PROVEN REVENUE ENHANCERS FOR YOUR FUNDRAISER

Empower everyone in the room to give to your cause
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Preface

At Greater Giving, we are inspired every day by nonprofit and school fundraisers—you work tirelessly to make the world a better place. We are constantly looking for ways to give back and one of those ways is by providing a continuous flow of up to date and useful fundraising information. Our Resource Library is filled with articles, guides, and webinars about fundraising, best practices, event management, and more. One subject has consistently remained the most popular: new ideas for revenue enhancers and how to incorporate them into an event.

We thought it would be a great idea to gather 26 of the best auction revenue enhancers out there and put them in one easy-to-use lookbook for you!

Through years of experience, we have accumulated a lot of great content on the subject; however, we wanted to take it a step further and reach out to the real experts—our wonderful auctioneer, event planning, consulting, and service provider partners, who bring these ideas to life and use them to raise more funds at events nationwide.

This book is intended to bring a wide variety of fun, tried-and-true revenue enhancers together and present them as ideas you can choose and adapt as needed.

Using This Lookbook

It’s easy to get started! Just flip through the colorful pages and read about the enhancers that catch your eye. Or read the book from cover to cover and bookmark your favorites. You might find a new twist to a game you’ve tried before, or be inspired to try something completely new.

Each chapter will focus on one revenue enhancer and outline how it works, provide some variations, and offer advice based on experiences. Additionally, one of our valued partners will share a real experience. If you would like to find out more information about the revenue enhancer or the partner, click the “Learn More” tab, where you will be directed to the full article in our Resource Library.
Preface

A Few Things to Remember

Raffles—Make sure to check your state’s raffle licensing laws as well as your organization’s bylaws. Also, check on alcohol sales rules and permits, as well as firearms, if those will be available at your event or in the auction.

Numbers—The ticket prices, amounts raised, and any other specific numbers used in this book are generalized and will differ based on the number of guests, the type of event, and guest budget. So plan accordingly.

Blinky Rings—A lot of the games refer to “blinky rings.” If you haven’t seen them, they are soft plastic rings that light up when pressed—and they are an inexpensive and noticeable way to let everyone know who is on board.

Packages—Part of the success of these revenue enhancers is having an exciting package that is buzz worthy. If you are interested in “no-risk” experience and travel packages for your event, take a look at our Auction Booster for options.

Managing Transactions—Another big theme in the book is making it easy to give. Whenever possible, use bidder numbers to sign your guests up to participate. Cash can limit the amount you can raise. Greater Giving has been providing high quality, all-in-one fundraising event software and credit card processing since 2002. We would love to talk with you about your fundraising initiatives.

Let’s Dive In

While revenue enhancers are a small part of your overall fundraising strategy, they can have a significant impact on the amount you raise. Especially if they are delivered by an auctioneer or event-planning professional, whose expertise is in getting the crowd excited to be a part of the fundraising momentum.

This book is for you, and we sincerely hope it brings you new ideas on how to raise more funds for your cause. Let us know what you think and if you have any ideas to share. Enjoy!
Acknowledgements

This is a compilation of visionary fundraising innovation spanning decades, from dedicated nonprofit and school fundraising professionals, auctioneers, event planners, to consultants and service providers. We would like to thank those passionate visionaries for bringing the revenue enhancers in this book to fruition. Countless nonprofit organizations and schools have improved their fundraising results and overall donor experience with these games.

Our work here is to bring these revenue enhancers and games to a broader audience by compiling the concepts into an easy-to-read and visually-pleasing format that can be used as a lookbook or idea book for breathing new life into your next event.

Many of our partners in this book do fall into the above-mentioned group of visionaries, providing new and creative ways of fundraising or radically morphing a concept into something fresh and new. Technology and the donor psyche is continuously evolving, and fundraising must keep up to be most effective.

We appreciate all of our dedicated partners, and would like to especially thank those that took the time and effort to lend their expertise to this project. While the insight in this book is enough to incorporate any of these revenue enhancers at your next event; hiring fundraising professionals can have a significant impact on the amount of money you raise. We encourage you to visit our Partners Locator at www.greatergiving.com or connect directly with a partner listed in this book.

We had a great time putting this resource together. Thank you to our content development team: Dathan, Sirenna, Jeanine, Derek, Joshua, Kiersi, Sara, Devon, and Jaqueline. A big thanks to resident fundraising experts Siri and Lisa. And thanks to our Advisory Community for helping us keep a finger on the pulse of fundraising.

Special thanks need to go out to Dathan Montes for meticulously managing the content creation process. To Debby Roth-Bush who manages our Partner Program and coordinates all communication with our hundreds of partners. To Ginnie MacPherson of MacPherson Design who turned a blank canvas into an illustrated gallery of awesomeness. And, to Jill Boyer, who consistently encourages the team to be creative and challenges us to provide the highest-quality resources for the nonprofit world.

I hope you enjoy this book! We realize there are still a number of revenue enhancers that didn’t make it into this book—so stay tuned for more . . .

Todd Smith, Digital Marketing Manager
Introduction

Kathy Kingston, CAI, BAS

“It’s not what people get; it’s how many people give that makes a difference.”

That’s my core message to fundraising auction clients and audiences—and to YOU. (Hint: That’s how I sold a tangy tangerine for $2,500 in an audience of 37 people at a benefit auction kick-off event!)

Imagine 26 fundraising auctioneers, consultants, and event experts sitting right on the corner of your desk!

As you face increasingly complex and competitive fundraising, now more than ever, it’s vital to add proven, innovative ways for your guests to become inspired and to support your great cause.

26 Proven Revenue Enhancers for Your Fundraiser offers you fresh, profitable ideas to generate new funds, engage more donors, and build fun and excitement at your fundraising auctions, galas, and events.

Written by many of the top professional benefit auctioneers and event planners, you will learn their outstanding insider tips in this essential book that every nonprofit leader, volunteer, and board member should read and share. Thanks to the outstanding leadership of Greater Giving, you’ll meet and have access to leaders in benefit auctions and fundraising events who you can contact directly for more information and valuable support.

Why Revenue Enhancers are Valuable for You

There are three significant benefits of adding revenue enhancers to your fundraiser auction event. First, they’re interactive because they stir energy, fun, and deepen engagement among the audience. Second, they’re inclusive. They make everyone feel they can make a difference because you’re offering a price point and an interest level at which every guest can participate. Finally, these games are income-producing, lifting your revenue above the grand total from traditional core profit centers (silent auctions, live auctions, and fund-a-need).¹

26 Proven Revenue Enhancers for Your Fundraiser is a vital resource for you, development staff, auction committees, boards of directors, and volunteers. Greater Giving has developed and organized this valuable book just for you as a visual showcase of the most popular, and some lesser-known revenue enhancers. Use this as an idea book—a quick reference to find the best revenue enhancer for your next event.

7 Insider Secrets to Maximize Your Revenue Enhancers

Here are my favorite strategies to best consume and optimize the excellent resources in this book.

1. Make Every Minute a Revenue Minute

Don’t leave money in the room. At many fundraising auctions and events, there’s a wide socioeconomic mix of guests. Plus, some guests don’t want, don’t need, or can’t afford to bid on a live auction or silent auction item. But they do want to contribute and participate, and to have fun, too. With revenue enhancers, you can diversify your event income streams and infuse new money into your event with Wall of Wine, Golden Ticket, Graffiti Wall, Flash Mob, and all the other awesome activities offered in this book.

2. Engage New Donors

Think about revenue enhancers as creative ways to build relationships with your supporters. Not just lighthearted opportunities to raise funds; you are creating a whole new social dynamic with these activities, stimulating audience interaction, while connecting guests more deeply to your cause. You can engage everyone at a giving level that is meaningful for them. From a donor-development standpoint, it’s this kind of meaningful, exciting engagement that builds loyalty long after auction night.

3. Do the Auction Math

Play it all out on paper first. Calculate how much you can actually raise before you commit to include it. Determine your ROI—Return on Investment. Do the math to determine if any of these revenue generators will raise enough money to be worth all of your time and effort.
Introduction

Kathy Kingston, CAI, BAS

4. Less is More

Don’t let the sideshow swallow up your circus. Make sure that revenue enhancers do not consume your valuable time and resources. While it may be tempting to add more, consider sprinkling in only one or two well-designed predictably-profitable revenue enhancers. This way you can still focus staff and volunteers on powerfully lucrative strategies such as audience development, donor cultivation, and marketing your high-income live auction and fund-a-need appeal. Keep your fundraising event fresh by switching out different revenue enhancers each year using all the terrific ideas in this book.

5. Add More Fun

Great revenue enhancers add sizzle and fun. People spend more money when they’re enjoying themselves. And fun is an important factor in the success of your benefit auctions and events! Why? A National Auctioneers Association (NAA) study showed that 92 percent of the respondents identified “fun” as their reason for attending auctions.²

6. Mobilize Well Trained Volunteers

Get organized and train an army of outstanding volunteers (who are not enjoying adult beverages or standing around visiting with their friends). The best volunteers are gregarious people who know how to enthusiastically and consistently engage your guests, both about your great cause and your revenue-generator activities.

7. Raise More Funds with a Professional Benefit Auctioneer and Consultant

Why risk it? A professional auctioneer, especially one who specializes in fundraising, can make a huge difference to the success and tempo of your fundraising event. Uniquely trained and dedicated to nonprofits and schools, professional benefit auctioneers and consultants use innovative, proven strategies that help you maximize your full potential—not only in raising money, but also in engaging your donors. Consultants and professional benefit auctioneers have the expert skills to design and lead interactive and revenue-producing activities that get your audience excited and engaged to raise more funds.

A Final Thank YOU!

First, I would like to express heartfelt gratitude to YOU for your dedication and passion to change lives and to make a difference for so many people, animals, and communities around the world!

I hope you enjoy reading 26 Proven Revenue Enhancers for Your Fundraiser and I wish you all the very best of success with your fundraising. A special thank you to all of the auctioneers, consultants, and event planners who added their significant talents to this book. To Greater Giving, we are deeply appreciative of your vision and commitment to nonprofit, educational, and charitable causes.

If you’d like to learn more, I would highly encourage you to contact each author/expert whose contact information may be found in each chapter.

Wishing you unprecedented fundraising success!

Kathy Kingston
kingstonauction.com
IDEA #1: 10X Envelopes

Any way you go about it, a 10X (or 4X) envelope fundraiser is a great way to add excitement, raise a bit more money, and collect names or register guests at your next fundraising event.

How Does It Work?

Guests are handed an envelope at the beginning of your event when they arrive. Your registration team asks them to place money inside—anywhere between $1 and $20. Then, they write their names on the envelopes and place them in a lottery box. At the end of the night, before guests leave (a good time is after your speaker finishes), have a special guest pick an envelope out of the box. The winner gets ten times the amount of her donation in cash, and the rest of the gifts go toward your cause.

All you need is a coordinator, envelopes, a box for collecting envelopes, a good pen, and $200 in cash ready to give away, if necessary! Make it even fancier with a sign or banner in front of the box or table where the box is located.

You can use 10X Envelopes at nearly any fundraising or program event, but keep in mind that adding this to your existing check-in process may slow things down in order to hand out envelopes and explain the concept and rules to each guest. Consider directing guests to a separate table with volunteers who will explain and collect envelopes.

The more guests, the better! Try this fundraiser at your next event that is sure to draw a good amount of people—a marathon, a comedy show, or a golf tournament, for example. If you are planning a public open house event to show off your new museum, exhibition, or front lawn statue, this is a great way to create buzz, collect contact information, and raise a bit of money.

To make a profit, simply take the highest entry point—in this example, $20—and multiply by your factor—10X—and divide that number by the lowest entry point. For this example, you want to aim for at least 200 participants to make sure you profit.

Variations and Other Names

Raise the stakes. If you want to try this game at a more elite party, like a cocktail party, instead of asking for a small donation, ask for a pledge for a larger gift, between $25 and $250. Instead of 10X being the prize, make it only 4X, with the ultimate prize being $1,000. Follow up with the donors later when they are leaving, and mail or email a pledge reminder for their gift the day after the event.

Use the Internet to your advantage and set up an online giving station. People might not have cash on hand, but they are willing to donate with their plastic! Record the amount donated and stuff it in their envelope instead of a bill. This way you get their contact information in your system, too.
Set three giving levels—play at $5, $10, or $25. Place three boxes instead of just one. Each box has a prize (instead of cash) associated with it that is worth at least 10X the value of the play price. For $5, they have a chance to win a prize worth $50 (a gift card for Amazon, a piece of jewelry, or maybe a flower arrangement voucher). The $25 box has a covetable prize like an electronic device. This way you can seek donations for the prizes and bring in even more revenue for your cause!

Advice

- This event works best when run at a check in with a smaller group that is auction savvy. This keeps things moving quickly.
- You may want to set up a “station” in the silent auction and encourage guests to participate.
- Sometimes an incentive to participate is very successful—such as a blinky ring or pin for participating.

We had a client who added this revenue stream to their event this past year for the first time. Many of their guests had never played it; the excitement and change generated lots of participation. Nearly 90% of the guests participated, including spouses who played individually. Not only did they participate, but many gave over the $20 maximum, resulting in an income of over $2,000! Then the winning envelope had only $12 dollars, and the generous attendee donated all of the $120 ($12x10) back to the organization!!

– Courtney L. Givens, Simple Pleasures Events

www.simplepleasuresevents.com
**How Does It Work?**

You’ll need raffle tickets—the double row where the ticket can be torn in two and both tickets have the same number. Give one to the purchaser and put one in the drawing container.

You want to price the 50/50 raffle ticket so sales quickly build up. The 50/50 raffle can be priced low at $5 or $10 per ticket or higher at $25 or even $50 per ticket. But the idea is to set the price at the level that will sell in your specific audience.

Consider having your auctioneer do a “sweep” from the stage right before you close out the 50/50 raffle ticket sales. Ask anyone in your audience who wants to buy a 50/50 raffle ticket to simply hold up their bid card and say how many tickets they want to purchase.

Have volunteers ready to quickly sell and tear new tickets. You may want to consider having volunteers working in teams of two—one to take care of the tickets and one to facilitate the purchase with bidder number.

Toss these new, last-minute raffle tickets into the drawing container and you are ready to draw the winner!

Ask an impartial person to draw the winning ticket (someone who didn’t buy any tickets), perhaps a student, a beneficiary, or a committee member.

Have your auctioneer announce the winning ticket number. Give the winner 1 to 2 minutes to collect their prize (allow more time if the prize is large). If no one shows up, select another winner.

**Variations and Other Names**

Although the 50/50 split is the most popular, you can experiment with different configurations: a 40/60 split or a 30/70 split.

One organization created a grid numbered from 1 to 45 and sold tickets for $2. They then selected two winners—one for $30 and another for $15.
Here’s a fun thing to do with the 50/50 raffle. Don’t wait until the end of your event to draw the 50/50 raffle prize, as you might do with another raffle. Instead, draw the winning ticket right before your live auction. That way the person who wins the 50/50 raffle has that much more money to spend in your live auction.

– Kip Toner, Kip Toner Benefit Auctions
www.kiptonerbenefitauctions.com

Advice

• Earmark the proceeds for a special project to generate more interest.
• Keep announcing to your audience what the total current sales are and, thus, what the prize will be. The more you announce the current prize amount, and emphasize it is a growing prize, the greater sales will be.
• If you want to be sure the prize is spent at your event, you can announce the prize as “credit toward auction purchases or contributions.”

Learn More
How Does It Work?

Start with event organizers identifying a live auction item as the prize. Once you have identified the prize, you’ll need a full deck of cards, a basket to hold the cards for the drawing, and energetic volunteers to sell.

The jokers and Ace of Spades are removed from the deck of playing cards and the remaining 51 cards are sold as raffle tickets, resulting in 51 opportunities to participate. The seller allows each buyer to choose his/her card. The card is then torn in half—the buyer keeps half of the card as their “receipt” to match with the winning card and the other half is placed in the basket for the drawing.

The auctioneer or emcee draws cards and announces each card as it is removed. When a card is drawn, the holder of that card is out. Depending on the venue and audience, you may ask people with tickets to stand for the drawing and stay standing until their card is drawn. When only one card remains, announce the card and identify the holder.

Next, the auctioneer will sell the Ace of Spades and either the holder of the remaining card or the winning bidder of the Ace of Spades will win the prize. Before selling the Ace of Spades, the auctioneer tells the holder of the remaining card, “We will now auction off the Ace of Spades. You now have a 50/50 chance of winning the package. If you want to increase your chance to 100%, you can buy the Ace of Spades that I am going to auction off.”

Conduct the auction and if the holder of the card in the basket is the high bidder, he/she wins the prize. If someone else buys the Ace of Spades, it is placed in the basket with the one remaining card. An impartial third party is brought forward and the winning card is drawn. Be clear in announcing if the card drawn or the card remaining wins.

Variations and Other Names

Match your deck of cards with the theme of your event—look online to find custom-printed decks of cards.

Mix it up and give multiple prizes—in descending order based on how many people are still standing. That way 5 people or 10 people win something, and you can charge more for tickets.
IDEA #3: Ace of Spades

Advice

- Your professional auctioneer can help select the prize from their auction item lineup and establish the cost per chance to align with the event’s revenue goals, the prize, and the audience.
- Ideally, the prize will be an item the majority of event attendees would love to win, though not an item expected to create a bidding frenzy and/or sell for far above raffle proceeds.
- Ensure your guests know the rules and how the game will be run.
- Thoughtfully select and train volunteers that are outgoing, personable, and able to explain the process to guests.

- If it is getting late, and you still have cards left over, sell them to the highest bidder in a package as part of your live auction segment.
- Make sure you only attempt an Ace of Spades fundraiser when you have enough guests to make it work.
- Sometimes an incentive to participate is very successful—such as a blinky ring or pin for participating.

Crowds like to keep the action and the auction moving. The drawing and announcing of the cards that are out of the running can be completed between auction items. When there are a few cards left, ask the card holders remaining to stand up. As the cards that are out are announced, those holding the cards are asked to sit down. The Ace of Spades is a great way to generate revenue, involve the participants, and keep the action moving between live auction packages.

– Charlie Moon, Charlie Moon Benefit Auctions
www.charliemoonbenefitauctioneer.com
How Does It Work?

The Bid on Green Line requires you to pre-print bids on the bid sheets with the minimum and increments. An example would be a bid sheet with $100 as a starting bid, and line items for $120, $140, $160, $180, $200 and so on. For Bid on Green Line, one of the line items, let’s say the $200 line item, is highlighted in green. The person that bids on that line is entered into a drawing for another fabulous prize.

For each of your silent auction items, you would determine the “sweet spot” for that item—how much are you trying to make on that item? For example, if you are trying to make $200 profit on each of your silent auction items, choose the cost, plus $200 line for each item. It will differ depending on the item’s value and whether the item was purely donated or whether your organization had to spend a particular amount on that item. Basically, you are figuring out the break-even point for each item, then determining the starting price and the best green line price.

Regarding the special prize you’re offering for bidding on the green line, it needs to be something very enticing like a movie pass for four, a date night out to dinner, or even a trip. It’s a balancing act to decide whether you’ll make more money with this item as a “green line” prize or a standalone silent auction item.

Crunch the numbers. Sometimes, you will get two identical items donated, such as two hotel packages. Keep one in the auction and use one as the green line prize.

Variations and Other Names

Your “Green Line” doesn’t have to be green at all! It can be any color—try to make it the same color as your organization or school colors, or tie it into the theme. Mix it up and have fun! Use it by itself or in conjunction with other strategies like the second bidder winner.

This revenue enhancer has also been setup as “Bid on a Star” or “Lucky Line 7”.

IDEA #4: Bid on Green Line

Perhaps you’ve had the same silent auction approach year after year, and you feel it’s becoming stagnant. Or, maybe you are looking for higher bids in your silent auction. Add the Green Line to spice up your bid sheet.
IDEA #4: Bid on Green Line

Advice

- Sometimes it takes the guest some time to figure out what the line is for.
- During the silent auction, have the MC and/or Auctioneer explain and promote, to encourage guests to place a Bid on the Green Line.
- Make sure you are placing the green line at the right value level.
- You can promote it by placing tent cards on the silent tables and adding a blurb to the bottom of the silent bid sheets.
- Have a large poster printed and displayed by the prize package explaining how Bid on Green Line works and advertising the sponsor.

Many of our events incorporate “Bid on Green Line.” Since we are located in the Seattle, Washington, area, I recommend a Seattle Seahawks 12th Man Tailgating package and we call it “Bid the Blue Line.” Whatever your package, make sure it’s fun and visual—one that any guest would love to win. This special line is a great way to encourage higher bidding on items in the silent auction. Most guests will skip the minimum bid and go straight to the colored line just so they will have the opportunity to win the prize package.

I recommend using it as a sponsorship opportunity—a fun way for a company to get exposure and be acknowledged throughout the silent auction and during the live auction when the winner is announced.

– Catrina Coulson, Bella Notte Auction Services
www.bellanotteas.com

Learn More
How Does It Work?

This is simply a raffle made more interesting with the intrigue of locks and good presentation. A birdcage, glass, Plexiglas box, or other see-through enclosure is put on display at your event with a desirable raffle item. A piece of expensive jewelry, a full-color photo of a nice piece of furniture, or tickets to a hot sports event coming up in the near future, are all ideas of a top prize. Depending on your event, you may want to have multiple birdcages.

Set up a table at your event, or set up a team of volunteers to take the cage and the keys throughout the event. Decorate your display to give it a sense of importance and prestige to draw guests’ attention.

Tie colorful ribbons to the keys and present them with the cage. If you have teams raffling different items, team members can hang the keys from their arms and can either be stationed at an event or walk around to tables. Alternatively, a presentation board with pegs can hang keys to the cage that guests can purchase. Only one key will open a lock holding the prize locked up within.

Schedule time to open the cage during your event. You’ll want to have all keys sold before guest try and open the cage—to ensure the winning key has been purchased. If you don’t sell all the keys, auction the remaining keys to the highest bidder right before inviting guests to try their luck at the cage.

The only difficult part of the fundraiser is to make sure you give the winning key away!

Variations and Other Names

Condense the format and offer immediate gratification by having volunteers carry the cage around to tables at a dinner or speaker event and sell keys for immediate trial to guests. This is a great way to play, since people will be inspired to keep purchasing keys until they win. For this scenario, you want to have multiple prizes available to re-stock the cage throughout the event.

Or, if you are planning a longer event, such as an art show, exhibit, or holiday open house, invite guests over a two-week period or month’s time to purchase a key when they visit. Then you can ask them to come back and try their key at a set time after the event.

If you choose this variation, make sure you collect email addresses and phone numbers of key purchasers and also give each key a secret number or code! If your winner does not show up, you can send out a notice to participants afterwards.
Advice

• Buy a small self-adhesive LED light to make your prize more noticeable, especially if your teams are mobile with your cages during an event.
• Make sure that the winning key has been sold before allowing guests to try and open the birdcage.
• Go to a local locksmith and have him outfit a good amount of keys for a padlock or a special box lock.

The display presentation is “key.” Dress up the inside of the cage and the surrounding table with related items and information to draw out the display even more. If you have a fine piece of jewelry, you might include a cardboard cutout of a beautiful woman wearing the piece next to the cage. Or, if you opt for tickets to a playoff game, hang a banner of the team, baseball gloves, and maybe even a looped music presentation of “Take Me Out to the Ball Game” near the cage to draw attention.

– Ed Gold, Stellar Fundraising Auctions
www.stellarsf.com
IDEA #6: Buy It Now Boards

Buy It Now Boards are a great way to offer variety at your event by selling donated retail certificates and services, or even lower-valued physical items, and not over-crowd your silent auction.

How Does It Work?

Buy It Now Boards are typically located in their own area of the venue, so it is also a nice way to keep traffic moving and give those guests on a budget, or slightly intimidated by the bidding competitions, a great option to participate and still support your cause.

The key is to make a very attractive display to draw attention to the area. It should have the same theme as your silent auction (casino, masquerade ball, beach, etc.) and ideally should be located up front in the reception area to catch your guests’ eyes. Be sure to have signs throughout your venue notifying and directing people to the Buy It Now Boards. Post a brief description of each item, the estimated market value, the “Buy it Now” price, and any other information that would be useful for the guest to make a buying decision.

Items on these boards are typically valued at $100 or less, and the items can be organized by category (pizza gift cards, grocery cards, coffee, personal trainer certificates and trial gym memberships, etc.).

Pricing of the board items should be thoughtfully considered, and different pricing strategies should be used for different types of items. For example, a $50 gift certificate to Amazon or your local grocery store could be priced at $45, $50, or even $55. These items are typically donated, and they sell quickly, so a price anywhere near the face value is fine.

Conversely, you may price a $125 dental visit/teeth cleaning much lower at perhaps $50; most attendees already have a dentist, but there might be a few bargain hunters in the audience who will happily snap this up. The same applies for gym memberships, personal trainer sessions, and items similar to these.

Advertise your Buy It Now Boards before the event. Just as you would advertise silent auction donors, be sure to advertise your boards’ donors, too, before the event and again near the board on the night of.

Before the event, be sure to explicitly call out your Buy It Now Boards. In your pre-event email, specifically reference your Buy It Now Boards section filled with bargain items. Highlight that the board area has numerous items valued at under $100. It is a great way to attract guests to your event.

This revenue enhancer is particularly effective for schools and other groups that may have a diverse group of attendees. It’s also great for events with a large number of lower value donated items.
IDEA #6: **Buy It Now Boards**

Variations and Other Names

The boards are also called Buy It Now, Bargain Board, $100 Or Less, or any other eye-catching title that draws people who might be looking for a deal.

Advice

- Boards typically open for business when the doors open, but you can still create a sense of mystery and anticipation by having an unveiling time at the beginning of your event. This is sure to draw a crowd.
- Once the cards are sold, remove them from the board to create a sense of urgency. Guests will want to get their purchase in before all the bargains are gone!
- Record purchases by writing the bidder number on the card or entering the sale directly into your event software.
- Remember to provide plenty of pens for guests to use!

Advertising the Boards to attendees is a great way to boost attendance, and makes it clear there is something for everyone at your auction. Send an email highlighting the items available and be sure to let donors know that the Boards will open for business when the doors open! This will help drive on-time arrival of your guests who are keenly interested in these items. Reward or thank your setup volunteers by giving them first dibs at the Boards, and allowing them to remove and purchase one or two items from the Boards while they are onsite volunteering, before the start of the event.

— Phyllis Hill, Viability Consulting
How Does It Work?

It’s always a great investment to have table centerpieces because that is where your event guests spend most of their time. You may be thinking about breathtaking floral arrangements, or perhaps something that ties in with your theme. Either way, these pieces can be auctioned to generate more dollars for your organization. And with one or more centerpiece sponsors you can bring in even more from the center of your tables.

Centerpieces can generate much more revenue when the emotional value is higher. Perhaps the centerpieces are from a very in-demand florist, or a signature golf course which included a round of golf—these have perceived value and are easier to sell.

Or perhaps the vase or container is a highly sought-after collector’s item. Any item that is handcrafted, such as the vase or another item that is part of the arrangement, is an easy sell, too, such as items made by students, or elderly patrons, or created by the people the organization supports. The more emotional connection there is to the centerpiece, the more likely it will sell for a higher price.

Keep the centerpiece sale simple with a “Take Me Home” tag. Create a tag, put a price on it, number the cards to correspond with each table, and you’re done. Ask guests to take the card to checkout if they’re interested in a purchase.

Variations and Other Names

While your auctioneer can auction each of the centerpieces, it can be time consuming. Some events make an interactive game out of it.

At some point in the live auction, the auctioneer encourages one person from each table to serve as the table’s auctioneer. The table’s auctioneer will auction off the centerpiece to a guest at the table. Each table will only get one or two minutes, and the auctioneer with the highest selling price will win a nice prize—or just bragging rights. Have a card at each table for the winning bidder to write down their bid number, and price. Then have them check out with that card at the cashier station or collect the cards prior to checkout to enter into your fundraising software.
Advice

• “Right size” your centerpieces. Centerpieces can block the guests view if they are too tall and they can interfere with the dining experience if they sprawl out.
• Keep it classy—you don’t want to appear like you’re in “everything must sell” mode like at a garage sale.

Once seen as an expense for decorations, with a little effort and a Centerpiece Auction, organizations can turn those table decorations into a fundraising bonus. Some organizations have the ability for their benefactors to create unique pieces of art as centerpieces. These pieces are always easy to auction due to their intrinsic emotional value.

A suggestion for organizations wanting to build additional value into centerpieces is through their local business community. By tapping into local businesses for a product or service donation that can be added to a centerpiece, your organization builds value for the donor, builds the brand for the business, and builds community for all.

– Darren Diess, Strategic Fundraising Solutions
www.darrendiess.com
IDEA #8: Dessert Dash

People love sweet endings—and they love games. What better way to top off your event dinner than with a dash for dessert? Display your mouth-watering desserts prominently as your guests arrive and then give them a chance to bid for the one they like best.

How Does It Work?

Round up desserts. Include a variety (including nut-free and gluten-free options). Make the dessert table as tantalizing as possible and place it in a high-traffic area. Label each dessert with a description, the baker’s name, and any ingredients that might cause allergies.

Make a big “Desserts” sign for the dessert table. Post the rules for the Dessert Dash in a prominent location. Post the Dessert Dash rules on your leaderboard during the Dash. Each table will need a dessert flag with its table number.

Create a bid sheet on brighty-colored paper for each table. Include the table number, spaces for each person to bid (bid number and amount), and a space for the total bid amount for the table.

As soon as guests sit down to dinner, encourage them to bid for their dessert. Explain that the table with the highest bid amount gets to choose the first dessert. Your auctioneer can help generate excitement for the desserts.

Each table selects a “Dasher” that will run to the dessert table when their table number is called. Have the tables decide which dessert they want and select a runner with good shoes.

The auctioneer calls out the table number for the table with the highest bid amount. That table’s Dasher gets to the dessert table as quickly as possible and selects a dessert by placing their table flag in it. As the first runner has entered the open space between the tables and desserts, the auctioneer calls out the table with the second highest bid and so on. A good auctioneer will add to the comedy with play-by-play commentary.

Variations and Other Names

If desserts aren’t the direction you want to go, try a wine or signature cocktail variation with a commemorative event glass.
With a little creativity and a bit of planning, dessert can be a fun and delicious way to raise more funds for your cause. Most dessert dashes I have seen bring in about $3,000–$4,000. One of my clients found some of the most beautiful desserts, coupled them with a crowd that had a gigantic sweet tooth, and managed to raise $15,000 on the Dessert Dash. That’s what I call SWEET success! It pays to get showcase-quality desserts and display them proudly at your event for maximum impact.

— Kelly Russell, Artisan Auctions
www.artisanauctions.com

Advice

Contact local bakeries, culinary schools, or cooking clubs for dessert donations. If you really want to engage your community, organize a bake-off the day before your event.

• The more visually stunning the desserts are, the higher people will bid for them.

• You can either have the catering staff cut and serve the selected dessert for each table, or have guests carry the desserts back to their tables. If you choose the latter option, make sure to provide serving utensils and dessert plates for each table.

• If you have desserts that need refrigeration, be sure you can store them on-site. It may be best to skip these, if possible.

• This will NOT work in a theater-style setting. It relies on the participation of a group of guests at a proper table who can come together to successfully outbid other tables.
**IDEA #9: Diamond in a Glass**

This glittery, romantic fundraising idea will add a little bling to your event, pad your fun, and pull guests into the spirit of your event. This auction game is an especially good addition to events themed with stars, bubbles, glitter, gold, or jewels.

**How Does It Work?**

Decide on a number of glasses of champagne to make available and a price point at which you think you can sell them all—you want them to go fairly quickly, and not have any leftovers, to ensure a winner at the end. (Try selling 25 or 50 glasses for a smaller event, 100 for a bigger one.) Choose champagne flutes that can double as keepsakes, so everyone walks away a winner and feels good about participating and shelling out the cash. Depending on the size and value of the diamond, organizations have success charging anywhere from $25 to $100 per glass.

Next, attach a small baggie to each glass containing a “diamond.” All of the bags are stocked with imitation diamonds except for one, and only a single lucky winner will receive a top-notch, unset diamond. Except they all look the same, so who can tell which is which?

Here’s the fun part! After the glasses are all sold, ask the jeweler who donated the diamond to set up an appraiser table outside the ballroom, capable of distinguishing between the “real” diamond and the imitations. Then, as part of the game, guests take their “diamonds” to the appraiser at some point during the event program to have it appraised. The appraiser table offers huge exposure to your jeweler partner or sponsor.

Once the real diamond has been identified and all of your guests have been appraised, the appraiser delivers the winning bidder’s number to the emcee to be announced.

**Variations and Other Names**

This revenue enhancer is known by several names, including Bubbles n’ Bling, Diamonds and Drinks, Diamond Bar Raffle, and Glitz in a Glass to mention a few.
IDEA #9: Diamond in a Glass

Advice

• Start selling the glasses early on in the evening, and make them available for purchase for a set period of time, e.g. one hour. Publicize to your guests that there’s a limited time to buy a glass—and possibly win the big prize.

• Make a crystal tower or pyramid out of glasses, filling and selling them one at a time as a visual representation of how many glasses remain. If glasses are selling slowly, task volunteers with going table-to-table to sell the rest.

• Feel free to make substitutions! Instead of a single unset diamond for a prize, substitute real diamond earrings, with cubic zirconia-set earrings for the secondary prize. That way, everybody leaves with something new to wear.

• Make sure to publicize your fun game of bling and chance, and explain how the rules work, so nobody misses their opportunity to buy some bling and get it appraised.

• It’s best not to put the jewel in the glass, but if you choose to do so, make sure people are warned not to swallow the jewel in the glass and offer to remove it for them before drinking.

• Announce the winner during the live auction.

This is a benefit auction revenue enhancer that I have never seen fail. When people come to an auction gala, a glass of champagne greeting them at the door seems very well received. For a small donation—in many cases only $25—everybody wins. You get a glass of bubbly plus you are going to get a jewel of some sort—at least some costume jewelry.

– Lance Walker, Walker Auctions
www.walkerauctions.com

Learn More
IDEA #10: Dice Roll

Let your guests try their luck with this whimsical, craps-style dice roll. These oversized, inflatable dice provide your guests with the fun and excitement of a casino atmosphere, while bringing in additional fundraising dollars for your organization.

How Does It Work?

The Dice Roll adds action to the evening as guests roll two large, inflatable blow-up dice and react to the outcome with cheers, especially when they roll a pair of ones. Since the dice are large, the guest rolls the dice one at a time.

Charge a set fee for a dice roll, such as $5 or $10 for one roll and $15-$25 for three rolls. The giveaway for winning rolls is usually tickets to use toward a prize. For example, when a 3 to 12 is rolled, the winner gets that same number of tickets. Rolling snake eyes (a pair of ones) is the big winner and is awarded 20 tickets.

There can be lots of different ways to use the tickets. Sometimes, dice roll tickets are specific to a certain special prize, such as a weekend getaway, nice dinner, or gift certificate. The tickets can be deposited in a special raffle prize bucket, or the winning ticket can be drawn at the end of the Live Auction.

At your event, it is best to have fun and enthusiastic volunteers at this station to get everyone energized and draw a bigger crowd over to the area. You can have a volunteer dress up like a Vegas dealer to make it more fun. If possible, rope off a special dice roll area and decorate it as much as you can, with a Vegas theme, or your relevant theme. It’s easy to get square cardboard boxes and paint them to look like dice.

Variations and Other Names

Another fun game variation is a roll of the dice to “crack the safe.” The prize in the safe remains a mystery, but you usually advertise the monetary value of the prize ($200, $500, $1000) to attract attention. For this game, you would choose 3 numbers, such as 12, 7 and 5. Guests who want a shot at “crack the safe” would have to buy three rolls. If they hit those three numbers, they crack the safe and win the prize. Be sure to create a lot of fanfare when the person hits the numbers. Make an announcement that someone has cracked the code, and draw the announcer and crowd to that area to reveal the prize.

You can even do a team competition, if it makes sense for your event theme. For example, you can have two teams of four people challenge each other for $40 per team entry. Bonus tickets can be given to the winning team for the lowest combined roll total, highest total, most sixes rolled, most pairs rolled—really any combination that is fun. Sometimes the competitive spirit takes over, and before you know it, each team has spent $100 or $200 to beat the other team!
IDEA #10: Dice Roll

Advice

- These inflatable dice are available to order online, and offline through party stores.
- Small dice at a special casino table can be used instead.
- The dice roll can also be an additional way for guests to earn tickets for a selective raffle.
- This is a great, easy way to engage everyone at your event. Most people don’t mind chipping in $10 or $25 for one roll, especially if there is an opportunity to win 20 tickets for a chance at a much larger prize.
- Some charities use this event to start out golf tournaments. For example, the team that rolls a five or a six gets to tee off from the closer tee, or they win more mulligans.

This revenue booster can be applied to more than just a Vegas-themed night. Small dice with a table can be applied, too; however, the large inflatable dice are more popular since they add more activity/show and tend to draw more people into taking a chance.

– Lynne Zink, Lynne Zink Productions
www.lynnezink.com

Learn More
How Does It Work?

You can offer a first bidder incentive.

**Silent Auction**

You can make the incentives across the board, meaning that every first bid on every item gets a prize, or you can make the first line bid incentive on select items—those that you think might be difficult for people to start bids on. The first bidder incentive strategy is also used on high-priced items to start the bidding.

Typically, you can offer something relatively small as an incentive. You might offer a free drink at the bar, or two movie tickets and popcorn for a night out. Or you might offer something that doesn’t necessarily have monetary value, but instead is prestigious—lunch with the nonprofit director or being principal for the day.

Highlight the first bid line on the sheet to show there’s an incentive attached. Use another font or highlight in a color to make it stand out.

Create the buzz and let guests know as they check in about the First Bid incentive. Make it fun, exciting, and yes—competitive!

**Live Auction**

With the First Bid Wins in a live auction, the auctioneer sets the starting bid high and will lower the bid amount in stages until the first bidder raises their paddle. There is no opportunity for other bidders to outbid the first bidder, so there is a lot more uncertainty around when to place a bid before someone else might.

Variations and Other Names

For the silent auction, use this by itself or in conjunction with other strategies like second bidder incentive to keep bidding going and bid on green line, where you offer bidders incentives if they “hit” a particular dollar amount line on the bid sheet.

For live auctions, if you have a large number of identical items, use this revenue enhancer to move through them quickly.
Advice

- This is a particularly effective revenue enhancer if you have a lot of items in your live auction and you want to keep the energy up throughout.
- Always consult with your auctioneer about this beforehand and let them choose which item(s) would be best for this revenue enhancer. It also helps to know your audience with this one!
- Keep in mind that first bidder incentive is strictly a strategy to get the bidding started, but it may not keep bidding going.
- Use the “keep it simple” approach. The simpler your bidding process is, the more bids you’re likely to have.

- To really simplify your bidding process, consider using Online Bidding to eliminate the need for bid sheets and allow guests to quickly manage their bids.
- Don’t delay the close of your auction because you don’t have enough bids—light the bidding fire with announcements around silent auction bidding coming to a close.

One particular auctioneer orchestrated the anticipation of the competition so well that guests couldn’t wait to get their paddles up and be the first bidder. The item went for 2000% above its value, far more than had it been auctioned off in the traditional way! And the energy in the room remained high for the rest of the live auction!

– Denise Glaser, D&K Events
www.dandkevents.com
How Does It Work?

Start by procuring a great prize, such as a fabulous trip for two, large flat screen TV, lunch with the mayor, or any other prize that might appeal to your group.

Once you have the price, marketing is crucial. You need to advertise the prize in all of your marketing material—in print and in any e-advertisements that you send. You want to create a sense of anticipation and competition that builds leading up to the event. Tickets are not pre-sold; they are only sold at the event. The flash mob scenario comes into play this way: no one knows when the tickets will be sold during the event.

At the event, be sure to showcase the prize in a high-traffic area. Make signage that draws people to the attraction. “Get Ready to Win” or “Buy Your Tickets To Win” are good examples. The display and the flash mob scenario together create a sense of urgency to buy tickets and join in the fun.

Have your volunteers work their way through the crowd to take cash or collect bidder numbers for tickets. They can have clipboards to write down buyers, or you can just use the two-part tickets that make it much faster without all the writing.

Set a time limit for ticket sales, such as five minutes, to create a sense of urgency. Take all the ticket entries and draw for the prize, then announce the winner during the beginning part of your live action.

Be sure and have your photographer take action shots of ticket purchasing and the general frenzy so you can use the photos to generate excitement for next year’s event.

And of course, take photos of the winner, and if the donor of the prize is present, include him or her, too. It helps with publicity and it helps future potential donors know how they’ll be acknowledged at your event.

In today’s nonprofit special event world of short on time, space and staff/volunteer resources, the flash mob raffle is a proven solution to maximize revenue generation for a raffle, no matter the size of the audience.
Get Ready to Win!

IDEA #12: Flash Mob

Advice

- This is quite the conversation generator during the pre-event function, as no one knows when or how it will happen. So there is an incredible sense of anticipation and urgency to join in.
- The idea is to have sales happening while the auctioneer and/or emcee is announcing the rules of the game, discussing what they will win, thanking the donor of the prize, and making other announcements that typically need to happen at this point in the evening.
- On average, it takes three to five minutes to sell out a raffle and then draw for the prize.
- Once the winner is announced, Renee encourages photos to be taken on the side of the stage with the winner and raffle team, when possible, so this can be used in marketing material both for donor prize recognition, and to show future donors how their donation will be acknowledged at an event.

Over the last decade, I have studied refining this raffle selling method and have determined the best point in the program to conduct this is at the beginning of the auction, with the winner being announced after the first live item or second, at the latest. Again, it is about creating a sense of urgency, selling out, and keeping the audience engaged into the next portion of the program.

– Renee Jones, National Fundraising Solutions
  www.reneejones.com

Learn More
IDEA #13: Get Out of The Clinker

If you’re looking for something different for your next fundraiser and you have an Old West or Great Gatsby theme, consider the idea of putting people into “The Clinker” (for fun!) to raise funds.

How Does It Work?

While this is intended to be fun and tied into specific themes, use caution and be sensitive as not to offend or closely relate to any realistic scenarios. Find a person or persons who are willing to be sent to The Clinker at your event. Remember to ask them ahead of time—you don’t want to take anyone (or their dates) by surprise! Make it funny and specific to the person you’re trying to put in The Clinker. For a principal, you can say, “Wanted for Extending the School Year for Snow Days,” or something else fictitious. Run the wording by the person to make sure they are okay with it.

Early in the event, make a big production of putting the person or group in The Clinker. Try to take your audience by surprise. You can have them appear before a “judge,” who will set bail for a funny offense tied to your theme. The people go off to The Clinker and your guests have to free them.

Place your structure in the middle of all the action; perhaps near the bar at a gala, or near the entrance at a carnival so everyone can see. Creating a makeshift witness stand and jailhouse can be done fairly easily by using cardboard, PVC pipes, or wood to construct the bars.

There is generally a small table with an attendant. People pay a fee—$10, $20, $50, or an amount fitting your event—to “post bail.” When the tally reaches the designated threshold, the person is released when bail is met.

Consider having a poster with the traditional “fundraising thermometer,” and update it as you reach your goal. Be sure to make announcements throughout the evening, and create fanfare when the person goes to The Clinker.

Variations and Other Names

As an option, you can choose to give perks when certain goals are met. For example, when you meet goals: at $100, the person gets a chair; at $250, the person can have a bottled water; at $500, a glass of wine; at $750, they can have a meal, and so on. Just make it fun and non-offensive. And remember to set an instant single donation “get out of The Clinker” amount, to encourage guests to make a large donation to free a certain person.

Additionally, this concept could raise money to put someone in The Clinker.
Advice

- Arrest only willing and participating volunteers.
- Put a WANTED poster next to the bar or other areas where you will have lots of traffic, like your silent auction area. You can make the posters fun, using an Old West theme, or a 1920s gangster theme.
- Consider who you want to go in The Clinker, and who will play the role of the judge. Think about costumes, too, and budget those in or ask a business to donate them.

A good way for the person or people in The Clinker to earn his/her/their bail is through social media. Create a donation page specifically for them to solicit donations through social media channels. It would be ideal to have a comedic videotape of the staged arrest happening and then this could be used to distribute out for bail money. The staged comedy will also draw attention for your in-room guests to be entertained and start posting bail.

Another idea is that the arrest can be done on a single or group basis. Schools have placed mock “Clinkers” on campus and arrested a group of students and made it a contest as well, to see who could raise bail first. There are several variations of this revenue enhancer!

– Ruth Kutschke, The Planning Place Events
www.theplanningplaceevents.com

Learn More
IDEA #14: Gift Card Frenzy

Gift cards are an easy thing for a store to donate, but if they are a standalone silent auction item, they may not raise face value. Why not make it a game and have fun with it?

How Does It Work?

Contact both large and small businesses about donating gift cards. Think about your audience and target businesses that appeal to them. Don’t forget small businesses and service providers (toy stores, print shops, massage therapists, day spas, shoe stores, etc.)—this can be a win-win for them, as it gives them an opportunity to make connections with new customers.

Find a creative way to display the gift cards: perhaps as ornaments on a Christmas tree, or as bricks on a schoolhouse for a school, or as bones around a doghouse for a pet shelter. Give it a catchy name like School Bucks or Doggie Dollars.

Even though you’re selling these cards outright, make it easier on your guests and just take down their bidder number. That way they can pay for all their purchases at once during checkout. List each card on a separate line of the bid sheet.

You’ll need at least one volunteer to set out more cards as they are sold and make sure guests enter their bidder number on the bid sheets.

When all the cards are sold, deliver the bid sheets to your checkout crew so they can add the gift cards to the guests’ purchases.

Variations and Other Names

Choose the best gift cards and let guests bid for them. Get your auctioneer involved and maximize the amount you can raise as part of your live auction.

For a black tie event, you can put the gift cards in fancy white envelopes. For a Hawaiian-themed event, guests can buy a gift card and get a lei.
At a recent event, we offered the Gift Card Frenzy in the middle of the live auction. We started off with a $100 gift card to a well-known local restaurant. We asked anyone interested in taking home this $100 gift card “for only $50” to raise their bid card. Of course, many, many cards went up quite enthusiastically. We then asked for $75, and just a few cards went down. Then we asked for $100, and a few more went down. The “wow” moment for everyone was when we asked, “Who will give $125 for this $100 gift card to benefit XYZ Charity?” and EIGHT bid cards remained in the air! Energy and applause filled the room, and we kept increasing by $25 until there was one bid card left up, and they gave $300 for the $100 gift card!

www.losangelesauctioneer.com

IDEA #14: Gift Card Frenzy

Advice

• Gift Card Frenzy should be FUN. It should be about your guests feeling great about giving more than they think they should.
• Offer the first few BELOW their value to start off, making sure MANY people raise their bid cards and get involved in the bidding process/auction frenzy.
• Encourage guests to encourage each other . . . there should be a lot of clapping and appreciation, especially for those bidding above value.
• Max out at 10 gift cards, and consider doing the 10 in two sets of five each at different times.
• Jim likes to start off by asking something like, “We have a $100 gift card to XYZ Steakhouse! If we were to give this away to someone, would that truly benefit XYZ Charity?” The audience strongly yells, “No! Of course not!!!” “But if someone were to go above and beyond; if they were to give ridiculously generously for this gift card, would that help XYZ Charity?” “Of course!”
How Does It Work?

In a golden ticket raffle, the tickets are usually sold at a higher price, such as $50, $100, or more. In most cases, this package will bring in more than any other live auction package, so the prize will typically be the most coveted. There are two primary options when determining the prize—either the winner will be able to select any item from the live auction lineup, or a special package will be put together just for this raffle.

You will sell a limited number of tickets to keep the event fairly exclusive to attract ticket buyers. Golden tickets are usually only sold at the event (i.e. no pre-sales), and are usually only sold during an allotted time slot, such as cocktail hour at the event.

Round up your most friendly, extroverted volunteers to walk around and sell tickets. Have them wear special costumes or hats to stand out. You may want teams of two to sell tickets so one can handle the sale and one can handle the ticket. You usually need one team for every 75 attendees and they must be able to answer all questions about the raffle.

Keep the logistics to a minimum, to avoid pestering your guests. You can use two-part tear off tickets where the buyer keeps half and you keep half for tracking, or use electronic purchases or a bid sheet to write their ticket number and name—whatever works best for you to track sales with minimal interruption of your guests.

Make a big production out of the golden ticket drawing. Have a flamboyant raffle bowl and an even more flamboyant announcer! If you have remaining unsold tickets, create a frenzied “last chance” atmosphere to have the announcer try to sell them right before the drawing. If in conjunction with a live auction, announce the golden ticket first. If standalone, pick an announcement time in the middle of the event, rather than waiting until the end.

Variations and Other Names

When the prize is one of the live auction packages, it can also be referred to as “Best of Live” or you can customize the name to fit your organization and/or theme. For instance, a Humane Society group Graham works with calls it the “Pick of the Litter” Raffle.
Advice

• Either the number of tickets available or the price can be adjusted to best fit your demographic.
• Some events allow purchase of only one ticket, while others let buyers purchase several. It’s up to you.
• Various organizations offer tremendous golden ticket offerings, such as vacations to exotic locations, a theater trip to New York City, fighter pilot for a day experience, season passes to theme parks, or season tickets to theater performances or sporting events.
• It doesn’t necessarily need to be a high-dollar value. In the case of a school fundraiser, the golden ticket can be for a prestigious item like “principal for the day” or “lunch with your favorite teacher.”

I like to recommend my clients provide a flashy, blinky ring to all Golden Ticket buyers. This helps create an exclusive buyers’ atmosphere, where others will want to be included if for no other reason than to have the cool blinky ring! It also helps those selling tickets know who has purchased already, so they don’t continue to pester your guests.

Tying your “Golden Ticket” to your theme is another way to make it fun. One group I worked with had an Olympic theme for its event, so the Golden Raffle Tickets were actually Olympic-style medals placed around the neck of each buyer, with a specific number on the medal. One attendee said he wanted to be like “Mark Spitz or Michael Phelps” for one night, so he bought eight tickets to have multiple medals around his neck.

– Graham Crow, Graham Crow Benefit Auctions
www.benefitauctionassociates.com/crow.htm

Learn More
How Does It Work?

The graffiti wall is a revenue enhancer that can be on the low end of the price scale, but provides an easy way for every guest to participate in fundraising, and it doubles as an organization-centric activity during your reception or after-party.

The way it works is that you create a space for your graffiti art, either a blank slate or a template, provide a table with the appropriate art supplies, and then, for a fee (anywhere from $5-$50 depending on the scale of your event), guests can purchase an opportunity to add their personal touch to the wall.

Depending on the size of your finished graffiti wall, you will need to make sure you have ample space available. If you also have auction tables, bars, food stations, and other activities in your event, you want to be mindful of the traffic flow. Your graffiti wall should be placed somewhere with good visibility, but not where it will compete for space. Your graffiti wall should be large enough to be clearly visible from several feet away and yet small enough that you can manage the installation and break down.

Variations and Other Names

There are multiple ways to tie a graffiti wall to your cause and the type of event that you are holding. Some examples could include:

If you’re holding a walk or raising funds for a health concern, make this a tribute wall where guests can honor family members and friends touched by disease.

If you have an honoree, use the wall as a space for guests to leave messages for that person and create a framed photo of the finished piece. (Or give them the finished piece, depending on the final size.)
IDEA #16: Graffiti Wall

Advice

- Create prompt questions to further engage and inspire guests. Let guests fill in the blanks to sentences describing why your organization is important to them or why they support you or how you’ve inspired their lives. This is also great for an anniversary year.

- If you work with a school or a shelter, consider working with an artist to create a starter backdrop, let guests add their own touches, and then donate the finished mural as a piece of artwork to be displayed in a building or a park.

- For most events, this should be done by creating a mural backdrop using canvas or wooden flats that are free-standing and can be set up in your event space and then transported back to your office following the event. You can work with a local theater or mural artist to create a backdrop or go as simple as a large blank canvas on an easel.

I’ve worked with clients to create this revenue enhancer on multiple occasions. My favorite was in a theater in Texas where we were producing a play that had a lot of graffiti in the set design. Because we owned the building, we could dedicate a wall in the theater lobby to our graffiti wall. We gave it a fresh coat of white paint and staffed the wall with a volunteer and some markers. It was hugely popular and became the go-to selfie spot, so our social media mentions also saw an uptick.

– Beth Sandefur, Beth Sandefur Events
www.bethsandefur.com
IDEA #17: Heads or Tails

This is an interactive game of choice and chance where the last guest standing will win the prize! This is a great opportunity to raise money for your organization and get your guests rejuvenated and ready to bid in a live auction.

How Does It Work?

First, select a prize that will appeal to a broad audience, in order to get as many guests as possible involved. The value of the prize itself can vary, but pick something that is relative to the ticket sale price. Ticket price will be determined by your average guest’s budget, but $25 is usually a good price point and a prize value between $300 and $500 will generally provide appeal to get your guests’ attention.

Guests purchase the opportunity to participate and receive a stamp, sticker, ticket—or something a little more fun like a beaded necklace, light stick, or other fun and inexpensive party favor. You can pre-sell tickets at any point before and during the event—but make sure there is a “last chance” promotion from your auctioneer prior to the game. Have bidders raise their bid card, and provide runners to collect money or make the transaction.

When it’s time, your auctioneer should ask all Heads or Tails participants to stand up. Then participants select either “heads” or “tails” by putting their hands on their heads—or their tails! The auctioneer flips a coin and announces whether the coin came up heads or tails. Those participants whose choice matches the coin flip get to stay standing—everyone else sits down.

The auctioneer continues asking participants to select “heads” or “tails,” then flipping the coin, eliminating more players until only a handful are left. Ask the last few finalists to come to the stage for the final coin tosses, until only one player is left standing. This is your winner!

Variations and Other Names

Heads or Tails is a staple in the fundraising world that is appropriately run via the flip of a coin, but you can get creative and tailor this revenue enhancer to your theme—think Helmets and Hip Pads for a sports themed event.

Some Heads or Tails games have designated times that allow any eliminated guest to buy back in. This is a great option for the organization, but can have a tendency to leave a bitter taste in the mouths of some guests.

If you want to sell multiple chances, think about limiting them and selling upfront only. E.g. sell up to four beaded necklaces to any guest and when they select the wrong outcome, they take off one of their necklaces until they are out.
IDEA #17: Heads or Tails

Advice
Heads or Tails is more than just a revenue enhancer. Many guests may have a pre-conceived notion that they cannot afford to bid on live auction items. Giving them the opportunity to experience the fun of raising their paddle before this begins is very empowering —helping them feel more comfortable raising their bid number. Heads or Tails will help:

• Raise additional money for your organization.
• “Warm up” the guests for the most important fundraising time of the evening—the live auction and/or paddle raise.
• Make sure your guests have located their bid paddle.
• Grab your guests’ attention and get them re-engaged after dinner.

Sometimes you may have to ensure your auctioneer understands the larger picture of why you are offering this revenue enhancer.

We frequently recommend Heads or Tails to our clients because we believe there is no better way to get the crowd energized before the live auction/paddle raise begins, while making a little money in the process. We have had nothing but extremely positive results with Heads or Tails—the typical revenue generated is between $2,000-$3,000 per event and what’s more important is that we know playing Heads or Tails also leads to an increase in both live auction and paddle raise revenue.

– Linda Shaw, Bolder Events
www.bolderevents.com
How Does It Work?

Identical jewelry boxes are wrapped—the most popular is a light blue box with a white ribbon—and stacked on display at the event. Guests can purchase a jewelry box with a chance to win. How the game is structured will depend on whether you have one elegant and expensive piece of jewelry or a number of pieces donated by a jewelry store or artist.

For a single high-value piece, put the jewelry on display and surround it with wrapped jewelry boxes. One of the boxes will be stuffed with a winner’s ticket. It’s important to manage the delivery of boxes in this scenario so the winner doesn’t open their box before you have sold all of the boxes. Determine a set number of boxes and price per box, by the amount of money you would like to raise for the item.

For a larger number of jewelry items, wrap each in a box and create a display about the types, values, and artist—allowing everyone to know they will be winning some type of jewelry with their purchase. In this scenario, guests purchase a box and display it on their dinner table (or carry it around the event in their pocket) until later in the night, when they are asked to open their boxes to reveal the winner.

If boxes are left over before the opening hour, you can have your auctioneer auction them to the highest bidder in a set or sets.

Once all boxes are sold, have your auctioneer ask people to open up their boxes and reveal the winner or winners!

Variations and Other Names

For a single high-value piece, stuff every box with some sort of jewelry of varying worth—even costume jewelry, plastic kids rings or mood rings! Everyone will be a winner that way and at least get a good laugh out of their purchase.

Everybody loves jewelry, or has someone in their life that does! Jewelry Boxes are a quick and easy fundraiser with a touch of mystery—a great addition to more upscale events like galas and cocktail parties with special donors.

IDEA #18: Jewelry Boxes
Advice

- If a jewelry store donates the item, ask if they will donate the boxes as well. Offer to add a store coupon in each of the boxes as a sponsor benefit.
- To ensure everyone opens their boxes at the same time, let guests purchase a blinky ring to represent participation. At a specific point in your event, ask all participants to hold up their blinky rings and have volunteers deliver the gift boxes.
- If you are worried that your audience will open up the boxes ahead of time, consider putting numbers in the boxes instead of winner and loser notes. Then ask a board member or special donor to pull a number from a hat at the end of the event. The box that matches the number wins the prize.

What woman doesn’t love a new piece of jewelry? We did a jewelry pull with necklaces made by a local artist. Each of the pieces was totally unique! For $100, you had the opportunity to select a blind box and get a jewelry item valued between $75–$200. I would recommend sticking to necklaces and bracelets. Earrings are much harder to match preference and rings get tough with sizing.

– Holly Rohrbacher, Bainbridge Events
www.bainbridge-events.com
How Does It Work?

The Last Hero is an exciting and profitable way to end your Direct Appeal (aka “Fund-a-Need” or “Paddle Raiser”), by giving a big prize to the very last donor.

Most direct appeals start high, and work downwards. For example: asking at the $5k, $2,500, $1k, $500, $250, and $100 levels. The Last Hero starts at the lowest donation level of the direct appeal and works up to find the last donor. The last paddle raise will be The Last Hero.

The most important thing to understand is that guests must know that they can donate as often as they want, but every time they raise their paddle, they are making another donation. Because this can cause confusion, advertising the rules is very important. The emcee or auctioneer should cover the rules, and the rules should be projected on screen.

Select an item that donors can compete for, such as a very expensive bottle of wine or similar prize. Some events have two great prizes that the last hero can choose from. Once you explain that you are going to end the direct appeal with a bit of fun, to find “The Last Hero”, and that this hero will get the big prize . . . get ready for excitement!

A teaser at the beginning of the event is always good. You can announce all the ways guests can make a difference (live auction, silent auction, fund the need, etc. You can then announce The Last Hero.

This revenue enhancer creates emotion and grabs guests’ attention just when they thought the event was moving to the next predictable part of the evening.

When the donations slow down, warn the crowd that when you say “going once, going twice, sold!” That final donor is the last bidder and the last hero!
Variations and Other Names

It’s also known as the Runaround Game or Popcorn and can also serve as a stand-alone appeal instead of, or in addition to a Fund-a-Need. This is great for gala’s where a direct appeal is not desired or not appropriate.

Advice

• Be sure to show a slide on screen with basic “how to” guidelines and rules.
• Clearly denote the value of any potential prizes.

This revenue enhancer is a ton of fun and can raise a significant amount of funds. The most that I have raised with “The Last Hero” is $38,000 and the largest “prize-value-to-funds raised” differential that I have experienced was raising $12,000 with a $300 magnum of wine.

– Chad Carvey, The Principal Auctioneer
www.principalauctioneer.com

Learn More
How Does It Work?

First and foremost, you must start with a fun and highly desirable item that gets everyone’s notice. It’s best to kick off the live auction with an item that is something almost anyone would want to bid on. But it is important that this item, though highly desirable, be at a lower price point than the remaining items in your live auction.

Why? Because this first item provides a great warm up for everyone. Guests will see how the bidding works and are likely to jump in when they feel more comfortable. The auctioneer has to get familiar with the crowd too, so it allows him or her to get ready for the larger-valued items coming down the road.

You can make it fun, too. Auction something that will turn heads, like a glass of water or a simple dollar bill. Many events successfully start their live auctions by auctioning a great bottle of chilled champagne. It needs to be a nice bottle, like a Veuve Clicquot Brut, which ranges in price from $35-$60. You could go all out and open with a bottle of Dom Perignon at $150+, but it is really not necessary for this first auction item. Consider having someone underwrite the cost of the bottle, and in exchange, offer a mention of the underwriter/donor by the auctioneer.

The venue will certainly let you borrow champagne flutes, but some organizations have event-specific specially made with their logo. The auction is for the champagne and flutes that guests can take home as a souvenir. You should create much fanfare around this bottle. Have a wine steward ready to serve it to the winner. Play it up.

Typically, the bidder will be bidding on champagne for their table, so it might be nice to offer two bottles as the first item, for a table of 8 to 10 guests. A note of warning, the other guests at the table might want to pitch in, but let them do this on their own at the table and just have a single buyer at auction checkout. Otherwise, it gets too complicated.

Once sold, create a lot of fanfare. Serve it on a silver tray with the white cloth draped over the server’s arm and immediately deliver it to the table.
Variations and Other Names
A nice thing to do at an event is to have a secret second champagne service that can go to the second highest bidder. You can give them the option to buy it at their bid price. It creates goodwill and fun and generates more revenue for your fundraiser.

Advice
- In general, the first auction item is not publicized. It is more of a surprise and as such, is normally left out of the printed program.
- If your first item is champagne, make sure it is chilled for several hours prior to the event, and ready to serve in glass flutes.
- You can purchase the champagne, or your venue might provide it for you either as a donation or as part of the cost of your event.
- Some people put other items with the champagne, like chocolates or a special hors d’oeuvres, or a swag item. Have fun with it and include enough for the whole table.
- Check with the venue regarding their liquor license, and be sure to adhere to your state’s particular liquor laws. If your event is held at a venue that holds a liquor license, you may have to obtain the champagne directly from the hotel.

I LOVE to hear the “POP” as the champagne is opened. Make a production out of it, but allow the auction to continue immediately on. Remember, the reason for offering this item in the first place is to establish momentum.

Depending on your guests, this item can raise a lot of money on its own. I’ve sold it for as little as $200 and as high as $3,600 — and I sold it twice at that price!

– Christie King, C King Benefit Auctions
www.ckingbenefits.com
How Does It Work?

Have a stack of 100 red satin boxes (or gold or purple, etc.) at the registration table that people can purchase for $100. Each box contains a ticket for a prize worth at least $100: flat screen TV, plane tickets, laptop, dog grooming, chainsaw, skis, etc. At the end of the evening, guests get to open their boxes and claim their prizes.

This is what makes this fundraiser great—it is very simple to run during a busy event. Any volunteer or staff person can be the point man or woman in charge, and you are more than likely planning to have a registration table anyway.

The point person will collect the set participation price at a designated game table, or from people raising their hands to participate from their tables. Participants can purchase from the gift box area and select their mystery box.

Variations and Other Names

Mystery Gift Boxes are a quick and easy fundraiser bonus you can implement at any event—whether it be a gala, ball, auction, or just a small cocktail party.

All you need to do is set up the gift boxes at your registration table, include some photos around the boxes of potential contents, place a banner announcing the game at the table, and remember to thank your sponsors on those pictures and displays as well.

If boxes are left over before the opening hour, you can have your auctioneer auction them to the highest bidder in a set or sets.

Once all boxes are sold, have your auctioneer ask people to open up their boxes and reveal the winner or winners!

This is also known as Grab Bags or Mystery Bags and we’ve listed out some other variations.

Instant Download “Boxes”: Why not try instant gratification? Participants can have a shot at different instant download prizes, like iTunes, Amazon, or online gift certificates or discount coupons to popular stores.

Spa Boxes: A popular gift idea, especially if you are close to Mother’s Day, is spa boxes. Lotions, face creams, and perfumes are easy to manage and wrap, and you can squeeze a few big prizes like spa day gift certificates into same shaped boxes.

Adventure Boxes: This might take more planning time, but you can work with local travel agencies, museums, and other destinations to provide day or weekend adventure vouchers for getaways and excursions.

Variations and Other Names

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Adventure Boxes: This might take more planning time, but you can work with local travel agencies, museums, and other destinations to provide day or weekend adventure vouchers for getaways and excursions.
IDEA #21: Mystery Boxes

Advice

- It is generally easy to organize and takes little time to put together as well, so it is a great idea for short-staffed nonprofits.
- Consider offering a limited number of Super Mystery Boxes that contain higher-valued items and sell for $250 or higher (with items valued at $250 or higher).
- If the gifts are large, take pictures and fold them into boxes all the same size.
- Post a complete list of all the prize donors, along with all of the prizes that are contained in the Mystery Boxes.

This is a great way to bundle smaller prizes, and guests can open immediately to see what they won, creating a buzz and excitement that will encourage others to go buy one. But, be prepared for all of the Mystery Boxes to sell out fast! We had an event where 100 mystery boxes generated $10,000 and sold out within an hour of opening the doors!

– Gayle Stallings, FUNauctions, LLC
www.funauctions.net
IDEA #22: Restaurant Row

Everyone likes to eat out, and restaurant gift cards are great revenue generators; however, sometimes you have so many it becomes a distraction from larger items. A great solution is to create a Restaurant Row.

How Does It Work?

Ask local restaurants to donate gift cards for their establishment. Focus on food (rather than merchandise) and know your audience—do they prefer burgers or steak? Target the restaurants that will appeal to your guests.

Set up a table in a prominent position and create a fun, attractive display for the restaurant gift cards. There are many ways to display the cards including hanging or taping them to a board where they can quickly be grabbed and handed to the guest. Or, you could list the restaurants on a chalkboard—similar to a daily specials board—and erase or remove them once their gift cards are sold out.

Even though you’re selling these cards outright, make it easier on your guests and just take down their bidder number. That way they can pay for all their purchases at once during checkout. List each card on a separate line on the bid sheet.

You’ll need at least one volunteer to set out more cards as they are sold and make sure guests enter their bidder number on the bid sheets.

Variations and Other Names

There are many names for this type of fundraiser: Grub Grab, Foodie Frenzy, Dine-N-Dash, Food-To-Go, etc. You can use one of these or come up with your own.
IDEA #22: Restaurant Row

Advice

- Fixed dollar amounts work better than a “dinner for four” because everyone has a different idea of how much that’s worth.
- Only offer discounts if you have a few remaining cards that aren’t selling.
- Create a Listing Board, a poster or dry erase board, listing all the restaurant gift cards. When you sell one, cross it off the list. It helps people see how fast the cards are selling.
- Use a computer monitor to display the restaurant gift cards for sale. Don’t forget to include the restaurants’ logos to capture your guests’ attention. And maybe display one of the mouthwatering selections to really tempt your guests.

The Restaurant Row concept is a great way to utilize donated gift cards that don’t fit well into a silent or live auction package. They are an easy sell, at a reasonable price point for your guests who don’t have the budget for the big auction items! I’ve also heard this called a “Feeding Frenzy” and incorporated it into the live auction as a warm up. Essentially, the auctioneer offers up the gift cards at face value to the first bidder that raises their paddle.

– Jon Bridenbaugh, Streamline Support, Inc.
www.streamlinesupport.us
**How Does It Work?**

It’s human nature to procrastinate, and auction goers are no different. One strategy organizations use to keep bidding on a more even keel is the second bidder incentive.

**Silent Auction**

This is a great strategy if you have an item or items with large bid, or when you have a higher-priced item that you think may not do very well.

This version of the Second Bidder Winner offers incentives for the second bid. You can make the incentives or prizes on every item or just on select items. Typically, you can offer something relatively small as an incentive or prize. You might offer a free drink at the bar, or two movie tickets and popcorn for a night out. Or you might offer something that doesn’t necessarily have monetary value, but instead is prestigious—lunch with the nonprofit director or being principal for the day. You can also put all second bidders into a drawing for an exclusive prize.

Simply highlight the second bid line on the sheet to make it really stand out. Use another font, or highlight in a color.

**Live Auction**

When two of the same high-end packages have been donated, auction the first as normal to determine the winner and follow up with the second highest bid to offer the same prize at the winning amount—or you can offer it at their second highest bid amount.

**Variations and Other Names**

This type of revenue enhancer works well for live auctions when utilizing popular auction booster packages—no risk travel and experience packages—when you don’t have a sponsor that can donate two of these prestigious types of items.
Advice

- Use the “keep it simple” approach. The simpler your bidding process is, the more bids you’re likely to have.
- For silent auction use, remember that a silent auction is never silent! Create the buzz. Announce the second bidder incentive, put it in your program, and spread the word while mingling with guests. You must constantly draw attention to your silent auction items throughout your event. Make it fun, exciting, and yes—competitive!
- For live auction use, make sure you keep the second item a secret from the audience to make sure you have competitive bidding on the first item.
- Bid increments vary from item to item. Some items make sense to have $5 increments, while others make sense to have $25 increments or more.

Your selected bid increments can affect how an item performs, and a good rule of thumb is to set increments at 10 percent of the starting bid. For higher priced items, you might consider an even lower bid increment of 5 percent.

- Don’t delay the close of your auction because you don’t have enough bids.

This is probably my favorite way to raise additional money with a live auction. We just had an event where someone donated a Hog Hunt and with a great auctioneer you can easily get over $6,000 for one of these trips. What the bidders did not know was that the company gave us two trips for the hunt. We sold one for $6,500 and when the auctioneer closed it out at $6,500, he called both bidders to the stage and announced we had two trips and they both won. The second highest bidder was $6,250. This set the live auction over the original goal.

—Tina Love, My Event Central
www.myeventcentral.org
IDEA #24: Secret Bids

A method of auctioning off packages without being able to see other bids. Once all bids are submitted, the highest bid is determined, and the bid is paid to win the item.

How Does It Work?
Similar to a silent auction, a package being sold by secret bid should be attractively displayed with a description, donor information, terms, conditions, and/or expiration date, retail value, minimum bid accepted, and a closing date and time.

Unlike a silent auction, you will not have a visible bid sheet. Instead, like a raffle, you display a closed container with a small opening. Interested bidders fill out bid slips with their bidder name/number, bid amount, and contact information (if not recorded elsewhere) and drop them in the container. If multiple bids are turned in by the same person, only the highest counts. At the end of your bidding period, someone reviews all bids for each package, determines each package’s highest bid, and, thus, the winner.

Secret bidding can be conducted easily by email as well, by sending descriptions of available packages and instructions to reply to bid. The winner is determined and contacted at the end of the bidding period, and payment is taken prior to delivery. You may wish to raise minimum bids to include shipping costs. Due to email deliverability issues, it is highly recommended to confirm receipt of each bid and notify bidders to expect this, in case bids are not received and/or are diverted to spam folders.

No bids are disclosed except the highest bid. In case of a tie, you may decide do a tie-breaker with the tied winning bidders, asking for new secret bids, using their last tied bid as the new minimum bid.

Variations and Other Names
Also known as sealed bids, blind auction, closed auction. May be done either by email or in person, including at an event with other fundraising features.
IDEA #24: Secret Bids

Advice

Secret Bids works especially well when:

- You have multiple quantities of the same item—take a specific number of the highest bids for the quantity you have.
- Your event space is large and you do not have mobile bidding, making it difficult to check bid statuses.
- You want an alternative to “Buy It Now,” where you do not set a max price.
- You have items left after an event and can conduct a second-chance auction by email.
- You receive duplicate donations and do not wish to offer more than one at the main event.
- And, if a secret bid is done via email, the bidding deadline should be no later than a week away, so to elicit a reply within the first few days.

Several years ago, I could not attend the golf tournament and dinner for a charity I supported. I was excited to receive an email the week after, offering a list of items that were either duplicate donations and/or not won at the main event, along with instructions to simply reply within five days with my highest bid for items I wanted and my phone number. It turns out a gift certificate for a restaurant I had wanted to try was on the list. I sent in my bid, and found out I won a week later! I was very glad to have this second chance to support the organization AND have a good reason for a special night out. Many of your supporters will appreciate this type of opportunity, too.

– Renee Zau, DonationMatch

www.donationmatch.com
IDEA #25: Selective Drawing

Provide an array of prizes and put them on display. Like a random drawing, guests receive tickets. Each prize has an entry box next to it where guests can deposit their tickets to potentially win the package.

How Does It Work?

Similar to a silent auction, create bundled packages your guests really want and will compete against each other to win.

Provide plenty of tables and arrange them to maximize traffic flow. Decorate the tables to highlight your packages—make them festive and tie them into the theme of your event. Provide a table tent or description sheet listing the contents of each package and place the entry box prominently next to the item.

Determine your ticket sales strategy—more tickets per dollar may provide the guests with perceived value and the added excitement of being able to spread their interests over many package options. Or, fewer tickets per dollar can increase the sense of providing the guests with a better chance of winning. Either way, sell your tickets in two or three quantity bundles and consider a better value per ticket, the more the guest buys. If you have an event professional, ask for their advice.

You can use paper raffle tickets; they are small, inexpensive, and have pre-printed numbers that distinguish which tear-off ticket goes in the ticket box and which the guest should keep. This makes it easy to manage and identify the winner. While adding some expense, you can alternatively order custom-printed tickets to match the theme of your event.

Each participant can buy as many tickets as he wants and there’s no limit to how many tickets can be placed in a single bucket.

You want to allow your guests plenty of time to place their tickets. The selective raffle can generally run about two hours. You could also hold back some really special items for the end of the event. Then your guests can buy extra tickets for these last-minute drawings. Once all the tickets have been placed, the emcee selects a single ticket from each item’s bucket and announces the winner.

Variations and Other Names

This is also known as a penny social or pick-a-prize. With the fun and novelty of a penny social, you can perk up enthusiasm for your fundraiser and provide an affordable way for everyone to join in the fun. The more tickets they buy, the more chances they have of winning.
IDEA #25: Selective Drawing

Advice

- The biggest challenge with this raffle format is that guests have to navigate to the ticket boxes of each package to select which items they want a chance at winning. Be sure to make this area easy to see and accessible with great signage and a location that is prominent and easy to get to.
- To avoid any ticket manipulation, make sure your ticket box has a lid with a slit allowing a one-way path for the tickets to be placed in, but no fingers to pull them out.
- By grouping items into categories, you’ll make it easier for your guests to find the prizes that interest them the most.
- Remember that using bidder numbers to purchase tickets will simplify the purchase process and increase the number of tickets purchased.

I have seen great success with raffles that allow guests to select which raffle drawing to enter by choosing the packages they want. Recently, a client completely did away with their silent auction and instead concentrated their efforts on securing and bundling 10 high-value raffle items. Using the Selective Raffle format, guests had better chances on the items they desired most. They raised over $18,000 with this raffle alone!

The best-selling raffle packages are when you have individual tickets, a small bundle, an arm’s length (or similar high-value bundle). Most guests will buy the arm’s length because of the great value. For example, if one ticket is $20, bundle 3 tickets for $50 and an arm’s length for $100 and see your revenue skyrocket.

– Paula Harris, Greater Nonprofits
www.greaternonprofits.com
How Does It Work?

Before you start organizing your wall of wine, you need to gather a wine collection (about 30 bottles for every 50 people attending). They should be a good variety of type and quality. If you are purchasing the wine, most bottles should be mid-to-low-range in quality, with a smaller percentage being high-end. A good price point for wine is around $25 per bottle.

Once you have the wine, you will need to wrap the bottles to hide the brand. Typically, bottles are wrapped in craft paper with a ribbon around the bottle neck. However, you can get creative by wrapping them to match the theme of the event, or in costumes to match the cause you are supporting.

These bottles will need to be neatly displayed for the attendees to see and pull from. They can be placed on a table, or stocked in a wine wall. It is best to keep the collection organized by red and white wines, and include a sheet in your display with the kinds of wine guests could win, as well as the companies that provided you with them. It is best to offer a holding place for purchased wine bottles, so guests don’t have to carry around their prizes for the rest of the evening.

Set up a table between guests and your display so nothing gets tipped over or moved—volunteers can collect funds and hand over the selected bottle, or mark the bottle with the bidder number to be picked up at checkout.

Variations and Other Names

There are many varieties on the wall of wine (WOW, Wine Pull, Wine Wall) that you can use to spice up your fundraising event even further. Some of these include:

- **Up the Stakes**: Host a wine collection evening. Rather than each attendee purchasing one bottle, they will buy raffle tickets for around $10-15. First place winner goes home with 20 bottles; second place with 15; and third place with 10.

- **Wine & Beer Pull**: Take advantage of the increasing popularity of craft beers by including beer in your collection. From there, you can either assign a fixed price for both drinks, or offer two separate tickets ($15 for beer, $25 for wine, etc.). Or, your audience may prefer beer where you could provide 99 bottles of beer on the wall.

- **Spin the bottle**: Place a wine bottle in the middle of a table, with wrapped wine bottles in a circle surrounding it. Let your guests buy a spin, and whichever wine the bottle lands on is theirs.

- **Ring toss**: Utilize this classic carnival game by placing wine bottles in a box. Attendees can purchase several ring tosses for a fixed price ($25-30), and win whatever bottles of wine their rings land on.

- **Special Prizes**: Tape special prizes on the bottoms of some of the bottles (vineyard tours, wine tasting tickets, etc.). This is a great incentive for your guests to participate in the Wine Pull or buy more than one bottle.

This is a fun addition to any fundraiser that allows attendees to donate to your cause and walk away with a bottle of wine. Guests purchase a random, wrapped bottle of wine that is potentially much more expensive than the purchase price.
At our Wine Women & Shoes Nashville event, the first year they had one WOW with 100 bottles and sold out in 45 minutes! Year two, they added a second WOW, one red and one white wine, and sold out again, this time in 60 minutes! Year three, they added a champagne WOW for a total of 300 bottles and $6,000 net revenue, with fairly minimal effort.

– Elaine Honig, Founder and President
STUDIO 4Forty | www.studio4forty.com

Unwrapped: Don’t wrap the wine bottles. Wall of Wine is particularly successful if you have been able to obtain a lot of high quality wine. Assign each bottle a number, and then place wine corks with matching numbers in a container. Attendees pay a fixed price ($20-30), pull a cork out at random, and win that wine.

Advice

- Acquiring all this wine can seem intimidating, but don’t worry. This event is a great opportunity to get a local winery, restaurant, or distributor involved by either donating or sponsoring.
- If you’re unable to procure a lot of donations, you can host a pre-event wine tasting party with some core members of your board and committee. Everyone will bring a bottle to share and a bottle to save for the event. This is a great way to build excitement leading up to the event and help stock your collection!
- Display and location are extremely important to the success of Wall of Wine. It must be placed in a high traffic, high-energy location and have a fun, visual display that attracts energy and attention.
- Include a few bottles of $75+ wines or one bottle of Dom Perignon and promote the potential winning value to attract even more interest.
- Tie a mission to the Wall of Wine Pull. For example, “This $25 donation gets you a bottle of wine AND provides 5 meals for a family at our shelter.” How could anyone say no to that?!
- Be careful what you promise. If you state a minimum value on the bottles of wine, be sure that each donated bottle truly has that minimum value. Fact check pricing online. Here’s one good source: www.wine-searcher.com.
Partner Index

Greater Giving

From the planning stages, to event night, to reconciliation, Greater Giving offers a complete end-to-end solution—resulting in increased revenue for your organization.

Greater Giving provides an all-in-one solution to manage all the details of your fundraisers year-round—from auctions with live or online bidding, to registration and donations, to a-thons and more, we’ve got you covered. Our solutions are easy to set up and train volunteers and staff. With no limit to users, number of events, or support—we’ll help you reduce costs and save valuable time. Collecting credit card data at an event is easy as a swipe with Greater Giving USB and mobile card readers. And, with data exchange, you will be able to interface with most donor management software—keeping all of your donor data connected.

Kingston Auction Company, LLC

An award-winning thought leader, benefit auctioneer, and consultant, Kathy Kingston is the author of the Amazon best-selling book A Higher Bid: How to Transform Special Event Fundraising with Strategic Benefit Auctions. She is the founder and principal of Kingston Auction Company, LLC, which has raised millions of dollars for organizations nationwide for over three decades. Ms. Kingston is the creator of the Philanthropy Model of Fundraising Auctions. Kathy has been awarded two of the National Auctioneers Association’s major awards, the 2012 Chuck Cumberlin Memorial Sportsmanship Award and the 2006 Rose Award. She holds a Master’s Degree in Education from Saint Louis University, where in 1986 she was named “Woman of the Year.” In 2013, she was inducted into the Million Dollar Consultant™ Hall of Fame. Through her innovative mentoring and coaching program, Kathy consistently empowers auctioneers and nonprofit executives to break revenue records, to engage donors, and to inspire a new culture of philanthropy.
Artisan Auctions
Kelly Russell is the face and force behind Artisan Auctions. She brings 10 years as a certified professional benefit auctioneer and positive energy to every room she works. A firm believer in that good process and communication equates excellent outcome, she provides attention to detail and consultation from start to finish. Her team of experts rely on her keen direction, knowing that in the end, the work we do makes the world a better place thanks to the nonprofit organizations we work for. Kelly works from a base of fundraising event experience, crafting auctions to meet and exceed client goals, and she has a great time doing it.

Bainbridge Events
Our team at Bainbridge Events has been planning nonprofit, corporate, and milestone events since 2004. We bring energy, enthusiasm, attention to detail, experience, and new ideas to all our projects. Contact us for your next event!

Bella Notte Auction Services
At Bella Notte Auction Services, our ultimate goal is to be there to help take the pressure off. We support you and your team by taking care of your event night services; helping with volunteers; and working with your organization to help you plan and execute a successful event.

Beth Sandefur Events
Every event and every organization has its own unique culture, but underlying principals remain the same. Beth Sandefur Events specializes in annual fundraising events with strong auction components by focusing logistics to make your event run smoothly. The goal is to lessen the burden on volunteer committees and staff so that you can keep your eye on the bigger picture. Based in the San Francisco Bay Area, service offerings include auction and registration management, event night support for Greater Giving, auction data analysis, and comprehensive project management.

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Holly Rohrbacher
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Beth Sandefur
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Bolder Events
Bolder Events is a Colorado-based company dedicated to delivering fundraising solutions to nonprofit organizations and schools. We provide our customers with “bold,” innovative, and flexible solutions to take the stress out of planning a successful fundraising event. We offer support throughout the event-planning process to ensure that no detail is forgotten. On event night, we provide a team of service professionals and equipment needed to completely manage the event, from registration through checkout and item pickup.

C King Benefit Auctions
C King Benefit Auctions is a full-service consulting company in the business of building partnerships throughout the Southeast. We do so by creating the best benefit auction experience for both donors and organizations. Christie King is a 4th generation auctioneer with over 30 years of experience in the auction industry and holds the Benefit Auctioneer Specialist designation. CKBA partners with organizations in an effort to play an active role in helping turn visions and dreams into realities.

Charlie Moon Benefit Auctions
When it comes to ensuring success of a benefit auction, you can trust your success to Charlie Moon Benefit Auctions. The success of your event is not an afterthought, it is not something he does to market his “real” auction business. Benefit auctions . . . that’s what he does. He understands the hours you put into your event. The many moving pieces of item procurement, seating arrangements, what goes on in the silent, the live auction and in what order the items must sell . . . and will work with you to orchestrate the vital “Fund the Need.” Trust your success to someone who has paid his dues, earned the designation, and lives benefit auctions.

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Charles Moon
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D&K Events

D&K Events comes from a nonprofit background and understands you and your organization are making a difference, and that fundraising events keep you going. Our experience is that fundraising events can be overwhelming and take away from your valuable time and efforts. That’s where D&K Events comes in. We take care of your event management for you, from navigating event software, to overseeing everything from the registration of guests to guest checkout, managing day-of-event volunteers, data entry, silent and live auctions. Our mission is to come alongside you and administrate your fundraising event so you can focus on what matters—sharing your message, growing your impact, and changing the world.

DonationMatch.com

Are you short on time? Is getting product donations for your fundraising silent auctions, raffles, and gift bags a struggle? DonationMatch is like a virtual committee member, making securing prizes for school and nonprofit events easier than ever. Staff and volunteers of schools and tax-exempt nonprofits are invited to sign up, post events, and reach decision makers at multiple companies in one place.

FUNauctions, LLC

When Benefit Auctioneer Specialist Gayle Stallings raises money for nonprofit organizations, she raises money as if it were her own nonprofit. Her dozen years of experience as an executive director of a statewide nonprofit organization, special events consultant and public speaking coach, translate into bigger dollars for your fundraiser. Raising more than $60 million since 2005, FUNauctions, LLC, a professional auction and event management company based in Austin, Texas, customizes the pre-event consulting that brings a one-of-a-kind perspective: Fundraising. Starts with FUN!

Graham Crow Benefit Auctions

For more than 25 years, Graham Crow has worked exclusively with nonprofit organizations throughout the U.S. and Canada. His ability to entice guests to “spend more money than they had planned, but to feel really good about it” has made him one of the most sought-after auctioneers in the country. Much more than an auctioneer and auction consultant, Graham becomes a true partner with each organization. The results and references speak for themselves.
Partner Index

Greater Nonprofits
I provide practical and strategic guidance to help improve fundraising results, communication outcomes, and organizational effectiveness—so that you can focus on achieving your mission. Through Greater Nonprofits, I offer coaching, training, and consulting services. We can work together to create a project plan that meets your specific needs and unique organization, so you get the results you’re looking for.

Jim Nye, The Benefit Auction Guy
Jim Nye is a Fundraising Auctioneer with an extreme passion for what he does and a long list of happy, repeat clients. He specializes in helping charities and schools across the country achieve their goals at their charity auctions and nonprofit fundraisers. Jim provides memorable and effective charity auction services for public and private schools, faith-based organizations, healthcare groups, arts and culture organizations, colleges, animal welfare groups, and many types of foundations.

Kip Toner Benefit Auctions
Kip Toner is regarded as one of the top auctioneers in the nation for benefit auctions. With more than 40 years in the benefit auction world, Kip has originated or enhanced almost all of the benefit auction techniques and revenue boosters. His firm, Benefit Auction Support Company, provides nonprofit benefit auction services including auctioneers and assistant auctioneers, event planning assistance, guest registration and cashiering services, and other auction night services. Successfully planning and conducting over 4,000 benefit auctions, serving nonprofits from Washington, D.C., to Hawaii, Kip helps benefit auctions of all sizes by bringing them new ideas that make benefit auctions more fun, exciting, and profitable.

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Jim Nye
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Kip Toner
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Lynne Zink Productions

Lynne Zink brings a lot to the table as a professional benefit auctioneer specialist, consultant, educator, and emcee. Her high-energy delivery motivates and engages audiences of all sizes, from client consultation through event-night auction. Zink’s extensive background in theater, education, and advanced benefit auction training, are contributing factors to her clients’ success in fundraising. Zink is the 2012 International Auctioneer Champion (IAC), serving as an industry leader. Other honors include Maryland Auctioneer of the Year, Maryland Bid Calling Champion, and serving as President of the Auctioneers Association of Maryland.

My Event Central

Established in 2004, My Event Central has been helping nonprofits raise millions of dollars with their fun and creative fundraising techniques. My Event Central is a multi-faceted company that provides all aspects of event planning and marketing. Our partnership with Greater Giving has allowed us to work with a larger range of nonprofits. While providing auction services, we also can provide event consulting on how to raise more money. My Event Central provides all of the computers, printers, and staff to work on your event, using the Greater Giving tools, while you attend to your event logistics. Since our partnership with Greater Giving, we have seen most of our events grow by 25% in revenue each year.

Lynne Zink
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Tina Love
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National Fundraising Solutions

National Fundraising Solutions provides time proven benefit auction and special event management services to maximize your fundraising revenue. Led by Certified Event Specialist and International Champion Auctioneer Renee Jones, NFS has raised hundreds of millions of dollars for nonprofit organizations benefiting the arts, education, and research efforts to better people’s lives around the world. Our philosophy is to create a high energy fun environment that is exciting for our guests and very profitable for our clients. NFS stands apart as a creative force bringing both an unparalleled enthusiasm and out-of-the-box thinking together with state and international champion auctioneers to maximize your onstage fundraising efforts, break event revenue records, and provide a seamless guest experience utilizing the Greater Giving software platform. Whether you have a full development team or dedicated parents sitting around a kitchen table planning your next event, we want to pull up a chair and be on your team to insure your event reaches the next level of success!

Renee Jones
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The Planning Place Events

With a focus on fundraising, The Planning Place Events offers personalized event planning and design services in and around the Chicago area.

Ruth Kutschke
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The Principal Auctioneer

Chad Carvey, aka “The Principal Auctioneer,” was a school principal for 29 years, and has been a professional auctioneer over 20 years. Chad is a certified “Benefit Auctioneer Specialist,” serving clients such as The US Olympic Team, The San Francisco 49ers Foundation, Children’s Hospital, Twitter, Pixar, and many more. Chad’s extensive experience, magnetic personality, and refreshing “heart-to-heart” approach leaves your guests wanting to share in the joy of giving!

Chad Carvey
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Simple Pleasures Events, LLC
Great events don’t just happen. They require precise planning, meticulous attention to detail, and a dash of creative magic. With over ten years experience in private industry and nonprofits, Simple Pleasures events can organize and plan any event, at any destination you desire. Whether your next event is two people, 200, or 20,000, Simple Pleasures can help you coordinate every aspect.

Courtney Givens
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Stellar Fundraising Auctions
Stellar Fundraising Auctions is a San Francisco-based charity auction firm dedicated solely to the craft of benefit auctions. Our focus is on pre-event consulting to help set the stage for success long before the night of our clients’ events. We conduct record-setting benefit auctions for clients across the United States, helping raise tens of millions of dollars every year.

Ed Gold
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Strategic Fundraising Solutions
Helping Your Nonprofit Raise Funds All Year Long. Far more than “just” a Fundraising Auctioneer, Darren Diess also works with nonprofits as a Fundraising Advisor, filling much of the role of a Development Officer—but at a fraction of the cost and without the turnover nightmares. From teaching your team how to fundraise, to introducing new fundraising ideas, developing donor relationships, and more, Darren’s expertise can help your organization meet its funding goals.

Darren Diess
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Streamline Support, Inc.
Planning your annual auction? You’ve got enough to think about. Don’t spend another minute sweating the technology. Call Streamline Support, the experienced tech experts who make sure your auction technology runs smoothly, from start to finish. equipment rental—pre-event prep—check in/check out—auction data entry

Jon Bridenbaugh
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STUDIO 4Forty

STUDIO 4Forty is the fastest growing event fundraising group in the country, offering two innovative event concepts with a full suite of services to support the event and ensure our nonprofit partners’ success. We are best known for our Wine Women & Shoes event series, a female and fashion-themed event that has been energizing donors for over a decade. It’s proven to be a winning combination that has helped net more than $50 million for worthy causes all over the country. With over 350 events under our belt, we consult, advise and coach our nonprofit teams, sharing our successful strategies, proven fundraising formulas, innovative ideas, and best practices. We work together to mastermind and execute a flawless and fashionable event—helping you attract new donors and taking your fundraising to new heights. Today, WW&S events take place in over 60 cities across the U.S. Our newest fundraising event series is Farm to Table(aux) which applies the same kind of energy, creativity, and fundraising expertise that has made WW&S so successful. Farm to Table(aux) combines the farm-to-table culinary concept with a modern interpretation of the theatrical French Tableaux Vivant or “living picture.” At each event, local chefs and farmers prepare a culinary feast alongside local actors, artists, or dancers who perform in mini-vignettes on small stages. Looking for a fresh and innovative fundraising event? Look no farther!

Viability Consulting

Viability Consulting provides consulting services and training programs to nonprofits, schools, PTAs, and organizations desirous of implementing software solutions to manage their business processes. For nonprofits, Viability specializes in Greater Giving, Quickbooks, and other Internet financial and fundraising applications. Viability also provides event services and project management, specializing in fundraising strategy, event management, logistics management, mobile bidding, guest registration and checkout, network setup, data entry, receipt production, and post-event reconciliation.

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Walker Auctions

Lance Walker of Memphis, TN is considered one of the leading benefit auctioneers in the country. His company has conducted over 3000 benefit auctions throughout North America raising millions of dollars annually for charities. This active auctioneer co-wrote the Benefit Auctioneer Specialist curriculum for the National Auctioneers Association and teaches the course to aspiring benefit auctioneers each year. He has M.A. and B.S. degrees in Education and is a graduate of the Certified Auctioneers Institute. Walker’s energetic style and stage presence has been an integral part of his client’s auction success.

Lance Walker
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Empower everyone in the room to give to your cause

Revenue enhancers always make our events more fun and helps us raise more money. We especially like the Wall of Wine with a ring toss. If you get the ring around the neck of the bottle of wine or liquor, you win that bottle. It’s more interactive than just a cork pull, and it went well with our recent Mardi Gras theme.”

— Michelle Renner, Director of Advancement Services, Chaminade College Preparatory School

We’ve incorporated Greater Giving’s Online Bidding and we’re never going back! The Eagle 8 is by far our signature raffle revenue enhancer! Thanks to Online Bidding, our guests can enjoy the luxury of stopping by the visual Eagle 8 display and instantly purchase raffle tickets at the touch of a finger! This annual auction is a must-have for our audience and since adding the mobile option it’s brought in more auction and more participation than any other year! It generates an additional $8,000+ to our silent auction revenue. Thank you, Greater Giving.”

— Joy Hall, Event Coordinator, Faith Christian Academy