

# How to organise an auction



A charity auction is a great way to give your fundraising a boost at a charity ball or dinner dance and a wonderful opportunity to raise awareness of MND too. It's also a fun way of encouraging healthy competition between your guests to keep the auction moving and the bids increasing!

## Getting started

Think about *what* type of auction to hold, *when* to hold it, *where* is the best location, *what* kind of 'lots' are you going to have, *how* you are going to organise and promote it and *who* your audience is going to be!

## Types of Auctions

**Live:** People gather and an 'auctioneer' creates a wonderful, lively atmosphere to encourage competitive bidding. Bidding can be made in advance with a reserve price on each item setting it as a minimum amount it can be sold for.

**Silent:** A list of items are provided in advance with bids put forward by either email, telephone or post. A period of time is set to receive bids and the highest bidder for each item will be the winner. This can also be held during an evening event with guests writing their bids on a list – so they can see all previous bid amounts.

**Auction of promises:** This is where people donate their services in lieu for sponsorship. i.e. cleaning cars, mowing lawns, cleaning the house, dog walking, cooking a meal, doing the weekly shop, etc.

## When and Where?

- Check that the planned date of your event doesn't clash with any major events already taking place in the area.
- Give yourself plenty of time to prepare.
- Make sure the location is easy to find, has enough capacity and parking, and is accessible for disabled guests.
- If you need to hire a venue (i.e. village hall or a community centre), visit it first and book well in advance.
- Discuss your requirements with the venue manager. Tell them what you want it for and they may even let you have it for free! If not, ask for a charity discount.
- Think about where your auctioneer will stand and make sure they have clear visibility of the full room to see who's bidding!

## What and How?

- Think about prizes that will appeal for the invited audience. Getting 'lots' that are relevant to your audience is crucial.

- Use your friends and family to help you reach a wider circle of possible contacts. If possible, try to telephone the 'Company/Organisation' *before hand*, in order to establish the correct name and contact details of the person who deals with charitable requests (often letters just end up in the wrong hands).
- Enquire within your local community for prizes; supermarkets, wine merchants, restaurants, hotels, spas, jewellers, etc and suggest 'what' you might like from them.
- TV production companies can come up with some interesting or novel auction 'lots'. Try asking for a 'day on the set'... an item of clothing from one of the shows stars... tickets for a live performance... a script signed by all the cast, etc
- Football/rugby clubs may provide a box for the day or a signed shirt or ball.
- Once you have a date and venue confirmed, get the word out! We can supply you with posters to put up at work, in your local pub, school or college, supermarket or library.

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- We can also provide 'authorisation letters' to support your request for auction 'lots'.
- If your workplace has a newsletter or magazine, ask if you could promote your event in it.
- Ask your local newspaper, radio or TV station to run a feature on your activities. We can provide a 'press-release' template.

## Who?

- Once you've sourced 'lots', it will give you more of an idea of your target audience and what they are interested in. It's important that you target the right people to ensure you generate enough interest.
- You will need an enthusiastic and confident auctioneer who can introduce the items to be sold and encourage competitive bidding.
- It's also worth having others to help you on the evening so assign roles for someone to hold up the 'lots' so they can be clearly seen to help with the bids.

- You'll need someone to take the payments and record what items were bought and for how much to keep a track of sales.
- If it's a particularly busy room, you will need 'spotters' to look out for people bidding who may be missed in the crowd. Ask someone to keep an eye on security to ensure nothing goes missing!

## Other things to consider

- Think about what time you'll hold the auction within the events schedule, i.e. immediately after everyone has finished eating. People are more likely to pay attention and engage more with what's going on while they are still seated and it's easier for your auctioneer to spot who's bidding.
- Set reserve prices on your 'lots' well in advance (this is the minimum amount you are prepared for the items be sold for). Ensure your auctioneer is fully briefed and reserve

prices are clearly stated in any promotional materials listing the auction 'lots'. The winner is the highest bid that exceeds the reserve price.

- Think about how people are going to pay (cash or cheque), and ensure security is in place to keep the cash safe – both during the event and when getting it paid-in afterwards. You may wish to determine that everything is paid for at the event to avoid time-consuming 'chasing' afterwards. Please make sure you give everyone a receipt.
- Some venues will already have a licence to sell or supply alcohol. If you are using an unlicensed venue and plan to serve alcohol, you may need a temporary events notice. Please apply to your local authority for this.
- Print out and distribute a list of 'lots' in the order they will be auctioned – including details of who has donated it.
- Thank everyone involved for their kind support and... have fun!