

Holding a Silent Auction

Silent auctions serve as an effective fundraising tool for community groups. The Brushy Fork team from Floyd County, Kentucky, organized a silent auction to help raise money for their computer gift project. The Technology Gift Incentive Foundation Team (TGIFT) donates a computer annually to a deserving student from Floyd County. Below are some planning steps and issues team members considered as they organized their silent auction.

Before the auction

1. Schedule your silent auction in conjunction with another event that will bring in a good-sized crowd of people. For example, the TGIFT team held their silent auction during a dinner at which they awarded their first computer.
2. Gather items for the auction from team members, local businesses and other people who support your work. Items at the TGIFT auction included gift certificates, autographed books, art prints, crafted items such as quilts and needlework, tea sets, food baskets, and curios. You can combine several small items into a basket to help raise the bidding price. Log items as you receive them so you will have an inventory of donations.
3. Create a bid sheet for each item. The bid sheet should provide a space for bidders to record their bidding number and amount of bid, recognize who donated the item for the auction and provide any pertinent information about the item. (See sample bid sheet at right.)

BID SHEET	
Item: Quilted Wall Hanging (hand-made by a local artisan)	
Donated by: David Crafts	
Opening Bid: \$50.00	
Bid number	Bid amount
1. _____	\$50.00
2. _____	
3. _____	
4. _____	
5. _____	
6. _____	
7. _____	
8. _____	
9. _____	

^ Create a bid sheet for each auction item.

Silent Auction Sign-In Sheet	
Name: _____1	
Telephone: _____	
Address: _____	
Name: _____2	
Telephone: _____	
Address: _____	
Name: _____3	
Telephone: _____	
Address: _____	
Name: _____4	
Telephone: _____	
Address: _____	

During the auction

1. Create a sign-in sheet for bidders on which they can record their name, address and telephone number. This sheet should be numbered so that each bidder receives a bidding number, which they place on the bid sheet for items they wish to buy. This sheet also provides contact information for any winning bidders not present when the auction closes.
2. Once a bidder has signed in, he/she uses the assigned bidder number to bid on items of interest. This simplified bidding process keeps bids anonymous until the auction is over.

^ Have bidders sign in and receive a bid number.

Closing the auction

1. Closing the auction takes some time so the TGIFT group closed their auction just after dinner and before the keynote speaker began his address. Attendees at the dinner were able to take a quick break and make last-minute bids before the speech began. During the speech three TGIFT members processed the auction bids.
2. When the silent auction closes, two or three people can use the bid sheets to determine who receives each item and how much each person owes. TGIFT used two people—one called off the winning bidder and amount from each bid sheet and the other recorded the information on a totals sheet. A third person grouped auction items by winning bidder and labeled the grouped items with the winning bidder's number.
3. Each winning bidder's name was then matched to that person's bid number. The items won and the amounts owed were recorded on a 3X5 index card and used as a receipt when the person checked out of the silent auction.

WINNER AND BID AMOUNT PER ITEM		
Item number	Bidder number	Amount
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____
8.	_____	_____
9.	_____	_____

^ Transfer items won and amount owed for each bidder from this sheet onto 3 X 5 cards so bidders can check out.

Miscellaneous considerations

Get permission to hold a silent auction if you are using a public area or someone else's property. Make sure the property owner does not have any policies against using the space for fundraising activities.

Gathering items to auction can take a lot of time and energy. The group holding the auction should plan a work session a few days before the auction to inventory auction items, log them in and determine starting bids.

Someone in the group should be responsible for writing thank you letters to individuals, businesses and organizations that donated items for the auction.

Gift certificates can be easy to lose at an auction. If your auction items include gift certificates, keep them in labeled envelopes in a box during the auction. Just put out the bidding sheet with pertinent information and pull the gift certificates for the winning bidders at check out time.

Bidder # 7: Alice Crowe		
Item 5	lamp	\$25.00
Item 11	photo	5.00
Item 16	t-shirt	4.00
Item 27	quilt	75.00
Total owed		109.00

^ Use the 3 X 5 card as a receipt for bidders.

Happy auctioning!

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