

All About Silent Auctions

Silent auctions are a great way to add a fundraising component to your event. The Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation is pleased to share our tips for a successful silent auction.

Planning

- If your silent auction is a component of a larger event, it is a good idea to identify a lead volunteer specifically for this area, with perhaps a sub-committee to assist.
- Plan ahead and start early! The amount of time involved in planning a silent auction often surprises people, but be assured, it's well worth the effort!
- Try to have as much space as you can. If the auction area becomes overly crowded, potential bidders may choose not to get involved.

Securing Auction Items

- Brainstorm a list of people and companies to contact. The best success is usually achieved through personal contacts. Try to seek items that will appeal to your event attendees – memorabilia, fantasy packages and hard-to-find items (including autographed items) are always popular options.
- Prepare a solicitation letter asking for items to be donated to the auction. Explain that you are raising money for the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation and that auction proceeds will support breast cancer research and community health programs. Inform donors that items contributed to auctions will not be tax receipted. Please see our Frequently Asked Questions document for more tax receipting information. If you intend to include contributors' names and/or logos on event materials (which is a great idea if you can!), let them know as they may be more inclined to contribute if they know they will be receiving recognition.
- Include a form for companies to complete, or ask them to e-mail/fax details of the item they will be donating (see the sample form on page 3). This will help to ensure you receive the items as they will be committed to in writing.
- After you have sent the letter and form, follow up with a phone call to see if they would be able to donate something to your auction.
- Try to solicit items at varying retail values – that way, guests can bid on items that suit their budgets.

Preparing for Bidding

- Review all items that you have secured and see if you can group any together. For example, a variety of touristy items in and around Toronto may be a "Discover Toronto" package. Make sure you know your audience and don't bundle too many together and risk making it too expensive and out of reach for people.
- Prepare bid sheets for each item and clearly number both the item and bid sheet (see page 4 for a sample bid sheet). It is a good practice to have bid sheets attached to clipboards with extra sheets attached. Make sure any restrictions are included right on the bid sheet (e.g. blackout dates, etc.).
- At the top of the bid sheet, include the name(s) of the individual or organization that donated the item. This is a thoughtful way to recognize the auction donors and generate publicity for them.
- Make sure you have pens for every item and several extras on hand! Attaching them by ribbon is a great way to ensure they stay with the clipboards.

- Draw attention to paper items like gift certificates or vouchers by presenting them in a visually interesting way – perhaps incorporating the use of props. For security reasons, it is a good idea to keep the original gift certificate/voucher at the payment table, and display a photocopy (clearly marked as such) at the auction table.
- If possible, assign a volunteer/committee member to each area of the auction (e.g. Sue is responsible for items 1 to 10). Their role is to become familiar with the items available, assist the bidders, and control inventory. And of course, volunteers and committee members can bid on items too!

Bidding Rules

- Develop your bidding procedures beforehand and make sure they are clear. Post the ‘rules’ so everyone knows how the auction works. We strongly suggest that you post a reminder to bidders that they will not receive tax receipts for their bids.
- Establish a minimum bid for each item. This ensures that each winning bid will be above a certain dollar amount – enabling you to feel confident about the minimum amount of money you will raise, and ensuring that the donors of each auction item feel they contributed to something worthwhile.
- Establish a minimum increment by which the bids must increase. Common increments are \$5 or \$10.
- Clearly post the time the auction will close and do not accept any bid after this time. Have your MC or DJ provide notifications when the closing time is 15 minutes away, and again when it is 5 minutes away.
- Outline the methods of payment that will be accepted. Adjust the sample bid sheet accordingly.
- Indicate your procedure for unclaimed items in your auction rules. For example, you can contact the winning bidder and, if they don’t respond, you can move to the second highest bidder or save the item for your next event.

Closing the Bidding

- When the auction is officially closed, encourage bidders to move away from the tables (or leave the room) so volunteers/committee members can highlight each winning bid. Guests are then invited back to see the results, and winners are asked to take their bid sheet to the payment table.
- Have a system in place at the payment table to handle the storage/transportation of funds raised. Some venues will let you use their safe to store cash and cheques. Speak with your Foundation representative for alternative solutions.
- Volunteers should be ready to process payments at the payment table, which should be in an area near the auction tables, but far enough away to have space to work. They will need a cash box and float, pens, calculators, a stapler, and paper clips.
- To manage traffic at the payment table, consider having designated times for people to pick up their items (e.g. last names A-K from 10-10:15 p.m.) or closing the auction tables or rooms at different times, with the closing time noted on the bidding sheet.
- Once the winning bidder has paid and the bid sheet with payment information has been filed, provide him/her with a ‘pickup’ ticket with their name and item number on it. They give the ticket to the person overseeing the table to receive their item. Or, have your volunteers pick up the items and bring them to the winners in the payment area.
- It is ideal for all winners to take their items home with them immediately; otherwise, you will need to coordinate the pickup of remaining items. Have a contingency plan in place, including secure storage and

transportation, for any items not picked up. Hotels and other facilities often charge a fee to store materials overnight.

- Make sure you thank all of your contributors for their support to the auction. You can use the commitment forms to ensure you have all the information you need for your thank you list.

EVENT NAME

SILENT AUCTION SPONSOR COMMITMENT FORM

We would like to contribute a silent auction item(s) to **EVENT NAME** in support of the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation.

Below is our sponsorship commitment of the following item(s):

Item(s) <i>(please include description and any restrictions)</i>	Estimated retail value <i>(please list for each item)</i>

SPONSOR INFORMATION

Company: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Postal Code: _____

Phone: () _____ Fax: () _____

Email: _____

Contact Person: _____ Position: _____

Please mail to: **EVENT NAME or fax to **(XXX) XXX-XXXX****

**Mailing address
City, Prov, postal code
Attn:**

In support of



EVENT NAME

Silent Auction Bid Sheet Template

Item: *Oneida Serving Platter*

Item Number: *60*

Description: *Oneida 40" Valentine Pattern Serving Platter with Silver handles*

Generously Contributed By: *William Ashley*

Retail Value: *\$240*

Minimum Bid Increments *\$20*

Minimum Bid Price: *\$150*

THIS TABLE WILL CLOSE AT **TIME**

Name	Phone #	Email	Table # <small>(if applicable)</small>	Bid Price
<i>Jane Smith</i>	<i>416-123-4567</i>	<i>jan smith@hotmail.com</i>		<i>\$160</i>
<i>Jean Jergens</i>	<i>905-456-7891</i>	<i>jeanjergens@yahoo.ca</i>		<i>\$180</i>

Payment Information

Name of Winning Bidder: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Method of Payment: Cash Cheque VISA M/C AMEX

Amount Charged to Credit Card _____

Cardholder's Name _____ Cardholder's Signature _____

Credit Card # _____ Expiry Date _____