



Silent Auction

A silent auction is an excellent way to raise some more funds during another fundraiser. Silent auctions are easy to set up, only require a little bit of preparation and are enjoyable for all. Just set up some tables, put the items on the tables with a bidding sheet, and watch the auction run itself!

During a typical silent auction event, items for auction are displayed for participants to inspect closely. In front of each item is a document called a bidding sheet, where interested buyers can place a bid silently or anonymously using a bidder number. Many silent auctions add a minimum increase requirement to their bidding sheets (the next bid must be a certain dollar amount more than the previous one), or a starting bid to particular items.

Planning your Silent Auction

Before the day

Brainstorming and decision making

1. Make decisions about what your silent auction will involve.
 - a. Will it involve people donating items to be auctioned?
 - b. Will you need to collect all the items yourself?
 - i. Will you need to buy them?
 - ii. How much can you spend? Budget? (consider making hampers of things such as chocolate/lollies, children's toys, etc, factoring in your budget).
 - c. How much room will you have to host the auction?
 - d. What information of the items will be shown?
 - i. Starting price for bidding for the item? (How much profit will you make from the product? What is the lowest price you can sell it for, in order to make a profit?)
 - ii. Specific information about what they are (What is the item that is being auctioned? What is contained in it?)
 - iii. Bidding sheet for guests (should include a space for their bid, their name, their contact details (phone or email), and what the item is that they are bidding for).
 - e. Decide which event will incorporate a silent auction, and identify the date of the event to inform your planning.

Promotion

2. Create posters for asking for donations for your silent auction
 - a. Contact information
 - b. Where they can drop it off/you can pick it up
3. Distribute donation posters (to family, friends, neighbors, people from church, etc)
4. When creating posters, decide whether you want to involve the silent auction information in an event poster, or whether you need to make more posters
 - a. Create posters with the relevant information
 - i. Date
 - ii. Time
 - iii. Venue
 - iv. Contact details
5. Distribute posters (letterbox drop, at your local church, family and friends, etc)

Collection of items for the Silent Auction

6. As you collect the items that are being auctioned, create bidding sheets for each of the items or use the ones provided and fill out the information
 - a. Include
 - i. Name
 - ii. Phone number and email
 - iii. Amount they are paying/bidding
 - b. If you would like to include
 - i. Description of the item
7. Organise volunteers to
 - a. Help transport the items to the venue
 - b. Help set up tables on the day
 - c. Monitor the silent auction (supervise valuable items, help bidders arrange anonymous bidding numbers, etc)

On the day

8. Set up the tables with each item
 - i. Have bidding sheet with the item
 - ii. Have the display/description of the item, with the item on display
9. After bidding has concluded, ensure guests pay their bidding fee, or organise payment and collection of their items
10. Pack-up everything at the end of the event

Things to Consider

Pre-promotion

If you're running your silent auction as part of a larger event, make sure you promote it when you're promoting that event. If you're doing it at a sports club, after church, or anything like that, check with them how you can advertise it.

Item display

Displaying your chosen items appropriately will help you to accentuate them. Keep in mind lighting and location when arranging your collection.

Item description sheets

It is best to accompany each item with a description of what the item is. This is where you can give more details on the item and if the item was sponsored, who it was sponsored by.

Bidding Sheets

Bidding sheets are where the actual auction takes place. Some auctions also offer a "Buy Now" price. If someone really has their heart set on an item, they can buy it before the auction ends and take it off the market, so to speak. This is optional, but is a good chance to increase revenue, since the "Buy Now" is usually quite high.

Desirable items

Your whole auction revolves around the items that are on offer. Sourcing valuable items that your audience will be excited by, will help you get the maximum possible revenue for your auction.

Something to keep in mind

Avoid writing the value on items wouldn't be the way to go. Some guests may not bid above the value price of the product.

Some item ideas

- Restaurant gift certificates, or even 'home restaurant' gift certificates where you are hosted by someone at church who prepares a special dinner
- Vacation getaways
Can you approach a winery or bed and breakfast to donate a night to your event?
- Sporting event or entertainment tickets (concerts, theater, symphony, opera, ballet) – especially when these events tend to sell out
- Vouchers for local or community-owned vendors

- Food or fruit hampers, which might include vinegars, pickles, jams, fresh fruits, dried selections

Are there businesses in your community willing to donate?

- Chocolate or lolly hampers
- Memorabilia or collectors items, i.e. donated by sporting clubs
- Books written by people you know
- Art
- Handmade items made by family or friends who are willing to donate, such as quilts, crocheted toys and paintings

