

Valued Non-Profits and Fundraisers

Since pioneering auction technologies in 1988, AES has had the opportunity to see service providers come and go. To assist you in the evaluation of such providers, we offer this short informational document that will help you avoid common pitfalls when looking at service and technology providers.

If you are not aware of other technology and service providers, a few you may be interested in researching are as follows:

- BidPal – <http://www.bidpalnetwork.com/>
- IML - <http://www.imleventtechnology.com/>
- Auction Source - <http://www.auction-source.com/>
- QTEGO – <http://www.qtego.com>

This informational document is comprised of two short sections. The first is a list of questions you might want to ask a potential provider and the second contains individual paragraphs explaining why you might want to pose these questions.

Questions to ask potential technology providers:

1. **Fees:** Do you charge a percentage of my auction or a flat fee, or both and what are those charges?
2. **Event Date:** Will you contract and confirm my event date or will you wait to confirm my event date until sometime after I contractually commit?
3. **Staffing:** Does your staff handle my registration, my live auction, raffle, multi-unit items and checkout?
4. **Equipment:** Do we or our patrons have to leave a deposit for the equipment that is used and are you insured if any of that equipment is lost, stolen or damaged?
5. **Accessibility:** Can our patrons at the event, as well as patrons that could not attend the event, use your technology solution to participate in the auction if we send them one of your devices?
6. **Bidding:** Can people that do not have a device or choose not to get a device at registration still bid in the auction from general use kiosk stations?

FEES:

Service providers and technology vendors will charge a flat fee depending on the size of your event. Most will also charge you a percentage of monies raised in addition to the flat fee.

This can also include monies generated outside the actual auction or technology solution, ie. a patron giving a check at the end of the event or donations raised through an “ask”, give” or a cash call.

Take-away: avoid paying percentages and beware of post auction fees.

EVENT DATE:

Your organization works very hard to make sure all details for the event are sorted out many months and sometimes years ahead of time. Make sure that your provider will guarantee that they will be there for your event date. Because some vendors charge a percentage, they will wait until the last minute to make sure they have the biggest fish.

Discovering a month or two before your event that your provider has found a bigger fish will have serious ramifications to the overall success of your fundraiser.

Take-away: confirm your provider will commit and guarantee to be there when you sign your contract. Don't find out weeks before your event that you don't have a technology provider.

STAFFING:

When looking at potential providers it is important to understand the level of support and expertise that they will physically be bringing to the actual event. While having technology can certainly boost auction revenue, many organizations look to, and require, on-site support staff from their providers. If they do ‘handle’ registration and checkout what do they do “exactly”.

Will there be people there? Does their technology handle it or are you doing it all on paper, with your staff, as you have in past years? Do they take care of the live auction and cash call information?

Take-away: know exactly who will be there, what they will do, and how many people they will bring to make the event run smoothly.

EQUIPMENT:

The age of hand held computer devices such as smart phones and PDA's have enabled organizations to generate substantially more revenue. There are many providers today that offer a hand held solution which is compact and generally well accepted by the younger and tech savvy patron base. Consider, when evaluating providers, whether everyone needs a device to bid and what are the costs if something bad happens to that device. Keep in mind that adding another device to their evening's event collateral, phone, purse, drink, program, bid paddle, could become cumbersome.

***Take-away:** make sure equipment is insured by the provide in case of loss, damage or theft. Allowing patrons to bid from their phones with a good mix of larger table top bidding devices for older generations is clearly the best implementation. Never require your patrons to "subscribe" or "sign up" for a 3rd party service just to participate in your auction.*

ACCESSIBILITY:

As budgets tighten, major sponsors move marketing dollars away from charities, it is extremely important to find revenue and support in new ways. Make sure you investigate the potential for your provider to allow bidders to participate geographically from anywhere in the world concurrently with your attending patrons. This helps bring huge dollars from grandparents of school children, supporters in other cities, states or countries, and potentially opens your fundraising up to the entire on-line community.

***Take-away:** finding a provider that can allow simultaneous bidding on-line to absent bidders concurrently with bidders on-site at the event venue can drive profits through the roof!*

BIDDING:

Many patrons attending events do not actually arrive with the intention of bidding in the auction. Upon discovering items of interest, patrons should be allowed to shop and bid on general use devices located throughout the venue. To that end, more senior patrons may shy away from small devices and draw to larger footprint devices for ease of reading and operations. Preventing senior attendees and spontaneous shoppers from bidding or buying can stifle revenue.

***Take-away:** make sure you have a technology solution for all ages and types of shoppers. Don't limit your bidding devices to the smallest, try to get a mix of technology that suits all generations!*

Once again we appreciate you considering Auction & Event Solutions for your upcoming fundraiser. Please visit our website at www.AESAuctions.com for more information on auction technologies, great live auctioneers and upcoming events.