

A few days ago, as I was at “church in the woods” it struck me that Jay and I have not talked to the community of race directors enough. It is true that we have talked with most of you over the past few years either on zooms (especially in the early days) or in person at events around the country. However, there is so much that is happening in the sport and within the platform that we would all be well served if we shared thoughts and plans with the community more regularly. So, consider this the first installment of notes from David and Jay. For this first one, we will start with where we’ve been and a look forward to what we’re excited about for 2024.

In September 2020, a new chapter began for UltraSignup, a platform deeply rooted in the trail running community. Originally crafted by Mark Gilligan as a passion project quickly grew into a cornerstone platform for race registrations in the trail and ultra scene. However, as the platform's popularity surged, it became evident that its infrastructure was not equipped to handle the growing demands of the trail running community and simultaneously Mark was ready to move on to other pastures.

Over the past 3.5 years, our team has dedicated thousands of hours to modernizing UltraSignup's backend, ensuring it can support the sport's current scale and future growth. This intensive focus on technical enhancements means that “visible” updates to the platform have been slower than anticipated. Nevertheless, we have recognized the importance of maintaining and boosting community engagement during this period to support runners and keep them an active part of the trail running community.

Supporting the Community

To this end, we initiated several non-technical projects aimed at fostering community interaction. These included launching the UltraSignup News, the Trailhead and Between Two Pines podcasts, the Dirt Circus, and our new Ambassador program. These initiatives are strategic ways for us to support runners, and you our race directors, and keep engagement with the platform high without being hindered by our ongoing technical overhaul. The rationale behind these efforts is clear: engagement drives event registrations. Our goal was to actively contribute to our race directors' success by not only attracting runners to the platform but also deepening their connection with the trail running community.

The Road Ahead

Looking ahead, we have ambitious plans for UltraSignup. The platform's technical overhaul is making significant progress, setting the stage for necessary, desirable, and innovative advancements. Our vision is to continue evolving UltraSignup in a way that adds more value to both race directors and runners, specifically within the trail running niche, as opposed to other platforms who aim to service all kinds of events and tickets. We are committed to vertical growth, focusing on our core community rather than expanding into unrelated areas.

In it for the Long Haul

Since acquiring UltraSignup, our team has expanded to 14 dedicated employees, all working towards supporting and growing our community. This period has not been without its challenges, particularly as we navigated through the macro-economic turbulence of 2023. The United States faced a recession, marked by the Federal Reserve raising interest rates and widespread layoffs across various sectors. Despite these external pressures, our commitment to UltraSignup and the trail running community remained unwavering.

Our journey through these challenging times has not only tested our resilience but also reinforced our dedication to our vision. As we move forward, we are excited about the possibilities that lie ahead for UltraSignup and the trail running community we serve. Our story is one of growth, adaptation, and unwavering commitment to enhancing the trail running experience for everyone involved.

With this bigger team there are many new opportunities for you to connect with a passionate UltraSignup team member. If we can be of help to you, please feel free to reach out. And, we hope to see you out on the trails both at races and community events through the coming year.

Sincerely,
David Callahan & Jay Kelley, co-CEOs