minute change to the lunch order
- It's almost impossible to force everyone through check-in. Speakers and sponsors will breeze by, there will be alternate entries, and often you'll have non-event attendees going through that add to the confusion
- Give each line a complete copy of the sign in roster
- Also have a list for the greeter, they can ask people if they are registered – easy way to know is if they have been receiving SQLSat email – and verify on the list

- Be prepared to handle walk-ins: need to capture at least name and email address and give them a hand-written name badge
- All attendees should have a name badge—this helps speakers make contact personal, and it allows you to easily control access to breakfast/lunch.

### ***Stuffing Event Bags***

- Best setup is 4-6 6' tables placed end to end so that people can work both sides of the table (2 lines)
- Have all items staged in one place so that it's easy to open them up and set on the table
- Recommend 5-8 people per 250 bags, this will typically take them 2 hours including a pizza break
- You won't have the same quantities of all items, some will run out early and that's ok!
- Very important that event specific items make it into each bag (event evaluation, session evaluations)
- Personalize bags to reduce check in time is hard to do because typically 30% of attendees won't show; combine that with not having enough of everything each time and you can wind up with attendees getting bags that are missing sponsor items while there are other bags not used that contain the needed items (not recommended)
- You need a lot of boxes/containers to hold the bags so you can move them easily—dropping a box can lead to a big mess—how many depends on bag size, but ball-park is 1 file sized box per 25 bags

### ***Session Evaluations***

- Place extra in each room for those that lost/can't find theirs
- Make sure speakers understand how they work – used for drawing prize tickets if prizes available (and make sure they have prize tickets)
- Provide a box in each room for them to collect the evaluations
- Set the expectation that they should review the evaluations post session and then turn in to the prize desk (and make sure the prize desk has a box to collect them; also note that prize desk should be responsible for tabulating the results)