

The Most Successful Auctions Do These Things...

- **A great Audio System is not a luxury.** It's worth every penny you spend on it! A surround-sound approach is best. A speaker in each corner of the room will avoid blasting out the people near the stage, plus your guests in the back will be able to hear just as well. **Hotel and banquet hall "house" sound systems are inadequate 99% of the time.** They are NEVER as good as a professional stand alone system. We need sound wherever we have bidders in the building. If your bidders can't hear... they won't bid.
- A "cool" or trendy venue may not always be ideal for fundraising. Try to envision the room with tables, a stage, screens, staff and 400 people in it before committing to **a room that looks awesome but may not be conducive to an effective auction.**
- **Close your silent auction before starting the Live Auction.** This remains a contentious issue at way too many auctions. It's simple - if your auction is run well; the money in a silent auction is made the last 5-10 minutes of bidding, regardless of when that takes place. The advent of Electronic bidding has given us a bit more time, so closing during dinner will work as well. But please don't wait until 10:30pm to close things down, it just makes the end of the evening messy.
- Stop allowing donors and Board Members to tinker with your auction. **Donors always want their donation in the Live Auction.** Politics or friendships should never dictate how you run your auction. Avoid promising a donor where their item will appear. Don't be afraid to walk away from a donation with strings attached.
- **Leave no money on the table.** Ask every guest for an extra \$25 before they leave. The majority of your crowd will not win anything in the Silent/Live Auctions. Give them the chance to donate that extra cash in their pocket. A raffle or good Paddle Raise will address this issue pretty well. The *"Do You Want Fries with that?"* 'round up your invoice' ask at checkout works well too. Selling centerpieces is an old standby.
- Avoid placing your highest value items at the end of the Live Auction. When arranging the order of your items, use a 'bell curve' approach. **Place your most exciting items about mid way through the auction.** This way, our unsuccessful bidders still have something else to bid on later in the auction.
- Keep everyone involved in your Live Auction by not focusing on ONLY "big ticket items". **A good (read: healthy) auction item is anything we can get two people to fight over.** Not just things valued over \$5000. This will help your live auction avoid a reputation of being "only for the rich people in the room".
- Keep things moving and **stay on schedule.** Start by having realistic Run of Show timings.
- Auction yields start to start to decline around 10:00 pm on a Friday/Saturday. (9pm on weeknights) **Use realistic times when calculating serving times, speeches, any program elements & auction timing.** Will *Mr. Blg Shot CEO* really keep his speech to 2 minutes? **Respect your guest's time.**
- **There is no perfect number of items for a Live Auction.** Go with your very best auction items for the Live. Stick with the solid performers. If you have 6 GREAT items and 3 more that are "so-so". Go with the Solid 6 in the Live! **A good item, is a good item, is a good item!** Those 'bubble' items will usually do just a well in your Silent Auction.
- **Reinvest in your auction.** Streamline. Computerize. Organize. Adjust. Listen to your volunteers. Track the data. Get honest feedback from guests. Evaluate your successes and failures each year.