



Silent Auction Planning Guide

A silent auction is a low-key, yet effective way to raise money for a charity. It's a great way to involve a variety of people in supporting a common cause. The greater variety of items you are auctioning, the greater variety of people will be attracted to your event.

If you like, a silent auction can be held in conjunction with another event such as a concert, a game night, a dinner, a talent show etc.

1. Meet with the committee that will be planning the event. Talk about the things you will need for your event. Assign responsibilities to each group member.
2. Decide on a date.
3. Find a location to hold your fundraiser. Try to get use of the space donated for the event. Check out your local recreation center, churches, schools, hotels, businesses, restaurants etc. You need something that can hold a lot of people (you will also need tables or counters on which to display items). A high-traffic area, such as a restaurant or park in the center of town is a great location because people passing by can stop in and bid as well as those you've advertised to.
4. Gather auction items. Ask area businesses for donations. If you feel comfortable you can go ask in person, or you can begin with a phone call or e-mail. If you call or go to the business in person be sure to do it during a slower part of the day. More often than not business are happy to donate. If they ask what kind of item you were thinking about don't be afraid to ask for something specific. Big ticket items will draw more crowds to your event (remember, it doesn't have to be a physical item...tickets to a concert or sporting event, gift certificates for massages, spa treatments, teeth whitening, carpet cleaning, music lessons, restaurants or retail stores, etc. are great auction items). If they can't donate anything thank them and ask if you can hang a flyer in their establishment. Invite them to come to the auction. They may end up bidding on something.
5. Advertise. Once you have your location, date, and some auction items it's time to start advertising. Ask to hang flyers at area businesses, the library, churches, schools, grocery stores, coffee shops etc. You could also advertise on a local radio station or in the newspaper. If your local radio station or paper charges for things like that, ask them to donate it for your group. Use free resources like Twitter and Facebook to let people know about the event and what kinds of items they will be able to bid on (include photos if possible).
6. Try to have a large variety of things to bid on as well as a variety of price points. You don't want to eliminate some of your bidders by having your items priced too high.
7. Smaller items can be combined into a basket to increase perceived value and make them more attractive.
8. The starting bid on each item should be about 50% of its retail value. People want to feel like they have a chance to get the item for a good deal and you want to get as much money for your cause as possible. Make sure you ask for the retail value as you are collecting auction items.

9. Each auction item should have a bidding sheet. It should include a description of what is being bid on, the minimum bid, bidding increments and the name of the individual or business (if they want to be identified) that donated the item. Try to come up with a creative description for your item or basket.
10. Make sure you have the silent auction guidelines posted the day of your event. Include the time it begins and ends, how the winner is determined, where to pick up their prize and when payment is expected (it's best to collect payment on the spot the day of the event).
11. Once the auction is over don't forget to send a thank you to everyone who helped make your fundraiser a success.

