

COUNTDOWN CARDS

Countdown to Success: Auction Planning At-A-Glance

Why have an auction?

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An auction is one of the most inclusive, flexible and downright fun special event fundraisers you can have.

An auction brings people together multiple times: during the planning stages, when gathering and setting up the items to be auctioned off, on auction night when the actual bidding takes place—and many times in between.

It offers all kinds of opportunities to get creative, too. You can have your auction at an interesting site, combine it with another type of event and offer unusual and one-of-a-kind items to bid on, including those that have little or no actual “fair market value.” Also, volunteers often find it easier to ask for donation items than cash contributions.

Plus, sponsors, donors and bidders all get plenty of recognition.

Auction Options: Silent, Live and Both

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Your “Countdown Cards” include planning for both a silent and live auction.

Silent Auctions: Items up for bid are displayed on tables along with a “bid sheet” describing the item and stating the required “opening bid” and bid increments (for example: the opening bid might be \$75 with bid increments of \$10). Your attendees can view the items at their own pace, in privacy, and withdraw their bids later if they want. During “rolling” silent auctions, tables or sections close at different times.

Live Auctions: A skilled auctioneer who knows how to pump up the crowd auctions off high-value items and “packages” of combined items. If possible, items up for bid are on display. Otherwise, displays that represent the item are created, often with photos or props. A live auction can be quite exciting, especially if “bidding wars” ensue. And if no one is bidding on an item, your staff or volunteers can get the ball rolling.

(continued on back)

SUCCESSFUL SPECIAL EVENTS FUNDRAISING COUNTDOWN CARDS

Countdown to Success: Auction Planning At-A-Glance

Combined Auctions: The best of both worlds! Bidders with varying budgets can participate and enjoy themselves, and you can use the Silent Auction as the build-up to the Live Auction. Make sure to number every item and include an enticing description of each one in your auction booklet or program.

Bidder Numbers

Every bidder needs a number. You purchase number paddles, or you can simply attach pre-printed numbers to the back of attendees' auction booklet or program when they check in.

How to use your "Countdown Cards"

The "Countdown Cards" begin at the point where you and your volunteer "idea initiators" have already met with your board or advisory committee members. You have decided to move forward with a fundraising auction — and now it's time to get to work.

There are 14 Countdown Cards in all. The first cards count backwards from your Auction Day, plus there's an "Auction Day" card and a "Month After" card. When you line up the cards, you'll see a timeline overview of what you need to do, from start to finish.

The "icons" that accompany each to-do item tell you at-a-glance what type of activity is involved (see the Icon Key at the bottom of each card). Finally, Begin or Start items are those that continue for more than one month. They appear on the Countdown Cards only once.

Please refer to the "Step 2" disk included with this set for more information on how to use your countdown cards.

MONTHS 14-11

MONTHS

1

COUNTDOWN CARD



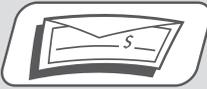
GOAL SETTING

Evaluate your capabilities: do you have the time, leadership, volunteers, audience and potential sponsors and donors that you need?



TEAM BUILDING

Introduce the Auction concept and support requirements to your staff, and ask for their input.



SPONSORS & DONORS

Make "warm-up" calls to volunteers and friends who have corporate contacts to develop your list of potential sponsors, and get recommendations from your board and staff, too (make sure to include media).



TEAM BUILDING

Make "warm-up" calls to current and past volunteer leaders to determine their interest level.



TEAM BUILDING

Develop a list of potential volunteer Auction Chairperson and Vice-Chairs (get additional recommendations from your board and staff).



GOAL SETTING

Set financial, attendance and mission-related goals.



LOGISTICS

Choose an approximate date for your Auction.



COMMUNICATIONS

Write an Auction case statement.

MONTHS 14-11

MONTHS

2

COUNTDOWN CARD



TEAM BUILDING

Get board approval and, if needed, set up an ad-hoc Auction Committee.



TEAM BUILDING

Select the Auction Chairperson.



TEAM BUILDING

Select the Auction Vice-Chairs.



SPONSORS & DONORS

Develop draft levels of sponsorship and recognition.



SPONSORS & DONORS

Develop draft sponsorship proposal letter to be signed by the volunteer that will be doing the asking.



SPONSORS & DONORS

Send sponsors letters.



SPONSORS & DONORS

Begin visiting potential major sponsors in person.



SPONSORS & DONORS

Begin confirming sponsor pledges (or the in-kind donations) you receive, and send thank-you letters.

MONTH 10

MONTH

3

COUNTDOWN CARD



GOAL SETTING

Hold first Sponsorship Committee meeting.



TEAM BUILDING

Recruit your Honorary Chairperson or Host Committee.



TEAM BUILDING

Hold your first Auction Chair and Vice-Chair meeting to determine which committees you need, who will oversee them and when you'll have your Organizational Meeting.



TEAM BUILDING

Recruit Committee Chairs, and if you're left with unfilled positions, open your Organizational Meeting to all volunteers. People will likely step up to the plate.



COMMUNICATIONS

Send a thank-you letter to each Committee Chair to serve as the official appointment and spell out the assignment.



LOGISTICS

Research any licenses, permits and insurance riders you'll need.

MONTH 9

MONTH

4

COUNTDOWN CARD



GOAL SETTING

Sponsorship Committee meeting.



TEAM BUILDING

Have your Organizational Meeting during which everyone comes together to brainstorm, assign responsibilities and work out crucial details as a group. Afterward, committees can meet independently to avoid "meeting fatigue."



TEAM BUILDING

Start recruiting committee members and send thank-you/confirmation letters as volunteers accept.



MARKETING

Develop your Marketing Plan and your "brand."



MARKETING

Create fact sheets and introduction letters for potential Auction-Item donors.



MARKETING

Determine which promotional materials you need to create, including print ads, PSAs and signage, and develop a timeline.



MARKETING

Contact your webmaster about website promotion options.

MONTH 8

MONTH

5

COUNTDOWN CARD



SPONSORS & DONORS

Sponsorship Committee meeting.



SPONSORS & DONORS

Create a potential Auction-Item Donors List.



MONEY MGMT.

Prepare the Auction budget, including expected revenue sources and expenses.



TEAM BUILDING

Develop your draft invitation list with your volunteer leadership, including those who "must be there," VIPs, media and other special guests.



LOGISTICS

Choose your tentative date and time.



LOGISTICS

Tour potential auction sites.



LOGISTICS

Set up computer programs (databases and spreadsheets) to track your budget, sponsors, Auction-Item Donors and their donations, vendors, volunteers and their assignments, check-out process and payments, and written communications, among others.

MONTH

MONTH 7

6

COUNTDOWN CARD



SPONSORS & DONORS

Sponsorship Committee meeting.



SPONSORS & DONORS

Auction-Item Acquisition Committee meeting.



SPONSORS & DONORS

Start soliciting Auction-Item donations.



SPONSORS & DONORS

Start confirming Auction-Item donations and sending thank-you letters.



LOGISTICS

Confirm your Auction date, time and place.



LOGISTICS

Plan Auction staging area details, including delivery dates and short-term item storage.



MONEY MGMT.

Consider additional revenue sources, such as raffles, grab bags, photos, t-shirt sales.

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COUNTDOWN CARD



SPONSORS & DONORS

Sponsorship Committee meeting.



SPONSORS & DONORS

Auction-Item Acquisition Committee meeting.



SPONSORS & DONORS

Flush out your Sponsor List by asking for input from all your volunteers.



SPONSORS & DONORS

Flush out your Item Donor List by asking for input from all your volunteers.



MONEY MGMT.

Prepare the final budget (including ticket pricing structure and Committee member sales requirements) and get it approved.



MONEY MGMT.

Start pre-selling tickets.



LOGISTICS

Interview and select auctioneer.



LOGISTICS

Get insurance and permits.

8

COUNTDOWN CARD



SPONSORS & DONORS

Sponsorship Committee meeting



SPONSORS & DONORS

Auction Item Acquisition Committee meeting



LOGISTICS

Finalize your invitation list.



MARKETING

Design the invitation, ticket, auction booklet or program cover and sponsor signs (you can drop in sponsor logos later if sponsorship development is ongoing).



MARKETING

Design and produce simple "save-the-date" postcards.



MARKETING

Mail "save-the-date" postcards and post your preliminary Auction information on your website.



LOGISTICS

Select your printer and, if necessary, your mailing house.



LOGISTICS

Start planning the food and entertainment.



LOGISTICS

Start planning Auction-Day program details, minute-by-minute.

9

COUNTDOWN CARD



SPONSORS & DONORS

Auction Item Acquisition Committee meeting



TEAM BUILDING

Start planning your Auction Day volunteer duties and recruiting the needed volunteers.



SPONSORS & DONORS

Follow-up with potential sponsors who haven't yet responded to your initial letters.



MONEY MGMT.

Update your budget and spreadsheets.



MARKETING

Finalize the invitation design and triple-check the information.



LOGISTICS

Print the invitations and tickets. Go on a "press-check" to avoid costly and time-consuming reprinting.



LOGISTICS

Begin preparing the Auction site layout and floor plan, including lighting, sound system and decorations.



LOGISTICS

Sign the caterer contract.

MONTH 3

MONTH

10
COUNTDOWN CARD



SPONSORS & DONORS

Auction Item Acquisition Committee meeting



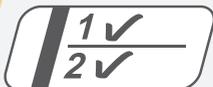
TEAM BUILDING

Send thank-you/confirmation letters to Auction-Day volunteers.



MARKETING

Write and send Auction press releases.



LOGISTICS

Address and stuff invitations (if you're not using a mail house).



LOGISTICS

Begin planning live auction details, including presentation, "fair market value" and opening bids.



LOGISTICS

Begin planning silent auction details, including presentation, "fair market value," opening bids and bid increments, rolling-auction timing and the winning bidder display.



LOGISTICS

Finalize checkout process.



LOGISTICS

Sign contracts with Auction Day entertainment, speakers, set-up personnel, lighting and audio specialists, equipment rental companies, security and valet services and other outsourced providers.



TEAM BUILDING

Begin planning your post-auction "thank-you" luncheon or recognition program.



SPONSORS & DONORS

Auction Item Acquisition Committee meeting



MARKETING

Mail invitations, including invitations to the media.



SPONSORS & DONORS

Confirm that you have received all your auction item pledges and know when they'll be delivered.



MARKETING

Determine the order live auction items will be presented and write the auction booklet or program, making it as enticing and attractive as possible.



MARKETING

Create addendum template in case you have late-arriving auction items (to be printed in-house).



LOGISTICS

Create Silent Auction Bidder Sheets.



LOGISTICS

Purchase bidder number paddles (or print bidder numbers to be attached to the back of the auction booklet or program).



TEAM BUILDING

Organize your one-night phone bank during which volunteers call invitees who haven't yet responded.



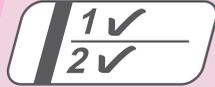
COMMUNICATIONS

Create post-auction evaluation forms.

WEEKS 4&3

DATES

12
COUNTDOWN CARD



LOGISTICS

WEEK 4: Print the Auction booklet or program and sponsor signage. Go on a press check.



MARKETING

WEEK 4: Run auction item "teasers" in your newsletters and on your website.



TEAM BUILDING

WEEK 4: Hold "check-in" Committee meetings to make sure everything is on track.



MARKETING

WEEK 3: Hold your one-night phone bank.



LOGISTICS

WEEK 3: Reconfirm with entertainers, speakers, special guests, vendors and other Auction Day participants.



LOGISTICS

WEEK 3: Walk through the Auction site one more time to see if you've overlooked anything.



TEAM BUILDING

WEEK 3: Hold your last "check-in" Committee meetings.

WEEKS 2&1

DATES

13
COUNTDOWN CARD



TEAM BUILDING

WEEK 2: Reconfirm with Auction Day volunteers to make sure they know what to do and when.



LOGISTICS

WEEK 2: Make sure the auction booklets or programs are back from the printer.



LOGISTICS

WEEK 2: Create your final guest list for the check-in table.



LOGISTICS

WEEK 1: Make the auction booklet or program available for preview.



MARKETING

WEEK 1: Send a second round of press releases.



LOGISTICS

WEEK 1: Revise and alphabetize your final guest list as needed, and print name tags.

AUCTION DAY

DATE

14

COUNTDOWN CARD



LOGISTICS

Manage set-up of Silent Auction tables and Live Auction displays.



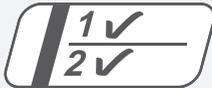
LOGISTICS

Test audio-visual equipment.



LOGISTICS

Confirm volunteer check-in table materials: volunteer list and assignments.



LOGISTICS

Confirm attendee check-in table materials: pre-paid list, VIP list, extra tickets, bidder numbers, auction booklets or programs, name tags and a cash box and receipt pad for guests who did not pre-register.



LOGISTICS

Confirm bidder checkout table materials: computers and power cords, printers (for receipts), credit card processing machines, bags for smaller items.



LOGISTICS

Confirm behind-the-scene materials: timeline of program script, event schematic and seating arrangements, insurance paperwork, receipts for auction items, emergency phone numbers, first aid kit, office supplies, all participant and vendor phone numbers, fire extinguisher.



TEAM BUILDING

Make sure everyone's needs are being met.



MONEY MGMT.

Bid on items, if necessary, to get the ball rolling.



TEAM BUILDING

Have fun!

MONTH AFTER

MONTH

15
COUNTDOWN CARD



COMMUNICATIONS

Mail follow-up thank-you letters to all volunteers, sponsors and donors.



COMMUNICATIONS

Mail thank-you letters to all winning bidders.



COMMUNICATIONS

Distribute, collect and compile evaluation forms.



TEAM BUILDING

Hold a "Constructive Critique" get-together for leadership volunteers and staff to discuss the auction results with one another.



COMMUNICATIONS

Prepare final report from databases, spreadsheets and evaluation forms, and send to key players and board members.



TEAM BUILDING

Hold your "thank-you" luncheon and complete your recognition program.



GOAL SETTING

Start planning for next year!