

# **Guide to Attracting more Donors and Doubling Donations**

~ Three auction fundraising tips you can use today ~



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Hello! Thank you for downloading the ***“Guide to Attracting more Donors and Doubling Donations.”***

By downloading this report, you are investing your time into learning the cutting edge techniques to raising more money at your Fundraising Auction Event for your organization, school or non-profit. We will be discussing 3 mistakes that many groups just like yours are making and the 3 solutions to remedy them. Are you ready to raise more money to support your mission? Let’s go!

## **About Call To Auction and Bobby D. Ehlert BAS**

Call To Auction has been an idea I’ve had for many years while conducting fundraising and benefit auctions under my own name. I wanted to find a way to help more groups and non-profits to raise even more money to help their causes around the nation. As a result, Call To Auction was created on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013 as the authority on Fundraising, and Benefit and Charity Auctions. Whether it’s conducting exciting and inspiring live auctions, creating an inspiring Fund A Mission/Need message or planning and consulting on ways to raise more money, Call To Auction participates in all facets of the Fundraising Auction Event. In just 13 months, the team at Call To Auction has raised millions of dollars and helped many groups exceed their fundraising goals and change so many lives because of it.

Now a little about me. My name is Bobby D. Ehlert BAS (Benefit Auction Specialist as designated by the National Auctioneer Association, a group of less than 200 nationwide) and I love raising money for groups making a difference in the world. Coming from an auctioneer family, I was brought up in the profession from birth. Whether it was washing cars at the local car auction, serving hot dogs in the lunch lorry, bid spotting and then bid calling, auctions have been a big part of my life. Being a professional auctioneer selling cars, real estate, collectables, household items and antiques, I found that my true passion was helping raise money for non-profits and schools. I love everything about auctions and wanted to find a way to utilize the auction method of marketing and help more people.

After completing a few benefit auctions for friends, I found that I was so excited after the event that I couldn’t go to sleep for hours, knowing that I truly made a difference in the lives of others by raising money that hadn’t existed prior to the event. This was my **“Call To Auction”** and I had to find a way to help more people through the auction method, which I love so much. Below are some of my techniques that I have developed through my years of experience conducting and planning auctions and training with some of the best Fundraising Auctioneers in the world.

## **Three ways to “Attract More Donors and Double Donations” at your next fundraising event.**

### **The problem:**

**People are attending your event but feel bored, unengaged, pressured to give and aren't sure why they even bothered to attend.**

So many times I hear from groups that the attendees are leaving early and not having a great time at their events.

Leading up to the event, those that are dedicated to the organization and are helping to organize the event are completely burnt out from the planning, procurement and setup and are disinterested in holding a successful event.

This feeling of disinterest is felt by the potential donors at the event and create an even worse mood. A huge silent auction is held only to have the closing postponed 30 minutes thus pushing back dinner. Once seated, the attendees are inundated with boring speech after boring speech. When dessert is finally served, the long live auction with 15 items is conducted by a volunteer auctioneer who's had a little too much to drink. If all the items sell for a reasonable amount the "auctioneer" may or may not attempt a Fund A Need (Paddle Raiser or Cash Call) and this just annoys the donors even more and decreases the likelihood that they will give even a dollar. Most of the donors sneak out before this part or just sit in silence.

The volunteers, board and committee members and staff all collapse and cry that the event was a total disaster. This feeling rolls over into the following weeks and months and the people that attended the event are nowhere to be seen and monthly scheduled donations have dropped causing the bottom line in the budget to become tighter and smaller.

Does this scenario sound familiar? At least a little bit? If your event has one or many of these symptoms, you need to keep reading! We will now discuss 3 ways to treat these symptoms and turn your whole event around.

## 1. Make a FAB-ulous Event!

You heard me...make it **FAB!** When your donors don't know that it's going to be **FAB**, then they might just be coming to network, socialize and party! "But you said make it **FAB!**" That's right! When you make the event **FAB**, your donors will want to give you money, time or both!

F=Fundraiser

A=Auction

B=Benefiting

Get it? **FAB!** Everywhere you market your event from the save the date cards, to the invitations, social media and press releases...make it **FAB!** Put it everywhere. You need to let your donors know that you're having a Fundraiser, period. This will not be just a party with an open bar and hors d'oeuvres.

**FUNDRAISER!** This will be a fundraiser they are attending that will have a multitude of revenue generators to FUNDRAISE for your organization. Whether it's a silent auction, live auction, raffle, wine pull, etc. let your attendees know that they will be spending money. This will draw out the true supporters of your organization and leave those looking for a party at home. By doing this, you are setting the expectations of your guests and letting them know what the event will be so that when they arrive, they won't be surprised by the fact that a person on stage will be asking them for money.

**AUCTION!** You also need to remind people that they will be attending an auction. Everyone loves auctions! The sound, the rhythm, the fun, the fabulous trips and experiences to bid on all in the name of raising money for an organization! By giving your donors the expectation that they will be attending an auction, they will come prepared to bid on your items. Advertise and market the word **AUCTION** along with **FUNDRAISER** so your guests will be ready to bid and to give. So you'd better give them some good stuff to buy! You'd better have a professional fundraising auctioneer to help them bid and have fun. You'd better have bidder numbers for them to use to bid. You'd better have a clerk and check-out process in place. These are just a few things to think about setting in place before you set up and advertise your **AUCTION!**

**BENEFIT!** Who is this benefiting? Some groups call their event "Best Gala Ever" or "Boots n Bling" or whatever catchy name the marketing department came up with. You need to put the words Benefit, Benefiting, or Benefits and then your organization so that the FUNDRAISING AUCTION is BENEFITING the mission you serve. This brings us into the "**Why.**" Why are your donors going to come? Because they love what you organization is doing and the people you are serving. So give them a good "**Why**" story and they will know that the **FUNDRAISING** they do in the **AUCTION**, **BENEFITS** your organization, its

programs and ultimately those that you serve. The more money you raise, the more people you can serve. Money is the tool that can make that happen.

## 2. Fundraising First/Dance and Dessert Later

“What?? But we have speeches, awards, dessert, and a DJ on the schedule...let’s just do the auction thing after all that.” Many times the “Auction” becomes a last minute thought and gets pushed to the end of the night. “We’ll just sell some stuff and raise a little bit of money” or “We don’t want to make our guests mad by asking them for money right away” are two phrases I often hear from groups that aren’t serious about raising funds and developing donor relationships. If you follow the FAB rule above, most of the people in the room will be true supporters and will be more than happy to give you money to benefit your cause. They will also be overjoyed with you respecting their time and attention by putting that part of the program first. You have to look at events like high school. Classes can only be 45 minutes long with breaks in between. So open your doors, silent auction and play time begins. You take a break and shuffle all of your attendees into the “Cafeteria” aka Ballroom and then you have their undivided attention for 45-50 minutes until their focus wavers or they have to go to the bathroom. This is critical fundraising time. They are all happy, hungry and ready to bid. Have the salads set as they enter the ballroom, they can snack a bit as you welcome your guests, thank your sponsors and tell a story about “Why” you are there that night. Then...**BAM! It’s AUCTION time!** You have the guest’s, soon to be donor’s full attention to get the giving going. When you have their attention, your donations will go through the roof in the Live Auction and the Fund A Mission.

The auction acts as a warm up and a blender at the same time to whip the crowd into a giving frenzy. An effective benefit auctioneer will help you build momentum, create excitement, engage the whole audience and inspire the donors to give. During the auction, the audience learns how to and gets used to using their bi cards (a must have!) They are also hypnotized by the call of the auctioneer into paying more for experiences and trips than they are worth, because they are constantly reminded that they are giving to the “Why.” The key to a great fundraising auction crowd is that they are there because they know:

**“It’s not what you’re GETTING, but how much you are GIVING to support the cause.”**

When guests and bidders understand this, when the auctioneer is selling that \$5000 value trip to Napa and he/she pulls a \$10,000 or more bid from the crowd, you know you have a great fundraising auction on your hands! This momentum carries over into the Fund A Mission portion of the evening because the pocketbooks are open and the heartstrings have been pulled, so now it’s time to gather up the money.

Another reason to fundraise early is because guests are leaving events earlier and earlier each year. They manage to sneak out during a boring speech or while dessert is coming out. You will raise zero dollars from 100% of the attendees that have left. Utilize this early time in the event to get 100% participation from the crowd you worked so hard to get in those seats.

### **3. Don't be afraid to Ask for the Money!**

Money...why do we have to always talk about money?

Money is said to be the root of all evil right? Money is also the solution to many of the world's problems if put into the hands of the capable and the caring. Who are the capable and the caring? That's you! Non-profits, charities and schools are the ones that are in the business of changing the world. Whether it is a Cancer Research Foundation, Private School, Animal Rescue or any of the 1.5 million non-profits, you are changing the world one dollar at a time. You all have expenses, personnel, salaries, equipment, overhead, supplies, gas, insurance, lawyer, accountants, to pay for even before you start talking about the services and programs you offer.

The almighty dollar fuels this machine and can do good and evil. It's the master that tells it what to do. By looking at money as a tool to do good and changing that conversation on the night of your fundraiser, you put that control into your donor's wallets, I mean hands. By connecting your donors with your cause and the impact that it is making in the world today, you are helping them to help you make a real difference. This becomes a partnership from that point forward. When a donor feels like a partner who's invested in your success, you have a donor for life. Studies have shown that most donors will stay with an organization for 2 years and then look for warmer and fuzzier pastures with another group. It is very important within those two years, you grab onto that donor and make them feel welcomed, invested and valued. You can do this by creating amazing and inspiring fundraising events.

Please don't be afraid to ask for the money! Work with your professional Fundraising Auctioneer and Consultant to help you create a great event starting from the greeters at the door to the last person the guests interact with before leaving for the night. First and last impressions are so important. Please make good ones! Your auctioneer should be able to work with you on developing an effective Fund A Mission message prior to asking for donations. He/she will also direct you to the most effective way to gather the donations and expedite check out.

Give those donors a reason to give and make it easy for them to give. (Bidder numbers, hint hint) Whether a donor gives \$100 or \$1 million, that feeling of giving is a lasting impression that will be with them for many weeks if not months after the event. When you send a thank you note and they open it, the donor is whisked back to that night and that feel good feeling of giving rushes over them. It's almost like a shot of drugs, but these are good drugs we're talking about! By perpetuating this feeling and reminding your donors about the impact they are making with your help, you will have donors for life. (Much longer than 2 years!) Please don't be afraid to ask for the money!

To wrap up, I want to give you some action items to take away and implement to make your next fundraising auction well attended and well funded.

1. Remember to make a FAB event! (Fundraiser, Auction and Benefit) Put this everywhere! Website, marketing materials, signage, etc. Your donors need to know that they are there to spend money!
2. Fundraise first, Dance/ Dessert later! Get the attention and dollars from your donors early in the event so you that you can touch all of them, not just those that are left in the ballroom.
3. Don't be afraid to Ask for the Money!

I want to thank you again for reading this report on how to find more donors and double your donations! If you implement just a portion of what I have laid out in this report, you will raise \$1000's of additional dollars! If you implement and tweak all of these strategies as well as work with a Professional Fundraising Auctioneer and Consultant, you will double if not triple your donations in a few short years!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bobby D. Ehlert". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the name.

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