



## **Best Practices Guide**

Greater Giving is dedicated to providing technology solutions to the nonprofit community in order to improve their fundraising efforts. We have processed more than \$1B in credit card payments in support of nonprofit causes for over 6,000 organizations and schools across the United States.

This Best Practices Guide is designed to help you achieve your event goals and maximize your fundraising success. Based on our experience at thousands of events, it provides event planning, management, and execution guidelines to help you and your team approach your next benefit with confidence. Using this Guide, you'll be more efficient and effective, and provide your guests with a great event.

For more detail on the subjects covered in this Guide, please refer to the Resources section of our Website.

**[www.greatergiving.com](http://www.greatergiving.com)**

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# Planning Your Auction

A benefit auction or gala is a social event that's planned and given by a nonprofit or school with the goal of raising money for a specific cause. Guests attend and support the cause by bidding on items at auction, retail purchases, raffle ticket purchases, or pledging to contribute funds to a specific effort—the drivers to contribute are limited only by the imagination of the organization raising money for a cause.

The main goal of any benefit auction is to raise money for a cause. Therefore, align your plan and event details in order to raise as much money as possible, and be unapologetic about expecting guests to pay full market value for items offered at auction or pledging dollars toward a specific cause.

## Planning Calendar

A benefit auction is often the biggest revenue-producing event of the year for many nonprofit organizations. Like any large event, it takes time, organization, and planning to deliver a memorable auction. Begin to plan your event at least a year in advance and follow a proactive timeline to guarantee a smooth process from start to finish.

The tasks for producing a successful auction are fairly standard. The tasks and timeline noted below are general benefit event planning guidelines. Your event may require that some areas be expanded or condensed. You can find a more detailed iteration of this timeline in a workbook format by downloading the Auction Planner at [www.greatergiving.com/planner](http://www.greatergiving.com/planner).

### AS SOON AS YOU DECIDE TO HAVE A BENEFIT AUCTION

- ▶ **Select a chairperson or leader who is organized and is able to commit to the entire event process.**
- ▶ **Talk with the previous event's leader(s) or chairperson(s) for feedback on what worked well and what did not at that event.**
- ▶ **Review the previous year's event history and resources.**
- ▶ **Start an auction planning binder\* for the current year.**
- ▶ **Form a steering committee and sub-committees.**
- ▶ **Contact Greater Giving to learn how Greater Giving Event Software Online and PC, Greater Giving Online Payments and Auctionpay can help your event run smoothly.**
- ▶ **Evaluate holding an online auction in conjunction with the event.**

#### \* Planning Binder

The planning binder is crucial to the event planning process. It contains all pertinent event information, such as budgets, vendor information, contracts, invoices, floor plans, collateral material, etc. Use this binder during the current year planning cycle and as a history and reference point for the next event.

## 9-12 MONTHS BEFORE THE AUCTION

- ▶ Select a date, venue, auctioneer and theme; consider space needs, availability, parking, community calendars and in-demand dates such as religious, school, or secular holidays, major sporting events, etc.
- ▶ Set financial and attendance goals.
- ▶ Establish firm procurement\* goals and deadlines.
- ▶ Create a budget.
- ▶ Schedule a procurement meeting with committee members to brainstorm and generate ideas about hot items to target.
- ▶ Encourage procurement volunteers to explore their personal networks for possible donations and sponsors.
- ▶ Review Greater Giving's Auction Booster offerings for travel packages and ideas.
- ▶ Identify sponsorship opportunities and benefits.
- ▶ Consider hiring a professional designer to create the event promotional materials, especially the invitation.
- ▶ Consider hiring a professional benefit auctioneer to drive more bidding at your event.

### \*Procurement

Procurement is the process by which auction staff and volunteers seek and obtain donated items to sell at a benefit auction. Auction staff and volunteers with donor forms for soliciting donations and suggest they carry them at all times.

## 5–8 MONTHS BEFORE THE AUCTION

- ▶ **Send procurement letters and emails. Be sure to communicate procurement deadlines, so you avoid having to insert item addendums in your printed catalog.**
- ▶ **Develop an invitation list, including email addresses.**
- ▶ **Create and send save-the-date cards and email to promote the event to donors, patrons and past event guests.**
- ▶ **Create Web pages promoting the auction. If using a Greater Giving solution, set up registration and donation pages to accept donations, sell tickets, and securely accept credit cards online.**
- ▶ **Add an item donation link to the event Website.**
- ▶ **Begin tracking procurement, sponsorship and guest information manually or in Event Software Online.**
- ▶ **Formulate a timeline\* for the day before and day of your event.**
- ▶ **Identify potential speakers and individuals to recognize during the program—this may include an emcee.**
- ▶ **Evaluate the sound system and lighting at the venue. If it is not adequate, hire a professional company.**

### \*Timeline

An event timeline is a detailed schedule of all aspects of the day of the event—including the volunteer schedule, registration, silent auction, live auction, event program and other activities. Create a detailed event timeline to maximize every minute of your event. Find timeline suggestions online at [www.greatergiving.com/tips](http://www.greatergiving.com/tips).

## 2-4 MONTHS BEFORE THE AUCTION

- ▶ Define event banking procedures.
- ▶ Reserve Auctionpay terminals for on-site credit card processing. If you also have Event Software PC, you can use Auctionpay Card Reader instead of the terminals.
- ▶ Identify the special appeal,\*cause or project (e.g. fund-a-cause or paddle raise).
- ▶ Escalate procurement efforts and outreach.
- ▶ Reserve Auction Booster items.
- ▶ Finalize invitation list and mail invitations.
- ▶ Recruit volunteers for the night of event.
- ▶ Outline registration and check-out procedures.
- ▶ Enter registration data into Event Software.
- ▶ Perform a site walk-through with the venue's catering manager; consider the floor plan, food, timing, flow and special needs.
- ▶ Create an online auction Website and begin a series of email campaigns to engage constituents.

### \*Special Appeal

A special appeal or fund-a-cause is a call to raise funds for a specific purpose, usually during a live auction. As an example, an auctioneer at a school's auction might ask for donations for a new computer lab. See more ideas at [www.greatergiving.com/resource-library/fundraising-tips.aspx](http://www.greatergiving.com/resource-library/fundraising-tips.aspx).

## 3-8 WEEKS BEFORE THE AUCTION

- ▶ **Finish procurement and record all items. Event Software allows you to track and manage procurement and print catalogs and bid sheets.**
- ▶ **Package items together to create one-of-a-kind offerings that will encourage higher bids.**
- ▶ **Assign items to live and silent auction sections.**
- ▶ **Sequence the live auction items.\***
- ▶ **Finalize and print the auction catalog.**
- ▶ **Begin collecting auction items and certificates.**
- ▶ **Produce display boards for silent auction items.**
- ▶ **If using computers and printers at the event, coordinate computer equipment and on-site technical support.**
- ▶ **Launch online auction site.**
- ▶ **Create a floor plan with the venue or caterer; identify traffic flow and possible pinch points.**

### \*Live Auction Sequence

The live auction sequence is the order in which items are sold during the live auction, and can be as important as the items themselves. Savvy event planners and auctioneers know that a successful auction depends on timing and bidding momentum. For instance, a Fighter Pilot package sold after dessert as guests begin to leave will generate lower bids than if offered during dinner. Consult with your auctioneer, refer to past events, and ask repeat guests about their preferences to help inform your decision regarding live item order.



## 2 WEEKS BEFORE THE AUCTION

- ▶ Mail or email catalog or teaser information about selected auction items.
- ▶ Assemble event materials and supplies to deliver to the venue.
- ▶ Create live auction presentation or slide show.
- ▶ Finalize event program and prepare speakers.
- ▶ Create day-of-event volunteer responsibilities and schedule. Confirm volunteer attendance.
- ▶ Organize all auction items and displays for delivery to venue.

## 1 WEEK BEFORE THE AUCTION

- ▶ If using Event Software PC, finalize arrangements for computer and printer set up.
- ▶ Test computers that will be used at event and make sure the network is intact.
- ▶ Give the auctioneer a detailed catalog to prepare for the live auction.
- ▶ Provide caterer or hotel with final guest count for meals.
- ▶ Auctionpay equipment is delivered.
- ▶ Train volunteers; communicate expectations, timelines and schedules (this can also be done on-site at the event).
- ▶ Create an addendum for the catalog for last-minute items.
- ▶ Print bid sheets from Event Software. Take to printer for duplicate/ triplicate copies.
- ▶ Assign guests to tables.
- ▶ Assign bid numbers.
- ▶ Finalize bidder packets, which usually include a catalog, bidder number and table number.

## DAY BEFORE AND DAY OF THE AUCTION

- ▶ Print catalog addendum if necessary.
- ▶ Enter last-minute registrations.
- ▶ Print registration lists and all reports pertinent to the event.
- ▶ Print final day-of-event schedule and distribute to event staff and volunteers.
- ▶ Deliver all items and event materials to venue. If items and material will be stored at the venue overnight, make sure they are secured.
- ▶ Complete on-site auction set up.
- ▶ Train volunteers.

## AFTER YOUR EVENT

- ▶ Bank reconciliation.\*
- ▶ Data backup and archive.
- ▶ Thank-you letters to sponsors, donors and guests.
- ▶ Reconcile budget, expenses and revenue to determine event results.
- ▶ Update auction contact list.
- ▶ Acknowledgements for volunteers (thank-you cards or a gathering).
- ▶ Hold a post-event party and debriefing with volunteers and staff.
- ▶ Update event binder and pass it to next year's leaders or chairpersons.
- ▶ Set date for the next event.
- ▶ Return Auctionpay equipment within 4 business days.
- ▶ Evaluate success of online auction; determine next steps. Consider selling items that did not sell at your event in an online auction.
- ▶ Order Auction Booster packages won by bidders within 7 days of your event.

### \*Bank Reconciliation

After the event, verify that all cash, check and credit card payments correspond with the winning bids for the live and silent auctions and other donations made at the event. Double check the final purchase amounts prior to sending funds to the bank. This is also referred to as an audit.

## Leadership, Committees and Volunteers

Benefit event leadership can make or break the event. Look at skills, commitment, and the reach of their network, when considering who to select as a leader. Some organizations may have a professional staff to plan the auction, whereas other organizations may rely solely on volunteer committees.

While tasks are generally similar from one auction to another, the person(s) and respective titles responsible for each set of tasks will vary depending on the organization. Most benefit auctions have an auction chair—the primary event strategist and driver. The first task for the auction chair is to divide up event responsibilities and select committee chairs to oversee each area.

The auction chair is responsible for the following:

- Reviewing information from predecessors.
- Selecting the date and venue.
- Determining auction budget and goals.
- Developing the overall execution plan and schedule.
- Driving activity that ensures the event stays within budget and fundraising goals are met.
- Evaluating progress toward goals.
- Evaluating and reporting on the auction results.
- Gathering and passing information to successors.

How the leadership or auction chair assigns activities will vary based on the event and the organization. Many organizations use these main categories: guest list, procurement, event logistics, event promotion, sponsorship and underwriting, and volunteers.

## Goals and Budget

### Goal Setting

Goal setting is a crucial component of a fundraising event, and should include financial, attendance and procurement goals. Before setting goals, it's critical for your auction and committee chairs to be clear about the purpose of the event and how it supports the mission of the organization. Ask them this question: "Is the purpose of the event exclusively fundraising and revenue generation, "friend-raising" and community building, cause awareness, or a combination of goals?" Once the event purpose is determined, choices made regarding event elements will be driven by the overall goals and purpose of the event—making decisions much easier.

### Budgeting

When determining the overall event budget, identify all potential sources for both income and expenditure. See the table on the following page for a list of potential budget items. Avoid feeling guilty about spending money on the event—you must spend money to make money! Many planning committees make the mistake of cutting expenses in areas that directly impact the revenue-generating potential of the event, such as, selecting an inadequate or sub-par venue or not choosing to hire a professional auctioneer.

When planning the budget, keep in mind that all expenses should be covered by sponsorship, underwriting and the revenue from ticket sales, so that all the revenue made at the event can go directly to the cause. Guests give more generously when they know that the dollars they spend at an event are going to the organization.

POTENTIAL EXPENSES	POTENTIAL REVENUE
▶ Advertising to promote event	▶ Selling advertising space in auction catalog or on event Website
▶ Credit card processing fees	▶ Cash gifts
▶ Decorations	▶ Fund-a-cause
▶ Equipment rental	▶ Sponsorships, including media partners
▶ Food and beverage	▶ Raffles
▶ Graphic designer	▶ Silent and live auction
▶ Insurance	▶ Special income activities
▶ Liquor license	▶ Sponsors
▶ Direct mail costs (postage, printing)	▶ Ticket sales
▶ Online services	▶ Underwriters
▶ Printing	▶ In-kind donations
▶ Professional services, including event planning, auctioneer, sound and lighting	
▶ Security	
▶ Software and hardware to manage event planning, check-in, and check-out	
▶ Venue	

### Fundraising Best Practice

Every event should pay for itself with ticket sales, sponsorship and other underwriting, so all revenue generated at the auction goes directly to the stated cause.

## Ticket Price

Use the ticket price to cover most of your event expenses and set the tone of the event. After you've determined all potential event costs, divide the expense total by your attendee goal to get your ticket price. Avoid reducing or subsidizing ticket prices. If potential guests communicate that

the ticket price is too high, they're probably not part of your target audience, because they are much less likely to spend money at your event. Interestingly, the guests you want to attend your auction will expect a higher-priced ticket. That price indicates to them that you do intend to raise money for your cause at the event.

### Setting the Ticket Price

To set the ticket price, divide the anticipated number of guests by the expenses for the event. Use incentives to help sell tickets. Guests may be willing to pay extra for VIP treatments, such as a celebrity waiter, a table up front, or advance bidding on auction items. Over the past few years the trend has been for people to RSVP at the last minute for an event of any kind. Encourage guests to RSVP early by offering low-cost incentives like a preview of the auction items or the catalog. Additionally, a reduced registration rate can be offered for those who register before a specific date. Some event planners schedule a VIP cocktail party for the first hour to encourage guests to arrive early, or pay a premium price for a ticket.

# Investing in Your Event

As mentioned in the discussion on budget planning, it is important to invest in your event to increase revenue. This section contains a variety of suggestions on where money is well spent.

## Venue Selection

It is tempting to select a free or reduced price venue. However, the venue is one area where the cost can easily be recouped by the ambiance. There are also a variety of considerations to think about when looking at venue including: the atmosphere, amount of space, location, parking and the furnishings that are included with the rental. Note that the costs of tables, chairs and linens are not always included at some venues. Think about the amount of space necessary for registration, silent auction sections, check-out, cashiering, and item pickup. Ask if there enough space for the size of event. Remember, adequate spacing is essential.

The flow of the event is very important, particularly for the silent auction. The “2 x 4 rule” is recommended by experts in the industry. This is where two guests can bid on any silent auction item at once, while two more guests can walk through the aisle between bidders bending over tables. If guests don’t have enough space to walk through the silent auction area easily, many will avoid it entirely. Fewer guests in the silent auction area mean less competition for the items, and less revenue for the event.

## Sound and Lighting

Sound and lighting are an essential component to any successful event. When considering a venue, be sure to visit the site at the time of your event to look at the lighting. It is very important that the silent auction area is well lit. If it’s not, there are a variety of low cost options for table lighting including battery operated lights that sit flush on tables.

For the live auction, remember that it is an auditory event. Guests who cannot hear the auction or related announcements will have a more difficult time participating. The house sound system in avenue is seldom adequate for the needs of a large social event like a live auction. If the

venue is not able to guarantee the sound will be adequate, ask for a referral to a professional sound company.

### Tip

Professional sound equipment is essential. Hotels and conference centers rarely have in-house sound that is adequate for a benefit auction. If your guests can’t hear the auctioneer they will not be able to bid appropriately.

If a band has been hired to play, do not use their sound system. Musical sound systems are for playing music not for a spoken presentation or auction. Generally with this type of sound system the sound in the front of the room is too loud while guests in the back will not be able to hear clearly.

Other things to consider about sound: request a wireless microphone for the auctioneer to allow him/her to walk freely among the guests, and ensure that venue or sound company has a technician on-site during the event to make any adjustments that may be needed.

## Catering

Catering costs are often negotiable based upon the size of the event. Contrary to popular belief, plated, or “served” meals tend to be less expensive and more efficient than buffets. Once your guests are seated, they are a captive audience. As long as they are well-fed, entertained, and happy they will continue to bid in the live auction.

## Professional Auctioneers

Greater Giving recommends that you consider interviewing and hiring a professional benefit auctioneer, because their main goal is to help raise more money for your cause.

It is the job of professional benefit auctioneer to maximize the amount of money being raised

by the audience without being intrusive or overbearing. A good benefit auctioneer will know how to pace the event, keep the energy up, and the bids flowing. They should know exactly how to work the crowd to bring in high bids and exceed the value of the live items. They may also provide a variety of consulting services including item sequencing and setting up your silent auction.

If you are using an auction company, secure in writing which auctioneer will be assigned to your auction and interview that person. Check for references, and see the auctioneer in action before committing. Every professional benefit auctioneer is different, and you will want to find one that matches the needs of your organization.

Sometimes professional auctioneers will donate in-kind services to fundraising auctions. Ask for a written contract regardless of the verbal commitment. Use the contract to outline event times, and to establish conduct and attire.

### **Auctioneer vs. Master of Ceremonies**

When a local celebrity, prominent board member, or parent wants to be the auctioneer at your auction, it can become a dilemma. Encourage them to be the Master of Ceremonies instead. This allows them to maintain an important role

at the event without risking losing money for the organization. The Master of Ceremonies' job is to keep the program on schedule and add personality. He or she is the glue for the auction, keeping the flow from one event segment to the next. This is an important, high-profile job and should be assigned carefully.

### **Event Support Systems**

Another thing to consider when investing in your event is the technology behind the scenes to help your event run smoothly, increase revenue and reduce time and resources needed to run an auction. Technology might include Event Software, Auctionpay equipment, Online Payments, laptops, projectors and printers.

Greater Giving provides a variety of technology event solutions that can be used independently or integrated for a seamless event experience for guests and staff. Track guests, donors, and items with Event Software; allow guests to register, pay for tickets and donate online with Online Payments; and streamline guests' check-out at the event using Auctionpay. Ask a Greater Giving Area Marketing Manager which solutions will work best for your organization.

# Audience Development

The primary goal for your event audience should be how much they will spend at the event, and not be the number of people in attendance. It is important to have the right audience present, because only 5 to 25% of guests typically spend large amounts at benefit auctions. Draw from your organization's network of contacts by looking to the board, committee, business colleagues, major donors, and prospective major donors. Remember that you want a room full of bidders—not just attendees enjoying a night out.

It is also useful to look at the history of the event. Use Event Software reports to look at previous years' auctions to identify trends. Who were the top 25 spenders and what is their association to the organization? Are they likely to attend again? What was the average amount spent per person

overall? Did corporate tables spend more or less than other tables? Consider inviting the friends' of the high bidders. A common misconception is that if a big name corporation buys a table, then they will bring in the top bidders. A more likely scenario is that they will pass those tickets to employees as a perk, and therefore those guests may not be able to afford spending a lot at the auction.

Once the guest list has been determined, be sure to incorporate ways for guests to donate even if they cannot attend. This can be done with a donation page available through Online Payments, or setting up Greater Giving Online Auctions prior to the event. Don't forget to include a return address envelope with your invitations for donations or include your Web site address for online donations.



# Marketing the Event

There are multiple ways to market an event including: your Website, online registration, email promotions, mailing materials, save-the-date cards, invitations and the auction catalog. The most popular medium are save-the-date cards, invitations, and email/Web pages.

## Save the Date Card

Event promotion pieces should be timed carefully to provide maximum exposure for the event.

Send the save-the-date card four to six months in advance of the auction. The purpose of save-the-date cards is to get potential guests to mark their calendars and consider attending. Include the date, venue, and name of the auction and a Website address. The piece should be inexpensive, such as a postcard, and related to the event theme, emphasizing that it is a fundraiser. Make sure that everyone on your committee has a handful of save-the-date cards so they can distribute to potential new guests.

Follow up with the invitation approximately two months prior to the event. Email can be sent at any interval; however, it is important to avoid overloading the target audience. Always include a link to the event registration page or online auction in each email to allow guests to easily register online, or donate to the event or cause.

## Invitation

The invitation should contain more detailed information about the benefit auction. Expand upon the save-the-date card and include the

day of the week, more information about the organization, contact information, event's start time, ticket's fair market value, and Web site address. Exclude information about the event's timeline (such as silent auction closings), because guests may be tempted to skip portions of the silent auction. The RSVP card should have the expected information—name of guest(s), address, phone, email address, payment method—plus a direct donation check box and a blank space for corporate matching gifts.

## Email and Website

Email and Web page content should be similar to the invitation. If your organization has the capacity and know-how, put some sample auction items on the site. Like the invitation, exclude all of the event's timing information with the exception of the start time.

There are many other ways to make potential guests aware of the benefit auction. Use your organization's newsletter, and social networking sites; make and post posters or flyers; seek local media coverage; start a word-of-mouth campaign; talk with members of local civic organizations; invite business members who donated items; and cross market at other events or gatherings. Everyone associated with the auction should keep copies of the save-the-date card with them at all times and be ready to talk up the event: you never know where the next donor could appear. You can also leverage your online auction and its mailing list capabilities to make announcements about your event, if you are holding one prior to your event.

# Procurement

Procurement is a vital part of any successful auction. The procurement team is as important as the items procured. When considering your committee, think about their circle of influence and with whom they might be able to network. They have to be able to go out and “make the ask” without fearing the word “NO.”

Procurement committee members must consider the auction audience’s financial situations and tastes, and set procurement goals accordingly. A great way to begin the process is by hosting a procurement brainstorming party. At this gathering discuss hot items, what the group would buy, and what has been offered at other events. Also, ask your top donors which items they would be willing to spend the highest amount to win. Remember not to rule out unusual items, and reach for the sky without placing limitation on possible items. Lastly, look at the event history to see what has sold well at previous auctions.

## When to Say “No, thanks”

As the group thinks about the items and how to get them, keep in mind the target audience’s financial abilities. Some items can be difficult to sell for their full market value, because of an initial high cost that is out of reach for the guests in the room. Other items may fall short due to their subjective nature of their appeal. “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” when it comes to your auction’s audience.

## Consignment Items

A consignment item is anything that requires either an up-front payment or a portion of the sale proceeds. Greater Giving offers a variety of unique travel packages that can be reserved at no risk to your organization. Visit [www.greatergiving.com/auctionbooster](http://www.greatergiving.com/auctionbooster) for more information. Be careful about the number of consignment items you put in your auction as some guests may get upset knowing that part of their donation is going towards purchasing an item. Be aware of the person that is consigning the items, ask yourself if they are using your event as a way to promote their artwork or jewelry, or truly support your cause.

## Retention of Value

Some auction items will sell for 100% or more of their full market value, whereas others will bring in less than their full value. Gift certificates, for example, rarely sell for more than their face value. The retention of value for each item is dependent upon many factors, including the kind of auction, ratio of items to guests, and financial capacity of the guests. Live auction items generally retain 75% or more of their retail value. Silent auction items will retain 50% of their value. The best way to overcome the low value items is to group them together to make them more enticing. This is called creating packages or bundling.

# Organizing Auction Items and Sections

## Timing

Every moment from the time the guest arrives to the time that they leave is a money-making opportunity. Consider the components and timing of the event. Generally, benefit events include silent and live auctions with the silent auction taking place during the reception and the live auction during dinner.

## Silent Auction

The silent auction is where bidders submit incremental bids on individual bid forms associated with a desired item and typically consists of two or three sections.

Typically, you can expect about 30% of the overall auction revenue to come from the silent auction. It's generally a good idea to split up the silent auction into several sections with staggered close times. This allows for a "bidding frenzy" to take place among guests, while giving more time for your staff to prepare for check-out and item pickup. The silent auction will also generate positive competition and excitement among guests prior to the live auction.

A general rule of thumb in estimating the appropriate number of items for the silent auction is as follows: take the number of guests and divide in half, which is called a bidding unit. Then take that number and divide in half again. You

want enough items to create a high demand. Keep in mind, if there is only one or two bids on the bid sheet at the end of the event, the item might not be a good match for your audience.

Mix up items rather than setting up silent auction tables by category to encourage browsing and impulse bidding. Categorizing items, such as; sports, wine, fine dining, and children's sections limits guests from roaming around the room and actively bidding on all items. Items in the first closing should be the least expensive, with a few higher value items mixed in. Put the most expensive items into the last closing. Medium-priced items should go into the middle closing. Assign each section a different color to help guests visually identify the location of a section in the final moments of its closing. Use the table below to help divide the silent auction items between closings if there will be more than one silent auction section.

Most of the bidding in a silent auction will take place in the last 30 minutes of the auction, so it is not necessary to leave the silent auction open for a long period of time. It is strongly recommended to close all the silent sections before guests are seated for dinner. Remember the majority of your money made at your auction comes from the live auction, not the silent. It's much better to have your audience seated and captivated rather than hovering over a bid sheet waiting to outbid someone.

	2 SECTIONS	3 SECTIONS
▶ 1st closing	40% of items	30% of items
▶ 2nd closing	60% of items	50% of items
▶ 3rd closing	—	20% of items

## Live Auction

The live auction should yield the majority of the funds raised at a benefit event. As a rule of thumb the silent auction is generally 30% of the revenue, the live 60 to 65%, and the fund-a-cause 5 to 10%.

To figure out the number of live auction items, first consider your fundraising goal. Be strategic in the number of items, types of items and amount of time you have in the program. It's important to put items in the live auction that will achieve at least the minimum value. It is suggested that these items be unique and of higher value.

The live auction should start during dinner while guests are still alert and enthusiastic about the event. Do not wait for dessert and coffee because the audience's energy will be waning. Your live auction should not extend past 9:45 p.m., reconsider either the start time of the live auction or reduce the total number of items if this is the case. Consult the auctioneer or auction company

about the event's timing. It is very important to have a seated and captivated audience. This is where a hiring a professional benefit auctioneer is beneficial. You can also work with the caterer in bringing out the meal and time with the progression of the live auction. Most guests will stay through coffee and dessert so it's a good idea to make sure the live auction ends before then.

The amount of time allotted in the live auction must be identified before selection of live items. Use the grid below as a general guideline for determining the live auction timeline.

With a target number of items in mind, determine which items will be placed in the live auction. Occasionally place two similar items back to back to promote competitive bidding. The key is to create competition between the bidders for every item. Do not to save the best items for last since not all guests will stay through the end of the auction.

EVENT COMPONENT	MINUTES NEEDED	SAMPLE AUCTION1	SAMPLE AUCTION 2	MY AUCTION
▶ Live auction bidding	2- 5 per item	(25 items x 2) 50	(8 items x 5)	
▶ Welcome comments	5-20	15	10	
▶ Special appeal or fund-a-cause	15-25	20	10 video 15 appeal	
▶ Raffle	10	10	(none)	
▶ Centerpiece auction	5-10	10	(none)	
▶ Dessert auction	5-10	(none)	(none)	
▶ Closing	5-10	5	15	
▶ Totals		110 minutes	90 minutes	

## Sequencing

Some auctioneers or auction companies offer live auction item sequencing services: this is a valuable service worthwhile of engaging. To sequence the live auction items on your own, follow these steps used by benefit auctioneers. These guidelines may not apply to every auction.

1. Count the number of live auction items and create a numbered worksheet. Add slots for the fund-a-cause, raffle, centerpiece auction, or other live auction components.
2. Place the fund-a-cause halfway to 2/3 of the way into the auction.
3. Categorize the items by type: sports, home/garden, kids/class projects, fine dining/entertainment, trips, etc. Count how many of each and divide by the total number of numbered slots. That will provide an approximate frequency for each item type.
4. The first slots to be filled are the first five items, the last item, and the items immediately before and after the fund-a-cause (see Event Planning Calendar for more detail).
  - a. First five items: Select lower-priced items that will achieve the full market value.

Omit items that can be doubled: show the bidders that they need to participate or risk losing the item entirely. Avoid items that are among the most expensive of the auction. Use the first five items to establish the tone of the auction and pique the guests' interest in what is to come.
  - b. Last item: Pick a moderately-priced item that will leave the auction guests with a positive memory. Do not place the most expensive item last.
  - c. Preceding the fund-a-cause: Insert an item that will generate a lot of energy, such as a popular vacation trip.
  - d. Following the fund-a-cause: Select a tangible item that can benefit from momentum, such as once in a lifetime package.
5. Once the slots from step four have been assigned, fill in the remaining slots alternating items in the categories determined in step three.

6. Leave room for items that can be sold twice (e.g. a trip or group dinner). Verify with the auctioneer that these items can be sold twice. This can generate a lot of excitement in the room and should be placed accordingly. Make sure that the guests do not know that there are "doubles" otherwise it will backfire on you.

## Surprise Items

Sometimes a great item is promised at the last minute. In those cases, create a slot for a "surprise" item between the fund-a-cause and the end, based on what kind of item it is and where it would logically fit. If the item does not materialize, an appropriate item can be pulled from the silent auction to fill its place. An addendum to the catalog can be used to alert guests to surprise items, as well as list any edits or omissions to the items.

## The Catalog

The auction catalog, whether printed or online, serves multiple purposes before and during the auction. First and foremost it lists the items being sold in the live and/or silent auctions, and a schedule for the event. The catalog will also be a key tool for the auctioneer and Master of Ceremonies throughout the evening.

## Auction Catalog

The auction catalog is the paper and/or online listing of items being sold during the auction.

Distributed in advance, printed catalogs or preview Web sites will become another marketing element to tantalize guests with a glimpse of the evening's offerings.

## What to Include in the Catalog

Separate catalog into sections, using tabs or papers in different colors to differentiate sections:

- a. Information about the cause/organization
- b. Letter from the executive director or auction chair
- c. Acknowledgements: volunteers, donor, auction staff

- d. Event schedule
- e. Live auction items
- f. Auction rules and procedures
- g. Sponsors or paid advertisements

#### **Additional Things to Consider**

- Add check boxes for guests to create a “wish list.”
- Use spiral binding for the catalog.
- Use easy-to-read, large, and high contrast fonts. Take into consideration that the event lighting will probably be subdued. Italics and script fonts are hard to read in dim lighting.
- Provide a separate bid card rather than printing the bid number on the back catalog.
- If space allows, put one live auction item per page. This allows guests space to write notes, and the catalog designer time to lay out all live auction items without worrying about items’ sequence.
- The live auction section should include catalog number, item name, donor name, a well-written description, applicable restrictions and fair market value.

#### **Tip**

Greater Giving suggests excluding silent auction item from the catalog. The main reason is that when guests arrive you want them browsing the silent auction tables rather than looking through the catalog and singling in on one item. Walking through the silent auction sections will create more excitement and impulse bidding than a catalog.

#### **Tax Laws**

State and federal laws vary on what is required of raffles, door prizes, auction rules and procedures, bidder disclosure about fair market value, and the like. Check with your local tax attorney to find out what permits and disclosure information may be needed for the auction to follow applicable laws.

# Event Staff and Volunteers

## Volunteers

One of the most important things for a successful event is to make sure you have enough volunteers and that each volunteer knows their role before the event. Help volunteers plan for their roles in advance, inform them about parking, as well as if meals will be provided. Give clear directions about appropriate attire. Communicate the specific start and end times for volunteer shifts. Many of the volunteers have a vested interest in the outcome of the auction, so allow time for them to participate in or watch the event.

Assign a volunteer coordinator to allocate volunteers to each area. The role of the coordinator is to make sure volunteers are

properly trained, understand assignments, and carry them out at the event. It is also good to clearly understand the strengths of each volunteer to make sure they are the right person for the responsibility assigned to them at the event. You do not want someone that is shy or timid to be greeting guests as they arrive.

Train volunteers prior to the event. Job descriptions, event timelines, nametags, and lists of frequently asked question are helpful for volunteers at the event. It is also advised to have a volunteer check-in area, and a place for them to congregate before or after their shift.

Use the chart below as a guideline to the number of volunteers needed for each function:

VOLUNTEER ROLE	SUGGESTED RATIO
▶ Silent Auction	2 volunteers per 40 items (working in pairs) 1 area lead 1 troubleshooter
▶ Data Entry (1 computer and 1 printer per 100 guests)	1 volunteer per computer station (or per 40 items if manual) 1 area lead
▶ Bid Spotter	1 volunteer covering 6 tables (depending upon room layout) 1 area lead (for all live auction volunteers)
▶ Recorder (live auction)	2-3 volunteers
▶ Runner (live auction)	2-3 volunteers
▶ Cashiering (1 computer and 1 printer per 100 guests is recommended)	1 volunteer per computer station (or per 40 items if manual) 1 area lead 1 troubleshooter
▶ Item Pickup	Item Pickup

### Tip

**Runners and Recorders:** Assign “runners” to collect bid sheets and close down the silent auction areas. It’s best to close down your silent auction in phases to maximize the amount of time guests have to bid, and also give yourself time to record the winning bids as you go, rather than in a rush at the end of the event. Data entry of winning bids should begin as soon as the first silent auction section closes.

During the Live Auction, assign “recorders” to capture the winner bidder number, winning bid amount, full name, and signature for each item sold.

## Leads and Troubleshooters

Designate someone as an area lead at each station including: registration, silent and live auction, data entry, check-out, cashiering and item pickup. The lead should ensure that the station is set up properly and that volunteers and staff have been trained. The area lead should also be responsible for moving files and equipment from one station to the next, if necessary, during the event.

To help the event run smoothly each station should have a designated troubleshooter. When questions or exceptions come up, volunteers and staff should know to direct them to the troubleshooter for quick, consistent resolution.



# During the Event

This section contains logistical information about the auction itself: bidder packets and files, bid sheets, procedures, and setup. Additionally, registration, data entry, check-out, cashing and item pickup will be covered in detail.

## Logistics

### Bidder Files

Set up a filing system for the event. There should be a file folder for each bidder number. These files will be used throughout the event to track each bidder's purchases by filing a copy of each winning bid sheet into the appropriate bidder's file. One of the most important advantages of a bidder file system is that it will help resolve any disputes that might come up at check-out by creating a paper trail. Receipts for raffle or ticket purchases can also be filed in these folders.

### Bidder Packets

To expedite the check-in process at registration, assemble a bidder packet for each guest. This should contain all materials each guest will be given at registration, including catalogs, bidder numbers or paddles, and any other items you wish to give your guests at registration. For best results, these packets should be organized numerically with the bidder number on the file tab.

### Package Numbers

Package numbers are assigned to all auction items both live and silent. Designating a separate sequence of numbers to each section allows for easy identification for data entry, filing, and item sorting purposes at the event. Live auction items should be assigned 1-99; the first silent section can be assigned 100-199; the second 200-299; and so forth. Auctionpay Event Software will automatically format package numbers to follow this industry standard.

### Silent Auction Bid Sheets

Silent auction bid sheets should be designed to yield maximum revenue. The components below

should be included. This format can be generated using Events Software.

- Item description
- Bidder number
- Bidder name
- Start at 25–50% of retail value
- Pre-calculated bid increments
- Guaranteed bid (150–200% of value)

### Guaranteed Purchase

A guaranteed purchase is an option used by a bidder who promises to pay a pre-determined amount (typically 150 to 200% of retail value) to secure an item. After a guaranteed purchase has been made, no further bids will be accepted on the item. When using guaranteed bids, once the item has been secured pull the part of the bid sheet so that guests will know they cannot bid on that item anymore. As an alternative place a "sold" sign or colored piece of paper over the top of the bid sheet.

Print the silent auction forms onto three-part, carbonless paper. At the close of the silent auction, the bottom copy stays with the item; the top 2 copies (white and yellow) will be taken to data entry to process the winning bids. Start by separating the white and yellow copies. The top copy (white) should be sorted by package number. These will be used to enter the winning bids into event software. They are typically the most legible and easiest to read. Sorting them by package number will allow the troubleshooter to identify the winning bidder if any discrepancies come up at checkout. The middle copy (yellow) should be sorted in numerical order by bidder. This copy is used to file in the bidder file or can be thrown away as an extra copy. Three-part forms can also be used for the live auction. Assign recorders to capture the winning amount and assign another volunteer obtain the winning bidder's signature on all live auction items.

### Tip

Three part paper is available at most office supply stores. There are a couple of options for printing three part bid sheets. The original bid sheet can be taken to a local printer for printing. Or each of the three sheets can be printed on a laser printer and collated.

## Registration

Registration\* is one of the most important parts of your event. It is the guest's first impression of the evening to come.

### \*Registration

Registration is an area where guests are welcomed to the event and given information needed to participate in the auction such as the table and bidder numbers.

## Setup and Process

Make sure the registration area is set up to handle the flow of guests at the beginning of the event. Greater Giving suggests two sets of tables: a "Registration Table" in front for checking in the guests and a "File Table" behind it to hold the guest files and other registration materials. Standard six- or eight-foot tables work best, each supporting two or three check-in lines. One check-in volunteer per 100 guests is recommended. As well as enough space to allow for two guests to stand next to each other to check-in.

In general separating registration lines for check-in alphabetically by last name is not recommended. Having "generic" check-in lines will keep things moving along. It is usually a good idea to have one main line feeding into the smaller lines at the registration tables to keep things organized, especially if expecting several hundred guests. This eliminates a backup of

guests waiting to check in at a designed the line, such as A-E when no one standing in line to check in at U-Z.

## Bidder Files

Setting up bidder files by bidder number rather than last name works best for most organizations. It is easier for volunteers working the file table to hear a number than a last name. Also, if there are two guests with the same name there will be no confusion as to which packet to pull. Provide volunteers with a guest list that has the guest last name, first name, bidder number and table number sorted alphabetically. When guests arrive at registration, the check-in volunteer will welcome them and ask their name. The check-in volunteer will either check against a list to

determine the bidder number, or convey the guest's name to the volunteer pulling files.

## Express Pay

If using Auctionpay, while the bidder packet is being retrieved, ask the guest if they would like to use a credit card to pay for auction items. If they do, swipe their credit card for Express Pay. The concept of Express Pay is similar to reserving a hotel room with a credit card. If an auction purchase is made, the credit card on file will be charged after the auction. If no purchase is made the card number will be deleted without any charges being applied. Credit card numbers of all Express Pay participants are securely stored, which allows for an easy check-out at the end of the event.

To expedite check-out, it is important to identify which guests have chosen to take advantage of Express Pay. Event Software will electronically mark guests as Express Pay by syncing with Auctionpay. Organizations that do not use

Event Software will need sticky notes, colored dots, or highlighter pens to mark Express Pay participation on the guests' bidder files. Be sure to tell guests who chose the Express Pay method that they will be able to bypass the cashiering station at the end of the event and proceed directly to item pickup.

### **Recommended Supplies for the Registration Area**

Registration Tables:

- One Auctionpay terminal or card reader per section or one volunteer per 100 guests
- An envelope or small cash box for storing signed registration receipts at each terminal
- Access to a power outlet and power strip(s)
- Copies of the registration report, sorted

- Boxes or crates to store the bidder files, which leave enough room for volunteers to reach into the bins
- Extra auction catalogs on or under the table

### **Bidder Numbers**

All registered guests should be assigned a bidder number\* prior to the event, but it is critical that bidder numbers do not change once they are assigned. Start with number 100 rather than 1 so that all auction transactions involve a 3-digit number. For couples, assign only one bidder number; another one can be assigned if necessary for couples who do not want to share a single number. Late registrations (received less than 24 hours before the event) can be handled at the exceptions (see "Exceptions at Registration" below).

#### **\*Bidder Number**

Bidder numbers are three-digit numbers used to identify and track guests' winning auction bids.

by LAST name with bidder names, bidder numbers, and table numbers

- Copies of the seating list, organized by table and by last name and include table assignment
- Table map or floor plan
- Pad of paper to keep a running list of notes throughout the event
- Auction catalogs and addenda
- Pens for signing registration receipts
- Other supplies, such as staplers or paper clips, and sticky notes as needed

File Tables:

- Bidder files for registered guests containing the bid packets, labeled with each guest's name and table number (or you may choose to have packets alphabetized on the registration tables)

Decide before the event what items, such as drinks at the bar or raffle tickets, can be charged to guests' bidder numbers. Make sure to inform the volunteers, bartenders, etc., how they will be accepting payment. Collect and record the payments often throughout the event.

### **Exceptions at Registration**

At every event, issues will come up during registration, check-out and item pickup. To help guests with issues or "exceptions" create an area at each station to manage problems without creating a bottleneck and holding up other guests. This is often referred to as a "Solutions Area." Assign a staff member or a volunteer who is very familiar with the guests and at troubleshooting. This person will handle any unexpected situations, including unregistered guests and those whose reservation cannot be located. Keep a stack of cards with unassigned bidder numbers and auction catalogs available throughout the event for these instances. Most

important, help these guests feel welcome while they wait. If a bidder number cannot be located for a guest or there are any changes in the original registration, ask the guest to move to the designated exceptions area. An area at the same table ensures that guests keep moving while special circumstances are handled cheerfully by volunteers. This can also be used if a corporate table was purchased and you did not receive the names of all the guests. The number of volunteers for this area will depend on the number of guests that are not properly registered.

## Data Entry

Data entry is where all the winning bids from the silent and live auctions will be gathered and recorded to determine what each bidder won and how much they owe. This can be done manually or with event software.

### Setup and Process

All the winning bid sheets should be collected at the data entry area and recorded as the event progresses. If using Event Software, this consists of entering each winning bid (bidder number, item number, and winning bid amount) into the software.

Whether or not you are using Event Software, one copy of each winning bid sheet should be put into the winning bidder's file. That way, as guests come to check-out at the end of the event, the file can be pulled and an invoice or statement created based on the winning bids in the file. For a manual event, an invoice can be created early and updated throughout the event. If using event software, an itemized receipt can be printed at check-out, or prior to the end of the event once data entry has been completed.

## Check-Out and Cashiering

Check-out and cashiering are the areas where volunteers generate invoices and process payments at the end of the event. Check-out generally consists of two basic processes: presenting guests with a statement or invoice that shows what they have won and how much they

owe; and accepting payments for those guests who did not swipe their credit cards for Express Pay. Once these two steps are complete, guests can retrieve their items and go home.

All guests should go through the same check-out line to retrieve invoices, whether they are Express Pay guests or not. Guests who did not swipe their cards for Express Pay will take their invoice to the separate cashiering station before retrieving their items. The advantage for Express Pay guests is that they will bypass cashiering and go immediately to item pickup.

### Cashiering

Cashiering, which is also sometimes called banking, is the area where guests pay for items purchased during the auction.

### Setup and Process

Depending on the location and size of your event, the registration and check-out areas may be in different locations. If so, make sure that the check-out area is set up properly and that files and equipment are moved from registration to check-out after registration has been completed.

Organize all guest files by bidder number to aid in quick retrieval of guest information.

If using Event Software for the event, make sure there are enough computers. Locate fast printers within arms reach of each check-out volunteer. The recommended ratio is one computer and printer per 100 guests. Slow or too few printers create one of the most common, yet easy to avoid, bottlenecks at the end of an event.

Whenever accepting credit cards, using Auctionpay or another method, it is the responsibility of the organization to retain signed copies of all receipts. Greater Giving recommends retaining receipts for at least three years for reference in the unlikely event that there is a dispute with a guest over a particular charge.

Below is a list of supplies recommended for check-out:

- Computers and printers (if using event software)

- 1-2 reams of paper and extra printer cartridges (if using event soft ware)
- Trash or recycling box
- Staplers and staples for each station, tape, sticky notes, pencils, paper clips
- Bidder files from registration
- Auctionpay terminals or card readers for cashiering at the end of the event
- Cashbox for all cash and check payments and signed credit card receipts
- Pens for signing receipts
- Calculators and tally sheets, or blank invoices, for totaling invoices (if using a manual process for generating invoices)
- “PAID” stamps for marking invoices once non-Express Pay guests have completed cashiering

### Check-out Timing

One of the most frustrating things for auction volunteers is dealing with guests who want to leave while winning bids from the silent or live auction are being entered. Establish a point in the evening when check-out will open, typically 15 minutes or 3-4 live auction items after the fund-a-cause if applicable. Give the volunteers sufficient time to enter all the information in the event software, allowing additional time at manual events. Post a friendly but assertive volunteer in front of the check-out area to explain when check-out will open. Or you may prevent unwanted interruptions by putting up a sign board or curtain in front of the check-out area. Many organizations choose to allow exceptions on a case-by-case basis.

Designate a volunteer specifically for troubleshooting, similar to registration, to help handle exceptions and discrepancies without slowing the process for other guests.

### Other Forms of Payment

If accepting check and cash payments at the event, be sure that volunteers keep track of all payments received, especially for cash. Nothing

is more frustrating than having to go back after your event is over to try to figure out who has paid in full and who has not. Record these payments in order to reconcile the accounting for the event. It is a good idea to write the bidder number on any checks received. Indicate split payments, such as a bill is paid partly by check and partly by credit card.

It is essential for manual events that record-keeping include some method of recording total amount due for each bidder, method of payment, and payment status (paid/unpaid). Cashiers should initial each paid invoice as it is processed in case of later questions.

### Express Pay

Cashiers will handle all payments provided by guests who did not use Express Pay at registration. Create a separate station slightly apart from the check-out station, or at one end of a check-out table. One of the advantages of using Auctionpay is that many guests will have registered a credit card at the beginning of the event, leaving cashiering volunteers to handle a limited number of transactions at the end of the event. After going through the check-out and cashiering, all guests will proceed to the item pickup area.

### Item Pickup

Item pickup is an area where guests retrieve items purchased during the auction. Depending upon the number of silent auction items, venue space availability, and number of volunteers, the auction planner will elect to use one of two general item pickup options.

**Option 1:** Group all items by winning bidder number; volunteers retrieve items for guests

The item pickup process will go very quickly if the silent auction items are grouped together by winning bidder number after the silent auction closes. Put the items into bags, one per winning bidder, and clearly mark the bags on the short side with the bidder numbers. This should also include certificates for any non-tangible items or items that will be picked up at a later date.

As items are placed into the winning bidder's numbered bag, staple the pink copy of the bid sheet to the outside of the bag, allowing for quick identification of the bag's contents. Sort the bags on the floor or on tables by bidder number. If an item is too large to fit in a bag, place it on the floor or table next to the bag and attach a piece of paper with the bidder number clearly visible.

Runners or recorders from the live auction can deliver the items to the item pickup area as winning bids are verified.

**Option 2a:** Leave items in original locations, volunteers retrieve items for guests

If choosing to leave the items in the silent auction area, this area will need to be roped off once the silent auction sections have closed. This also may require additional volunteers to deliver the items at the close of the event. Make sure the items remain clearly marked by item number (i.e. by leaving the 2nd or 3rd part of the multi-part bid sheet with the item).

**Option 2b:** Leave items in silent auction area, guests retrieve own items

Organizations without a large volunteer pool may elect to have guests retrieve their own items from the original locations on the silent auction tables. Regardless of how many volunteers are available, keep a troubleshooter on site to help guests locate their items, to track down any missing items, and to verify that guests are collecting the correct items.

It is important that all items are clearly marked with the pre-assigned package number. This will

allow volunteers to quickly retrieve those items and sort them by the winning bidder number.

Extra volunteers should be available to assist with large, bulky, or heavy items. Make arrangements in advance for what to do with items too large to transport from the event (such as art, furniture or large class projects).

Very large events should consider having two-way radios between the data entry and item pickup areas. The staff at check-out can call ahead with bidder numbers so the item pickup staff can collect the items for the guest. Be sure to have the item pickup area Lead keep a "problem log" to record any issues that come up.

### Supplies Recommended for Item Pickup

- Auction items
- Certificates for non-tangible items or any items that are not at the event
- Pens
- Shopping bags (most department stores will donate these for free)
- Cart or dolly
- Twine and padding
- Pad of paper to document any pickup discrepancies (i.e. lost or unlabeled items)
- Report or master list of all auction items with the successful bid amount and bidder number
- Paper to record which items will be delivered or shipped at the guest's expense

# After the Auction

## Finances

After the auction, it is critical to reconcile all auction receipts. This will ensure accurate credit card charges and accurate auction revenue totals. The process is essentially the same for events that are done manually or those using Event Software: check the original bid sheet against what has been recorded in Event Software or on the hand-written invoices.

Complete the banking process by sending credit card transactions to the bank. Consult the Auctionpay literature and trainings on how to sync Event Software with Auctionpay terminals in order to submit the credit card payments. If using the card readers, this step is not necessary.

Pay any outstanding bills associated with the auction and close out the books. Compare the actual budget to the one that was created at the start of the planning stages and make recommendations for the next auction's budget.

## Etiquette

Always acknowledge the winning bidders by sending a thank you letter. It is also a good practice to include a final copy of the guest's receipt with the letter. If it is public information, share how much money was raised at the event and attribute the success to their support. A gracious letter of appreciation will go a long way

toward laying groundwork for the next fundraising auction. It is not necessary to attach a receipt from the Auctionpay terminal. At this time, a survey regarding the event might also be included to obtain guest feedback. Feedback is a gift and will help during next year's planning process to create the best possible result for the next event.

Thank the volunteers as well, either by way of a hand-written note or by holding an appreciation gathering or party. Get feedback on what went well and what could be improved.

It's also a good practice to have a debriefing meeting with the auction chairperson and committee members. This will allow you to obtain valuable information for the next year while it's still fresh in their mind.

## Start Planning for Next Year

Evaluate the auction including the budget, marketing, results, and procedures. Complete the planning binder that has been meticulously created throughout the entire auction planning process. Include final event expenditures, event revenue, copies of vendor invoices, and notes from anyone involved in the evaluation process after the event. And most importantly, pass this valuable information along to the next auction committee chairperson to use as a foundation for next year's planning process.

Greater Giving works exclusively with schools and nonprofit organizations of all sizes to improve their fundraising events, and year-round fundraising goals. Greater Giving offers complete event fundraising solutions that include event management software to manage all aspects of a benefit event, an online registration and donation service, an online auction system, and payment processing the day of the event. Since 2002, Greater Giving has created products and services that are easy to use, improve donor experiences and, most of all, help increase revenue. Find case studies, additional event tips, online seminars and other benefit event resources at [www.greatergiving.com](http://www.greatergiving.com).

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