

Grassroots sports clubs around the world rely heavily on smooth registration and payment processes to [thetechleaders](#) keep operations running. For many, Eventbrite has become the go-to platform for event ticketing and participant registrations. However, as club seasons grow and memberships swell, the cost and complexity of using services like Eventbrite can become burdensome. This raises an important question: **Can a club run registrations and payments without Eventbrite?**

In this post, I'll break down the hidden subscription bloat lurking in typical club tool stacks, compare pay-per-send messaging versus monthly tiers, explore free form and registration options, and provide practical advice for clubs of ~500 players, parents, and supporters. Along the way, you'll discover solid ticketing alternatives with Stripe integration that won't bleed your club dry on fees.

Understanding Subscription Bloat in Grassroots Clubs

Over my nine years consulting grassroots clubs—covering football, netball, and cricket—I've seen a recurring issue: clubs unwittingly accumulate an expensive pile of subscriptions. One tool to manage registrations, another to send bulk messaging, a third for payments, plus volunteer scheduling apps, email lists, and more. It's easy for these to add up.

What often happens is:

- Multiple tools overlap features but require separate subscriptions.
- Several services tier pricing by monthly user counts, message volumes, or seats—even if actual usage is small.
- Per-ticket or per-transaction fees are hidden or unclear on pricing pages, springing surprises during reconciliation.
- Redundant accounts or multiple logins multiply admin work, especially across changing committees.

For example, it's common to see clubs subscribing to:

- Event management platforms (Eventbrite, TryBooking)
- Email marketing services (Mailchimp, Constant Contact)
- SMS or bulk messaging tools (Twilio, ClickSend)
- Payment gateways (Stripe, PayPal) integrated into websites or forms

What does this cost in practice?

Imagine a typical club with ~500 players, plus parents and supporters. That's roughly 1300 contacts to manage, communicate with, and collect payments from across registration, fundraising, and events.

Tool Type	Example	Typical Monthly Cost	Annual Cost (per season)	Notes
Event Management / Ticketing	Eventbrite	Free to \$79+	\$0 - \$948+	Plus 2-3% + \$0.99/ticket fees on paid events
Email Marketing	Mailchimp	\$30 - \$80+	\$360 - \$960+	Often charged by contact count; 1300 contacts pushes higher tiers
SMS / Bulk Messaging	Twilio / ClickSend	\$10+ plus \$0.03 - \$0.10 per text	Varies widely by use	Monthly minimum fees plus per-message costs add up
Payment Processing	Stripe / PayPal	N/A (transaction fees)	2.9% + ~\$0.30 per transaction	Per-transaction, unavoidable but transparent

This can easily add up to several thousand dollars per season just in software and transaction fees, frequently hidden or compounding.

Pay-Per-Send Messaging Vs Monthly Tiers

A big culprit of unseen costs lies in bulk messaging subscriptions. Clubs often need to get announcements out via SMS or email but can easily outgrow “free tier” limits. This traps clubs into monthly subscriptions for large contact lists, even if they only send occasional messages.

There are two main messaging cost models:

1. **Monthly Tier-Based Pricing:** Pay a fixed monthly amount for a set number of messages or contacts. Examples include Mailchimp’s contact tiers or ClickSend’s monthly bundles. The downside—clubs pay regardless of use volume. Many months see minimal activity, yet subscriptions remain.
2. **Pay-Per-Send Pricing:** Only pay for messages sent. Services like Twilio or some transactional email providers charge small amounts per SMS or email. This can be much more cost-effective for clubs who send blast messages infrequently but maintain large contact lists.

For example, sending *200 SMS alerts* per season might cost \$6 if paying per send (\$0.03/SMS), compared to a \$30 monthly subscription for 1000 messages, several hundred dollars annually.



For email newsletters, transactional email services (like SendGrid, Amazon SES, or Postmark) offer pay-per-use plans compared to contact-tiered bulk services, greatly helping clubs with fluctuating volumes.

Tip:

Choose messaging platforms that separate **contact storage** from **message send costs**. This avoids paying hefty monthly fees just for holding your list.

Leveraging Free Forms and Registrations

You might ask—why pay for event management or ticketing platforms at all? Many grassroots clubs can benefit enormously from free online forms that support registrations and payment collection.

There are a number of free or low-cost options that integrate with Stripe or PayPal, allowing clubs to:

- Collect player registrations with custom fields (name, grade, shirt size, etc.)
- Accept payments during sign-up (fees, uniform purchases, memberships)

- Send simple confirmation emails
- Export registration data easily for admin work

Popular free tools include:

- Google Forms (free form builder, integrate payments via URL redirects or add-ons)
- JotForm (free tier, Stripe integration, payment fields)
- Cognito Forms (free tier for basic uses, Stripe compatible)

These tools impose no subscription fee, making them ideal for clubs on tight budgets.

Example: Running a Stripe-Integrated Registration for ~500 Registrants

Let's assume a season with 500 player registrations and 800 parents/supporters who may want separate event tickets or fundraising donations.

Component Service Cost Notes Registration Form + Payment Cognito Forms / Jotform with Stripe Free tier or <\$20/month Custom form fields, instant payment collection Payment Processing Stripe 2.9% + \$0.30 per transaction Approx. \$15,000 total payments => \$480 fees Email Messaging SendGrid / Amazon SES (pay-per-send) As low as \$10 per 10,000 emails Occasional season announcements SMS Notifications Twilio (pay-per-send) \$0.03 per SMS 400 messages = \$12

By centralizing registrations via free or low-cost form tools integrated with Stripe, clubs can remove the recurring Eventbrite fees and gain full control over payment flows. Messaging can be managed on pay-per-send plans that align with actual usage rather than flat monthly fees.



Key Advantages of Moving Away from Eventbrite

- **Cost Savings:** Avoid cumulative platform fees and monthly subscription bloat.
- **Data Ownership:** Full control and exportability of player and supporter data.
- **Integrated Payments:** Streamlined payments with Stripe, a widely trusted gateway.
- **Flexibility:** Tailored forms that reflect your season registration nuances, merchandise sales, fundraising, and more.

- **Reduced Admin Overhead:** Easier handover between committees with simpler tools and less login proliferation.

Overcoming Common Concerns

Does it require IT experts?

Not really. Most free form builders are drag-and-drop with online tutorials. Setting up Stripe payments is straightforward and well documented.

What about ticket scanning and check-in?

If you do need on-site ticketing, some clubs pair Stripe payments with low-cost QR code apps or simple spreadsheet check-ins. This can replace expensive “event ticket” features.

Are transactions secure?

Stripe is PCI compliant and widely trusted by businesses worldwide. Combining it with reputable form tools keeps your payments safe.

Summary: Can a Club Run Registrations and Payments Without Eventbrite?

Absolutely. The combination of free or low-cost form tools and direct payment integrations such as Stripe offers a robust, cost-effective alternative to Eventbrite for grassroots clubs managing around 500 registered players and supporters.

Reducing subscription bloat, choosing pay-per-send messaging, and prioritizing simple, clear payment processing will save your club both money and admin headaches. Always run your fee math on a seasonal basis to see the real cost impact, and remember—there’s no one-size-fits-all tool, but plenty of ways to combine tools smartly.

Final Tip:

Keep a running list of 'things that break on game day' and design your club's registration and payment systems to be as po-faced reliable and committee-proof as possible. Sometimes simplicity beats bells and whistles.