

Presented by Murad Auctions

**VALUABLE AUCTION SOLICITATION
TIPS AND RESOURCES FROM
INDUSTRY EXPERTS**



**HOW TO
SUCCESSFULLY
SOLICIT
DONATIONS FOR
AUCTIONS**

Establish a Solicitations Committee

When soliciting donations for auction fundraisers, one of the most important things to remember is to ask for help. You need to have a Solicitations Committee. The Solicitations Committee obtains donations for the silent and live auction. You have numerous other responsibilities of planning your event, so you can't solicit donations for your auction alone.

Prepare Solicitation Tools

Provide your Solicitations Committee members with a notebook with resources they will need and information that explains their duties and goals. The information you provide should be updated regularly. You can also make all of the information in the notebook available in digital format, so committee members can print extra copies or e-mail them to prospective donors. You can e-mail the committee members all the documents or you can have them available for download on your website.

The notebook and downloadable documents should include:

- Contracts
- Information about your organization
- Sponsorship opportunities
- List of past donors from a database that you have compiled and maintained (You can do Internet searches to find key prospects, see links below.)
- Solicitation/donor request letters. See resources below for samples.

Use These Solicitation Resources

- [Typical Letter Sample](#)
- [Creative Letter sample](#)
- Click [here](#) to get ideas on writing an effective solicitations letter.

Other Tips for Preparing Solicitation Materials

Here are a few other tips that will help you prepare for soliciting donations:

- In all of your materials, it is extremely important to be specific about why you are raising money.
- Ask committee members to copy the solicitation letter into the body of their e-mail instead of attaching the file to increase the chances of potential donors reading it.
- Ask them to attach the contract and donation form to the email.
- Make sure they include the solicitors contact information in the email so they can easily answer any questions or concerns.
- Include links to your website in all e-mails

Meet With Committee Members Regularly To Prepare Them for Success

After you recruit your committee members, meet with them to explain their duties. You will also need to meet with them regularly to:

- Answer any questions they have about their duties
- Brainstorm ideas for soliciting donations and to provide any additional information they need.
- Divide the committee into teams to contact prospective donors.
- Set goals for donations and report on progress.
- Review updated database of past donors and donated items
- Revise or create the donor request letter and donation receipts and distribute to all committee members and prospective donors.
- Find out if any committee members have relationships with retailers, business owners or individuals that could be possible donors.
- Set and review the time limits to receive donations.
- Cheer the success of your members, address issues or roadblocks and offer solutions.

Explain How Donating Auction Items Benefits the Business Owners

Many people don't know how to solicit donations for auctions. They don't want to bother the business owner, but the success of this process is all about how YOU think about it. In actuality, you are offering the business owners a great opportunity to gain exposure for their companies and the possibility of gaining new customers. If your solicitations team understands that you are really presenting a great opportunity to your local businesses, the team members will be more excited to approach them.

Have Fun and Be Creative with Your Solicitations Committee

Be creative with you committee. This is important because if you make the solicitation process fun, your committee will be more motivated and successful. For example, one school we worked with had a safari theme. To be consistent with the theme, the chairperson gave each person on the team a green folder titled *On the Hunt for Great Auction Items which included* solicitation information, a small pair of toy binoculars, and a safari hat. It was a huge hit! Here's another idea for a safari theme: Give each team member a water bottle, a flashlight, a folder decorated with animal print and instructions on *hunting down great items*.

Show Your Auction Solicitations Team How Much You Appreciate Each of Them

Let your committee members know that you appreciate all their hard work. Tell them that you will list their names and the items they solicited along with a special thank you on the bid sheet or display card. For example, include something like the following on the bid sheet or display card: Thank you, Sharon Smith for soliciting this auction item.

This motivates them to bring in better items and they will be grateful for your appreciation. Give prizes for the top three people who bring in the most items for the auction. Make it fun. Hold a thank you party for your committee.

Plan Solicitations Early; Be Strategic and Divide the Work

Here is some helpful information to remember when soliciting donations:

- Ask a volunteer committee to help with this task.
- Ask each volunteer to research and solicit 10 to 20 companies.
- Make a strategic plan, research on the Internet, and send out the requests.
- Keep in mind that many companies accept donation requests via e-mail or phone, but most still require a formal request on the organization's letterhead.
- Make sure to maintain inventory of items in a secure location.
- Use some type of [auction software](#) to track your items
- Begin your solicitation at least 6-9 months prior to your event to allow the company the time to process your request and send the item or certificate to you.
- Summer (May-August) seems to be the best time to solicit companies for donations. Most people are not asking during this time, and many retailers are not as busy during the summer months.
- For some companies, January is the best time to solicit because their budget runs out quickly.
- It is often a time consuming task to research the various companies and send in the solicitation forms, but well worth it when the donations come rolling in!
- Many hands make light work, so asking numerous people to solicit donations from a few companies works much better than asking one person to take on the daunting task of all solicitations.

Teach Your Committee How to Ask For Donations

Ask for something specific instead of saying, *We'd like you to donate something from your store.* Ask for a specific item you think will sell well. Say, *We'd like a Viking grill to include in our men's section of the auction.* If you ask for items worth around \$100 or \$250 many retailers and businesses will honor your request. Some will give you an item worth about \$50 instead, which is better than a bunch of \$10 items on the auction tables!

Don't expect items to come in from just sending out e-mails. Retailers like the personal touch. Encourage solicitors to go by stores and introduce themselves and tell them about the great exposure donating an item will give them!

Ask for donations from the businesses you frequent.

Memorize the demographic and economic information about your patrons and convey this to your potential donors. "The average income of our guests is over \$100,000 and most live within 10 miles of your business. "They are your perfect customers!"

When soliciting donations, you may also want to use a few of the [20 phrases that will make your donor feel like a hero.](#)

Gift Cards

Gift Cards are easy to get as donations because retailers know that this will bring the winner into the store and that they will likely spend more than the gift card amount. Ask your committee to solicit gift cards from the retailers they do business with. When you are eating at a restaurant, ask if they will donate a gift card. It is hard for them to refuse a paying customers!

Tips to Increase Odds of a Successful Auction

Charity auction items usually sell between 50-70% of market value, with some variance.

To calculate how much in donations the committee needs to acquire, multiply the gross auction revenue goal by 2. If you want to raise 50K, then you need to acquire 100K in donations to reach your goal. If your items are outstanding and bring more value, then you will raise more money than expected. Be cautious and you are almost guaranteed to exceed your goals.

Use online auctions to increase your percentage return to 75% of value or more!

Focus on Less Is More



The silent auction should have fewer, higher valued items. If you have too many items, you will have a garage sale instead of a successful auction. The formula we use is no more items than half the number of guests at the event. An event with 400 guests would have no more than 200 silent auction items. 100 to 150 items valued at \$50 or more would be even better. You will make a higher percentage of the retail value if you stick to this formula.

In general, people get worn out at live auctions that are longer than 30 minutes. That's why it's important to offer less items that will bring in more money. Offer 8 to 10 items instead of the typical 15 to 20 items. You'll discover that those fewer items, if they are substantial, will bring in more money.

Offering fewer more valuable items will also provide the opportunity for people to write a check afterwards. Incorporating a five minute fund a cause at the end of the live auction will allow those guests who did not win anything in the auction to make a cash donation. So, less live auction items could mean more money for your charity.

Auction Items That Sell Well

Unique Experiences, Items and Services are Auction Items That Sell

Most of your guests at an auction fundraiser can buy trips and retail items anywhere. Your goal is to offer auction items that sell. Creating packages that are unique experiences, will give you great results by offering something that cannot be obtained anywhere but at your event. Here are some examples of items that were auctioned by some of our clients:

Cheer it like it's Hot!!



New and improved *Cheerleader for the Night* program entitles FOUR girls to be cheerleaders alongside the Varsity Cheerleaders at one home game in the season. This includes attending practice and the morning pep rally, and being on the sideline for the entire game. This priceless opportunity is guaranteed to be a HUGE hit with your enthusiastic cheerleading fans!!!

Little Drill Teamers

Five girls get to sit with the drill team at a district home game and attend a morning practice. In addition, your girls will have a cameo appearance in the spring dance show! This is a wonderful chance for five friends to learn from and dance with the best!

A View to Thrill

One lucky person will get the ride of their life on the one and only, Dallas Stars Zamboni! Experience what it is like on the ice with thousands of screaming fans cheering as you zip around the rink in the Zamboni! Friends and family will have the best seats in the house as they watch from the 12 person luxury suite! Be at American Airlines Center Dallas Stars Game for the thrill of your life!

Calling all Ball Boys!

Your little future football player and 3 of his closest friends will enjoy a night at a varsity football game alongside the players. They will enjoy practice with the team helping the coaching staff the week before the game, sitting with the team at the pep rally, and being at the locker room pep talks prior to the game. At the game, they will be on the sidelines enjoying the excitement. They will also receive an official game ball signed by all of the varsity players. This would be a night to go down in history for your son!

Fighter Pilot for the Day

For the person in your life who has everything! This is a wonderful opportunity to surprise the recipient of your choice with a chance to fly in a real fighter jet! This wonderful flight package will allow the captain of this experience to choose his or her favorite airport to take off and land! Please fasten your seat belt and prepare to land this once in a lifetime experience! [Click here to find out how to obtain this package and more experience packages!](#)



Offer Experiences That Appeal to Men



Men's items are hot and they sell really well. Many men love rugged adventures and sports involving guns. Men who attend your auction will easily bid and pay high amounts for experiences such as a hunting trip, a fishing trip a dove hunt or a safari. Women may even bid on them for gifts for their husbands or as a trip for themselves.

Other popular live auction items that sell are opportunities to meet war heroes and Navy Seals and to use their special weapons, such as cannons and high powered guns. So, if you know war heroes, get them in your live auction.

Offer Items That Interest Auction Committee Chairmen

It's always great to offer live auction items that the auction chairs care about. When brainstorming ideas for live auction items, if committee members voice interest in the items and say they would buy them, add them to your auction items. If your board member says she would love to go on a trip to Paris, then get a trip to Paris for your live auction! Try to get the trip donated, but if you cannot, click [here](#) to take a look at the packages we have to offer for your next event.

Some other ideas may include:

- Famous Chef Cooking Dinner in Your Home for 12 guests
- Movie Preview Party in Famous Producer's Private Viewing Room
- On Field Experience with a Professional Athlete with Locker Room Tour and Personally Autographed Jersey and Ball.
- Personalized Washington Tour with Your State Representative and US Flag

- Experience With a Priest or School Principal Taking Part in Something Unique about That Person. An example is a parish priest who was a Texas A&M football player who will hold a private practice with your son's team and then take 3 guests to the A&M game during the season.

The possibilities are endless. Just use your imagination and brainstorm with your committees.

Free Auction Items to Offer at Fundraisers

When planning a fundraiser for your non-profit, it's important to consider using virtually free auction items to really increase profits.

Here are some ideas for free auction items:



- Front parking spaces at a school or church. We have seen these sell for up to \$5,000 each and you can sell multiples, if you would like!
- Front row seat for graduation or the holiday program or church/synagogue service
- Naming rights for the gym, the circle drive, porta cashes, the football field, horse barn, a horse for an equestrian group, or animals at the zoo.



- Guest conductor at the symphony
- Serenade the night of your event by the lead singer of the band
- Walk on the set of a local show or movie set



- Behind the scenes tour of a local news show or movie set. This is a great package to offer at a high school auction for a student and 3 friends. You could arrange lunch with a news anchor or actor.



- Cooking lesson from a famous local chef



- Radio show guest host
- Breakfast with the fire department chief or police chief
- Ride along in the police chief's car



- Tour of the fire station, including the fire truck and ambulance
- First spot in the carpool line at a school
- Principal for the day
- Junior cheerleader or drill team dance member for one game or the whole season
- Ball boy for the football team



- Throw out the first pitch at a baseball game
- Ride in the front car or on a float at a Christmas parade



- Personal Santa visit in your home
- Lunch lady for the day. He/she gets to plan the menu and serve during lunch.



- Be a doctor or surgeon for a day. The child gets to see a surgery and learn about being a doctor.

These are just a few free auction items ideas. Brainstorm with your committee and come up with meaningful experiences for your group. Please feel free to [contact us](#) if you need help soliciting auction items or for a free consultation to learn more ways to increase the profits of your fundraising event.

Travel and Experience Packages

If you are having a hard time getting some more valuable travel and experience packages donated, you can use no risk packages found on our website. Use the link below get ideas for packages that sell well. We can customize a package for you or add to the donated items you have to create a package.

- [Travel and Experience Packages](#)
- [Experience packages](#) appeal to those who can buy anything they want
- Get more ideas for great auction items on our [Pinterest page](#).

Avoid These The Following Auction Items:

- Services that require a personal relationship, such as lawyers, personal trainers, plastic surgeons or hair salons. These don't usually sell very well except if donation is from a very prestigious and well- known person
- Jewelry unless it has universal appeal.
- Artwork
- Really unusual items. Ask yourself: Would I bid 50% of value on this and be excited about winning it? If not, don't include it in the auction.
- Coupons for a percentage discount. You need to obtain a full donation.

Companies to Contact for Nonprofit Donations

To assist you in making your fundraising event a success, we've compiled a list of companies to contact for nonprofit donations. Most companies have a community outreach department and will make donations to schools, churches and nonprofits. The key is to visit their websites and follow the process outlined for

charitable donations.



[Southwest Airlines](#) supports

- Organizations that aid Families Facing Serious Illnesses
- Programs and organizations that provide support for our Military and their Families when separated by duty
- Organizations that assist in Disaster Preparedness and Response
- Programs that foster action and create ideas to benefit our planet



[Carnival Cruise Lines](#) supports a broad range of causes and organizations, with primary funding interests in the following areas:

- Culture
- Community Affairs (human/social needs and children/social welfare)
- Education
- Health/Human Services

Special emphasis is given to requests focusing on the education and welfare of youth.



[Nikon](#): In assessing sponsorships, they evaluate the overall opportunity which includes how it fits with Nikon's marketing brand strategies, consumer reach, consumer engagement, partnership opportunities and the impact on the communities in which we serve.

You must fill out their online form, at least 6 months prior to your event to be considered.

SEAWORLD PARKS
& ENTERTAINMENT.

[SeaWorld](#) partners with charities across the country whose values and missions are aligned with our own, including hospitals, organizations that serve children with disabilities, and animal shelter and rescue groups.

Visit our [Pinterest](#) to see a collection of companies who will make donations.

Here are some additional sources to contact for nonprofit donations:

Retail

[Barnes & Noble](#)

[Best Buy](#)

[BJ's](#)

[Costco](#)

[Home Depot](#)

[J. Crew](#)

[LL Bean](#)

[Land's End](#)

[Macy's](#)

[Nike](#)

[Otter Box](#)

[Sears and Subsidiaries](#)

[Sports Authority](#)

[Staples](#)

[Target Stores](#)

[Walgreens](#)

Restaurants/Food/Drinks

[Ben and Jerry's Donations](#)

[Ben and Jerry's Ice-Cream Foundation](#)

[Coca Cola](#)

[Cracker Barrel](#)

[Landry's Restaurant Chain](#)

[Olive Garden](#)

[Panera Bread](#)

[Panera Bread Fundraising Night](#)

[Paradise Bakery](#)

[The Cheesecake Factory](#)

[Total Wine & More](#)

Grocery

[Albertson's](#)

[Kroger](#)

[Publix](#)

[Stop & Shop](#)

[Whole Foods](#)

Kids/Toys

[American Girl](#)

[Books A Million](#)

[Build A Bear Workshop](#)

[Oriental Trading Company](#)

[Nintendo](#)

Travel

[Disneyland](#)

[Sea World Orlando](#)

[Sea World San Diego](#)

[Six Flags](#)

Airlines

[US Airways](#)

[Jet Blue](#)

Finance

[Wells Fargo](#)

Recognize and Thank Your Donors and Sponsors

Show them the love! Recognize your auction donors and sponsors on your auction website. It is really great if you can put their company logo and/or their name on your auction website and link it to their website.

Put their business names in your event program and on the slideshow running during the event. Encourage the donors to provide business cards for you to put on the auction tables.

Ask them to create a QR code for the display card which will take your guests to their website for a discount or coupon at their store/business. If you don't know how to do this, [ask us](#). We can help.

About Murad Auctions

As professional charity auctioneers, [Murad Auctions](#) organizes and manages successful, profitable fundraising auctions for non-profit organizations in Dallas, Fort Worth and other cities across the U.S. We use our expertise, knowledge of the auction industry, new and creative auction ideas, and our effective and efficient procedures to host auctions that are so effective they often break records and exceed goals. We offer a variety of auction services to help make charity fundraisers successful, including live auctions, bid spotters, auction consulting, registration services, silent auction set up, auction solicitation services, and professional event planning.