



Making the Most of Your Anniversary Gala

For more than 25 years, I've been honored to serve as auctioneer and consultant for countless anniversary events. Alongside my valued clients we have found it very useful to emphasize that these 'anniversaries' are exceptionally well suited for building enhanced advocacy and donor cultivation.

Here are six strategies to grow, gather and retain all of those supporters who love you, raise more (record-setting) money and expand your attendance and support base.

1. First and foremost, **obsess on audience development.**

Reach out personally to your founders and all past board members and invite them personally. Then reach out and invite every single donor – personally. Make sure that you include everyone who has ever attended ANY of your events. Your unique anniversary celebration will only happen *once*, so here's the one to make truly memorable.

Be sure to include any and all auction item donors and invite them personally, too.

2. Form a **diverse, active host committee**. Invite supporters, from the founders and volunteers from the past to present-day donors. There will be many people who are not able to attend and wish to offer their support by sending a contribution.
3. Pick the **most lucrative anniversary theme**. In all of your outreach, promotion, marketing, and social media, keep your mission and impact front and center. From your save the date card to your inspiring speaking program – showcase the impact that your generous donors' contributions have helped your organization to accomplish. This is the time to go all out so that everyone falls in love with your great cause all over again!

Start early – even several years before your anniversary event. Your signature event is also an opportunity for a year round celebration with numerous events.

4. **Avoid costly mistakes**. Many groups spend valuable funds, resources and time on what another auctioneer calls the “3 Deadly D’s: decor, dessert and dancing.” (Hint: no one will recall the name of the band, the color scheme, decorations or tablecloths – however, they will be inspired by true, first-person stories that showcase the amazing impact your mission has on the lives of those it serves.) Be sure your audio is robust and visuals vibrant. That’s where your gala support should go.

5. Invest your time and resources into what matters. Focus on your purpose. With your guests overall enjoyment in mind, your purpose is three-fold.

1. Communicate what the impact of your donor's gift will accomplish
2. Obsess on strategic audience development
3. Express profound gratitude again and again

6. Leverage your anniversary event as a launching pad to skyrocket fundraising too. Whatever the year – your fundraising auction is an unparalleled opportunity to invite and engage new supporters and current donors in an exciting, profitable and inspiring way! Stand out as a signature, inspirational, fun, *and* profitable event where your generous donors are thrilled to bring friends, family and colleagues every year!

Celebrate your success, treasure the past and continue to create a legacy for your great cause and your donors for the future.



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