

TOP 10

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL AUCTION

A GUIDE TO HELP RAISE MORE MONEY
AT FUNDRAISING AUCTIONS



PRESENTED BY MURAD AUCTIONS



A nonprofit's live auction usually brings in between 60 and 70% of the profit for a fundraising event, making it very important for your organization to capitalize on this portion of the evening to earn maximum dollars. This e-book contains some helpful tips from Murad Auctions about audience development and how to select the right auctioneer-- two ways to ensure a successful event!

1

Share a description of the live auction items with your guests prior to your event.



Give all your attendees a description of the live auction items prior to your event so they can take the time to decide which items they are interested in. This can be accomplished by emailing your guests the live auction catalogue complete with color photographs and compelling descriptions. Ask if your guests would be so kind as to forward the live catalog to their friends in support of your event. If you attach the proxy form to the email, these friends could become bidders as well. In addition, if you are holding an online auction prior to the event, you can showcase the live auction items in preview mode and allow guests who are not attending to enter a proxy bid through an online form. If you are not holding an online auction, set up an auction web page, and showcase the items here. At a recent school event, we sold a package to a parent who was out of town for over \$5000.

2

Make sure the auction chairperson and the auctioneer know who potential high bidders are and where they are seated.



The auction chairperson and the auctioneer should know who potential high bidders are and where they are seated in the room (preferably near the front, close to the stage). Call your past high bidders and tell them about what you have to offer this year. Ask them what they would be interested in and what they would be willing to bid on the item. This gives the auctioneer a good starting point to begin the auction.

3

Make sure key representatives of your organization are near the check in area to greet and welcome guests.



Make sure the Development Director, Executive Director, and other key representatives of your organization are near the check in area to greet guests and make them feel welcome.

Hiring a company to [manage your registration area](#) will free you up to do this important task. Your job is to represent your organization and get to know your guests. Greeting them, telling them about the exciting items you have in the auction and genuinely getting to know your guests will go a long way in the performance of the live auction.

Having your auctioneer greeting guests is a great idea as well. If you have hired a professional benefit auctioneer, he or she attends many fundraising events each year and knows many of your donors. They will rely on the auctioneer to get the “scoop” on the hot items in the auction. Recently at a children’s charity event, a donor approached our auctioneer and asked, “What are we selling tonight?” He replied that the focus for the night was the fund a cause for scholarships. She replied, “Great! Look to me when you ask for donations at the \$10, 000 level!” This was wonderful since the organization had planned to start at \$5,000. Louis began at the \$10,000 level and this donor raised her bid paddle, and the three big donors in the room felt compelled to do the same!

4

After everyone is seated, start with a brief emotional appeal or story related to the agency's mission.



This should preferably be a video no longer than three minutes in duration. A video is much more controlled and can be scripted and timed to your specific needs. A live presentation is very unpredictable and can create timing issues at the event. In addition, the video can be placed on YouTube as a PR piece to direct more donors to your website, so it is defiantly worth the investment to have a professional videographer create the mission video for you. [Contact us](#) if you would like a referral to someone to help you with this or to see sample videos.

5

Hold the live auction during dinner.



The best time for the live auction is during dinner when everyone is relaxed. Consider the auction as the dinner entertainment. Your guests have had a chance to visit during the cocktail hour and have had a couple of drinks. If you wait, your guests may have had a few too many drinks or will be full and getting sleepy. Catch them when they are alert and ready to bid! Wait to serve dessert and coffee until after the live auction is over!

6

Use professional bid spotters to work the crowd and help the auctioneer bring in the bids.



Although you will pay a fee for this service, these professionals can help make more money for your organization and are well worth the cost. Volunteer bid spotters can be used as well, but the professionals are a necessity!

7

Sell items that you can “double up”.



This technique creates great excitement and doubles or triples your income on one donation. We recently sold a dinner with the principal of a local private high school for \$8,000. We had four bidders vying for the dinner. We got pre-approval to sell the dinner as many times as we could, so instead of making \$8,000, or even \$16,000, the dinner sold four times and brought in \$32,000! The auction chair was dancing in the aisle! (Contact form) [Contact us](#) to find out how to get multiple packages donated to sell at your next event. You may also want to check out our [auction items](#) to get ideas of unique travel and experience packages for your live auction. These great trips and experiences can be used to supplement your live auction, raffle or can be used to easily double packages at your next event.

8

Get multiple packages donated



An example of how to get multiple packages donated is to approach people who are donating their home in Colorado for example. Ask them if they are willing to donate a second week at their house if you get two bidders. If they are not, ask them how much it would cost to rent the house for a second week. This cost, plus 10-20% would be the minimum amount you are willing to sell the package for to a second bidder. You may also want to [check out our auction packages](#) to get ideas of great packages for your live auction. These great trips and experiences can be used to supplement your live auction or raffle or can be used to easily double packages at your next event.

9

Have the wait staff postpone serving dessert and coffee until the live auction is over.



The end of the evening is always signaled by the serving of dessert, so have the wait staff postpone serving dessert and coffee until the live auction is over. It is best to have a captive audience during the live auction, so save the entertainment for after the live auction as well. If a great band or comedian is performing at your event, they go on stage after the live auction.

10

Hire a professional licensed auctioneer who is a Benefit Auction Specialist



It is important that you hire a professional licensed auctioneer who is a member of the National Auctioneers Association. He or she should also carry Errors and Omissions insurance and be able to present you with an insurance certificate as proof of this. It is even better if your auctioneer holds the Benefit Auction Specialist designation. This indicates that special courses in benefit fundraising have been taken. Your auctioneer should be available to meet with your committee to help give advice of timeline, types of auction items that sell well, ordering the live auction items etc. Remember that the auctioneer works for you and should be of great assistance in making your event a success.

To learn more about our services and get tips on holding successful fundraising events, see pictures of events and ideas from other fundraising events:

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