


# Auction Procurement Kit

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Visit [https://causepilot.com/procurement\\_kit](https://causepilot.com/procurement_kit) to download the accompanying free tools and make your life so much easier!

# Introduction

In this Auction Procurement Kit, I'll share with you several ways to make your auction bigger, better, and believe it or not, more effortless.

You'll grow your auction fundraiser year after year by building a great team and procuring more and better auction items, you'll raise more money, and everyone will love the fun and ease of participating in the process.

You'll start by creating a well-thought-out plan. This plan will guide you, step-by-step, on what to do and how to do it, and then you can rest assured that by following the plan, you'll better ensure success.

As the Founder and CEO of a fundraising software platform specializing in auctions, I have worked with countless nonprofits to raise millions for their respective causes. Over more than ten years of service, I've seen what they've done well, and poorly... so I know a thing or two about building and hosting the best auctions possible.

Every organization and every auction is different, so please use this Procurement Kit as a guide. The information is intended to help you think through the processes and formulate your own plan that will meet your specific needs.

Let's face it, whether you are a newbie to hosting an auction fundraiser or a seasoned expert, you don't want to do it wrong, reinvent the wheel each time, or get stuck in a rut of "this is how we've always done it". Any of these things will likely get you what you've always gotten or you may raise less because what was once exciting has now lost its luster.

However, you can avoid this by taking a different approach to procuring auction items and running your auction more intentionally. Let me show you how!



## Step 1. Set Goals

*“Know where you’re going.”*

Before you can get somewhere, you must know where you’re going. The first question is...How much do we want our auction to raise?

The number of auction items you need to procure, and their level of value are very different depending on whether you want to raise \$10,000, \$100,000, or \$500,000+. You should be realistic when you set this goal.

Think about the size of the team you can build, your supporter audience (the number of people in your contact and social media lists), their potential enthusiasm, and typical level of giving.

If it’s your first auction, you might start a little smaller. If you’ve done this before, you already have a pretty good idea of what can be done.

Set your goal high enough that you must reach for it but not so high that you’ve set yourself up to fail.

Next, determine an average value for your items. If they are around \$100 each, then you should consider that, on average, you will likely raise around 50% or \$50 for each item you procure. If you can get items that are more in the \$1,000+ range, you will need fewer items to reach the same goal.

Typically, an auction will have a little of everything... low, medium, and high-value items to appeal to everyone. But, for this exercise, it’s good to pick an average so you can set a procurement goal.

*TIP: If this isn’t your first rodeo, look at your past auction(s) and get an average value by adding up all the items’ values and dividing by the number of items.*

Let’s say you want to raise \$50,000, and your average item value is \$100 (avg. raise \$50). Then, you’ll need to procure approximately 1,000 items.

If your average item value is \$500 (avg. raise \$250), then you’ll need 200 items.

It takes a much bigger team to procure 1,000 items than it does to procure 200. Knowing this basic information will help you build the team you need to reach your goals.

*TIP: When it comes to the overall event, you'll need to set a budget. If the procurement needs funds to create and mail receipts, thank you cards, donor gifts, etc., be sure that your team's needs are included in the budget. If the budget isn't there, just get creative!*

[DOWNLOAD: Goal Calculator >](#)



Example of a western themed auction item display table.

## Step 2. Build your Team

*“Surround yourself with people who share your passion.”*

If you're currently a one-person show at your nonprofit, and want to host an auction that brings in a significant amount of money, it's time to start building a team.

Rally volunteers who share your passion for the cause/mission. If you're a larger organization with staff and many volunteers, congratulations! You have a team ready to go.

If you're an organization like a school, you probably have a built-in community and pool of eager volunteers. You'll just need to get them to join the effort.

To get people to join your team, show them what's in it for them. Here's a short list to help you formulate your pitch.

- It can be lots of fun. (We make meetings fun!)
- They'll meet new people and make new friends.
- They are supporting their community.
- They are contributing to a cause they feel passionately about.
- You will help make it easier for them with small pre-determined tasks.
- They'll have plenty of time to accomplish their commitments.
- It's a team effort and everyone participates based on their abilities.
- You'll provide the tools they need to ensure success.

Make building your team easier by sharing upfront precisely what will be required and the benefits of joining the effort.

You can make it easier for your team by giving them the tools and support they need to do their best work in the shortest time possible.

Think minimum effort with maximum results. You'll give them a specific set of tasks, and a timeline, show them exactly how to solicit items and how to pick them up, and you should be there to help along the way.

It's a lot easier for your team members to commit to taking on responsibility when they know exactly what it will entail. Distribute the workload so team members know in advance the time commitment that will be required.

**"Leadership is the art of giving people a platform for spreading ideas that work." --Seth Godin**

Although everything can be managed manually on spreadsheets, if you want to make the best use of your team - and your - time, and stay organized, consider providing your team with great auction and event management software.

Make sure you provide education and training, so your team isn't flying blind or reinventing the wheel. Give them what they need to ensure their success, yours, and the organization. Create a pitch that will attract the best people for your team!

Start building your team as early as possible. Attempting to pack 3-6 months of work into 30 days will not make for a team happy. Don't put unnecessary pressure and stress on yourself or your team. Start early and take the time you need to do it right. The bigger the auction, the longer you need.

[DOWNLOAD: Team Builder & Meeting Schedule >](#)

## Step 3. Create a Donor List

*“What excites them?”*

Who is your ideal audience? What do they love to do? Where do they like to shop? Where do they like to eat? What would excite them, their friends, and/or their family? What would they consider fun? You get the idea.

After considering these questions, create a list of businesses that provide these sorts of products, services, and experiences.

Stores and restaurants in your community are always good options because your auction participants already go there and welcome the thought of giving their money to a worthy cause and possibly getting a discount at their favorite places.

The goal is always to get the best items possible, that will excite your supporters and raise the most money for your cause. Every item given is equal to a donation and money in the bank, so you might think...the more the merrier!

But...not so fast. Some items sell better than others, and you'll have limited resources (time and help), so you'll want to put your focus on the best possible items first.

When I say, “know your audience,” I mean, for example... Sports memorabilia might not sell well at a Lady's Tea event. Cooking or spa experiences might do very well. However, that same sports memorabilia might bring top dollar at a “Dad, Son, and Donuts” event. Make sure your offerings match the interests of your audience.

Smaller items are easier to sell while larger items must find the right buyer. Gift certificates, liquor, tickets to events, and a variety of things that everyone loves sell easier than things that are very specific to a person's unique style. For example, jewelry and paintings, sometimes do very well and sometimes they do not.



Think about offering items at every price point so everyone can find something to bid on. That's what makes an auction fun and allows your supporters to make a contribution.

## **How To Begin**

If this isn't your first auction, start with your list of donors from last year. But don't just automatically go back for more. Take a good look and evaluate what sold well and what didn't.

Look to expand your offering by finding more of what sold well. Consider alternative options for donors that had items that didn't sell well. They clearly support your cause so don't discount them. Ask them to donate a different product/service or to become a sponsor instead.

*TIP: Keep good records on every donor. If this is your first year, you'll find that you have to look up and locate a contact name, phone number, email address, mailing address, physical address, etc. This is time consuming busy work for the team. When you take care to keep good records, you'll be well ahead of the game next time.*

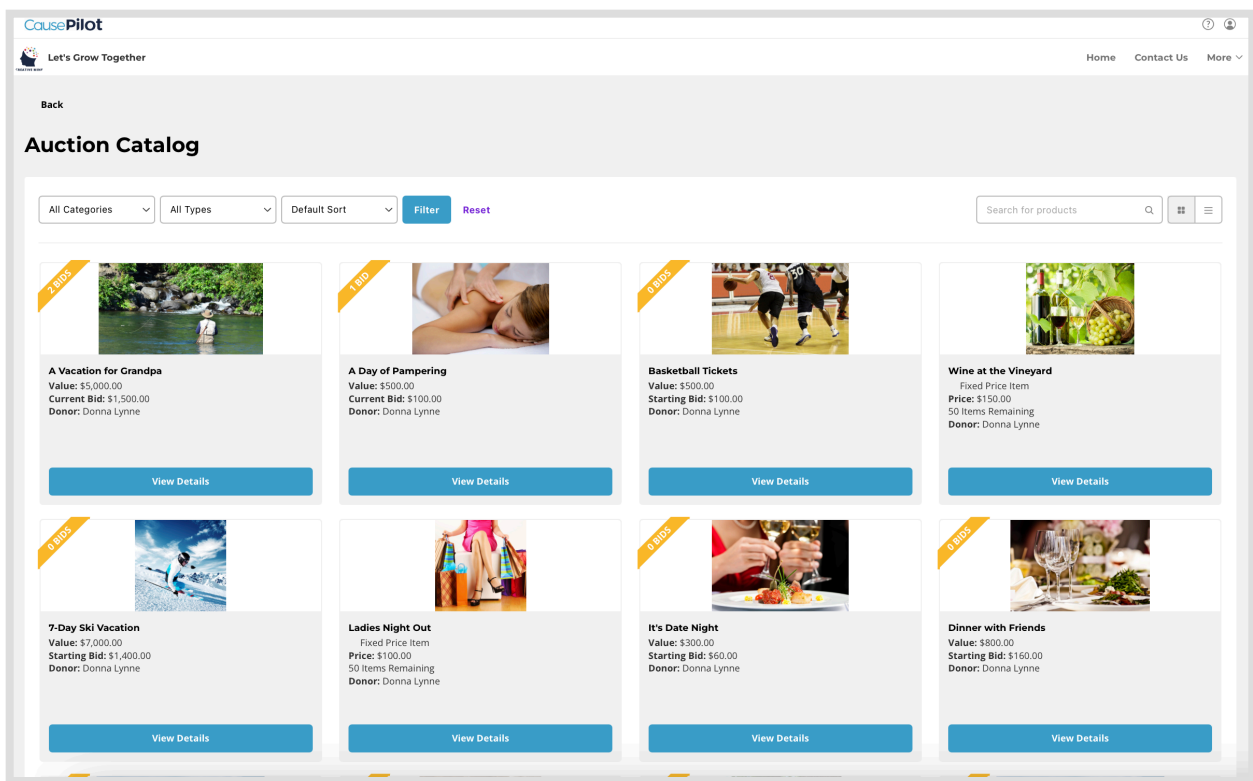
Sometimes just having a fun trip in your auction can add a little excitement, whether it sells or not. There are several consignment companies out there that offer trips and experiences whereby you only purchase them after they sell. There's no cost or obligation upfront.

The only downside to consignment items of any kind may be, if someone is willing to spend \$5,000 or \$10,000 for a trip, and your organization only get to keep \$1,000- \$2,000 of that sale, would they have given you the whole amount for something else? Who knows. Again, know your audience!

Simply Google "Fundraising Consignment Trips and Experiences" to get a list of companies that offer this type of service. They will provide you with all of the details and images you need for your auction catalog.

Some companies provide various types of memorabilia as well. The goal here is to get your creative juices flowing by providing a few ideas of what might work best for your auction.

[DOWNLOAD: Donor & Contact List Spreadsheet >](#)



Example of an online auction catalog

## Step 4. Solicitation

*“It’s all about the ask.”*

One of the most daunting tasks for your team is soliciting items. The reason is that people are afraid to “ask” as it makes them feel yucky...like they are selling or begging. Let’s take that thought right off the table!

Soliciting auction items for a great cause is doing a good thing. Don't assume that your organization is the only one who benefits from a donation of an auction item. Believe me, it benefits the business that helps your community in more ways than one.

A suitable auction donation from a business is often a win-win-win! You raise more funds, the donor advertises to the community, and the event attendees have a more enjoyable experience because of the high-quality items.

Soliciting auction items comes down to sharing the benefits with the donor and doing so in a way that is not forceful or “salesy.”

Some people have a knack for it—but don't worry if it's not natural to your team immediately. Let's discuss some critical components in asking for an item to auction.

Any business owner knows that advertising is expensive and public relations complicated. Pitch participation as a way of advertising their business and a way to show they care about the community.

After all, you are raising support for a cause you feel passionately about and are offering a business a very inexpensive way to promote its product or service.

Here are some of the benefits to the business that you can explain:

- The chance to display their product and/or brand to the community via your online or printed auction catalog and/or at an event.
- If you know it, tell them the size of your potential audience and the likely number of views their brand will receive.
- An opportunity to support a worthy cause is excellent public relations, which they can share with customers in their own newsletter and promotional materials.
- Auctions provide a tremendous low-cost advertising vehicle for them.
- And it's a "donation," so potentially tax deductible.

... For a business, you can't beat that!

Keep in mind that you aren't just asking for a donation. You are offering a great deal that the business will benefit from. If they say yes, great! If they say no, move on to the next.

## **Teamwork makes the Dream Work**

Divide and conquer! Before you start soliciting, you'll need to take your list of potential donors and divide responsibility among your team members. This is where you'll see it pays to know how many auction items you need and how big your team should be to accomplish your goal.

Consider what is a reasonable number of items to ask each person to be responsible for. Maybe it's 10, 20, or 50. It all depends on how many items you have, the number of volunteers, and their willingness to give their time. But, keep in mind that they will get some "No's" so, help them establish how they will further build their list to reach the number of items they are responsible for bringing in, and the value.

Set some goals for your team to contact a certain number of potential donors and bring in a certain number of auction items per week. Keep track of their progress and reward those that do a great job - encourage those that are falling behind.

Also, ask more successful teammates to share tips with those who seem to need assistance. Their expertise should help close some deals and increase the team's overall performance.

*TIP: Eager and experienced volunteers are a great asset. Encourage those who have successfully solicited auction items before to share their knowledge and expertise with the newbies. Building a great team that wants to come back and help again will pay off in multiples.*

If you have a good number of volunteers, consider breaking them into teams with team captains. This will help to ensure everyone is focused and doing their job. It also provides an opportunity for the team captain to be creative in how they motivate their team.

Some fun ideas include a little healthy competition, setting goals, or giving out prizes for the most auction items brought in.

When you have successfully divided and conquered the list of potential donors, it's time to start making those calls or sending those emails!

## **On Contacting Businesses**

It's a good idea to start with an introductory solicitation letter and/or email. On one hand, people get less mail these days, so maybe they'll notice and appreciate your letter. At a minimum, it's a little heads-up to expect someone to reach out soon.

On the other hand, if you have email addresses - it's free to send one or more emails. Everyone gets a lot of emails so this too may be something that they just glance at but it can include easy, quick click links to your website, forms, etc. Consider emails another opportunity for the business to see your organization's name and start to become familiar.

*CausePilot's Procurement component provides a way for you to accept donation forms online so you know who wants to donate items to your auction.*

It would be wishful thinking to say most businesses will see your letter or email and immediately offer their donation. You'll most likely still need to reach out personally to close the deal and/or pick up donated items.

But an introductory letter or email can set a great tone for what you are trying to accomplish with your fundraising event and give them advance information on why they should donate.

It can make the team member doing the soliciting job a little easier because the stage has been set. And remember, you are also building your organization's brand and awareness in the process.

When you call a business, ask for the owner or manager. Same if you walk through the front door. You need to speak with a decision maker. If they aren't available, ask for their name, phone number, and email address so you can reach out again later and directly.

You certainly won't be the first to ask the business for a donation. People ask business owners for this kind of stuff all the time, so sometimes a worker might be programmed with a quick "No thank you". However, you know the value of what you're offering, so you just need to get in front of the right person. A sweet smile, a little charm, and a great pitch go a long way.

Provide your team with a script of how to "ask" for donated items. They don't need to read it verbatim, but they should use it as a guide. It will help them say the right thing to get the best result. Remember, not only are they working toward fundraising, but they are also representing your organization so you want them to always be their best and know how to correctly share your organization's message.

*TIP: Share that other businesses like theirs have donated. If a competitor is donating, they might want to donate too, or even up the ante. Knowing which businesses have donated via an online catalog or spreadsheet is helpful for all teammates.*

*TIP: At your meetings, ask team members to share experiences so you can all benefit from things that worked well and things that didn't. You'll likely get some funny stories as well.*

## **Make the Process Wonderful**

As you start asking for items, don't forget about managing your team through the solicitation process. Meet with them regularly and do your best to add a little fun to every meeting.

Take care of business and ensure everyone calls on the potential donors they've been assigned. Hold each team member accountable and help when it's needed. But also build rapport and encourage friendships.

Treat a meeting like a friend's get-together and have time, at the end, to socialize and have a snack. This will help create an environment where seasoned volunteers return again next year!

*TIP: When approaching previous donors, show them how well their auction item was received by the audience last year.*

*How many bids did it get? How many participants did you have overall at your event, which equates to how many people saw their brand/product?*

*Encourage them to take their donation up a notch!*

You also might consider asking your current list of supporters if they have anything they'd like to donate. Especially if you are a school with a built-in support group like parents.

Simply ask them to consider donating frequent flyer miles, a vacation home for a week, or their own products and services. There are probably lots of entrepreneurs out there that would love to get their product in front of your community. In the case of a school, they'd love for other parents to know they have a business.

*TIP: If you have a built-in supporter group, ask each person or parent to donate at least one item to your auction.*

*Everyone knows at least one person they could ask to donate something. Offer incentives to send in more with rewards like free tickets, better seating at your event, or a pizza party for the kids.*

[DOWNLOAD: Solicitation Templates >](#)

The screenshot shows the CausePilot website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the logo 'CausePilot' and the tagline 'Let's Grow Together'. Below the navigation bar, there is a 'Back' button and a 'Donate' section. The 'Donate' section is titled 'Make an item donation' and contains two main parts: 'Enter Item Details' and 'Enter Donor Details'. The 'Enter Item Details' section includes fields for 'Item Name', 'Item Description' (with a rich text editor), 'Estimated Value' (with a dollar sign), and 'Item Condition' (with a dropdown menu set to 'New'). The 'Enter Donor Details' section includes fields for 'First Name', 'Last Name', 'Email', 'Phone', 'Company Name', 'Company Address', 'Company suite, apt., etc.', 'Company Country' (with a dropdown menu), 'Company City', 'Company State', 'Company Zip', and 'Company Website Url'. A 'Self Claim' button is located in the top right corner of the 'Enter Donor Details' section. At the bottom of the form, there is a 'Submit Donation' button.

Example of an online solicitation page



## Step 5. Procurement

*“Pick up the items.”*

Every physical item must be received either by pick up (most common) or by the donor dropping it off. These are great public relations opportunities, so the donor knows that your organization truly appreciates their contribution.

Making the pick-up or drop-off process easy and fun is vital. Focusing on this will make it even easier for business to donate again next year.

Provide your team with guidance on how to pick up items. Consider asking team members to choose a partner and go out together to pickup items. This will make it more fun for everyone. But most importantly, remember... when it comes to picking up auction donations, a little courtesy goes a long way.

*TIP: Provide your team with instructions to adequately package fragile items so they don't break before the auction even starts. Ask them to request from the business or bring packing material and boxes as needed.*

Packaging auction items correctly will help prevent any damages in transit. Establishing these protocols early on will make the process much smoother for everyone.

Provide advance training to your team on how they are to meet and greet donor businesses. When arriving at a donor's place of business, advise someone of your name and that you represent the organization. Here's an example...

*“Hi, my name is Donna Lynne, and I'm here on behalf of Common Good. We help the world to be a better place. We spoke with Joe Smith, who generously offered to donate a \$250 gift certificate to The Great Store.*

*I'm here to pick up the donation...”*

After retrieving the item, leave a thank you card for the donor that includes a little bit more information about your organization and event. You might even consider inviting them and a guest to your event. The card could be stapled to a brochure or flyer that talks about your organization and its mission.

*TIP: For each item you procure, be sure to include the donor's name, address, phone number, and email address. Also, note the type of item donated, any special instructions for handling it, and the item's value.*

*TIP: When a team member picks up the item, they can even take a selfie in front of the business, and/or with the contact, to document the pick-up and to say thank you! Put it on social media and tag the business to promote goodwill and future donations.*

## **Why Procurement Matters**

The truth is, you never know—this donor could become an advocate for your organization, share their participation with their customers, and encourage other businesses they work with to do the same. This is how you multiply support throughout your community.

Provide your team with an Auction Item Donation form and ask them to fill it out entirely for each item, so you get all the information you need.

This form should include the donor's contact information, so you can send them a thank you and tax receipt later. It will also include such things as the name, description, and estimated value for your auction catalog. *(We'll discuss this in more detail later.)*

## **Make The Process Rewarding**

Again, don't forget to keep the process fun for your team. Provide incentives to accomplish the tasks they've been assigned.

Add a little friendly competitiveness and reward those that put in the extra effort. It might be something as simple as a visible chart to track everyone's progress. We all loved stars in kindergarten, and we still do!

Instead of people working as individuals, maybe some people would prefer to work together with another person, and then they are a team too. If you're able, you could offer a prize for the top team and/or top 3 teams.

The point is to get creative and make your events fun and exciting for everyone. Master this, and you'll have people clamoring to be a part of your team and events in the future!

Also, remember that the solicitation, outreach, and pickup process takes time. Depending on the size of your auction, ensure you are allowing enough time to accomplish these tasks without putting too much pressure on volunteers. That is... if you want them to enjoy the experience and participate again next year. And believe me, if you want to build a successful venture, you need repeat participation.

The goal is to keep growing your team, your number of items and the quality and value of the items, year after year....and you do that with positive improvements.

*TIP: Keep clear records of every auction item. It will save you a great deal of time next year if donors give you repeat items.*

*After the event, ensure you add the number of bids and how many items sold so you can review the results.*

[DOWNLOAD: Auction Items Spreadsheet >](#)

## Step 6. Process and Organize

*“A stress-free auction.”*

In advance, decide where and when items will be dropped off after being picked up. Share this information with your team. Believe me, you don't want your auction items floating around throughout the event space or in people's trunks up until the event.

Nothing is more frustrating than making trips to drop off items only to have no one home or the storage facility locked. Save your team time and energy with a designated plan.

With this in mind, you'll need an excellent location to accommodate and keep all of your auction items organized. The bigger the auction, the more room they can take up. Having a storage facility, an empty room, or a garage is good to hold your items so they won't be in anybody's way. If you have shelving, even better!

At a minimum, make sure you having room enough to stack items around the room in groups will go a long way to keeping you organized. You can keep a spreadsheet available for each storage area and/or team so everyone can track what goes where.

Build a master list using the Auction Item Spreadsheet and list its storage location so you can easily find it when it's time to prepare for your event.

Basically, here's how to make the process easier. Take your Auction Item Spreadsheet and, as items are received, add the details from the Auction Item Donation forms. Then put everything in its designated storage location.

Also, keep track of the volunteer who brought it in because, if you have questions, they are your best resource. Assign each item a number and tag it with something that will stick and/or not fall off as it's moved around.

Keep items physically organized by number so you can quickly locate them if necessary.

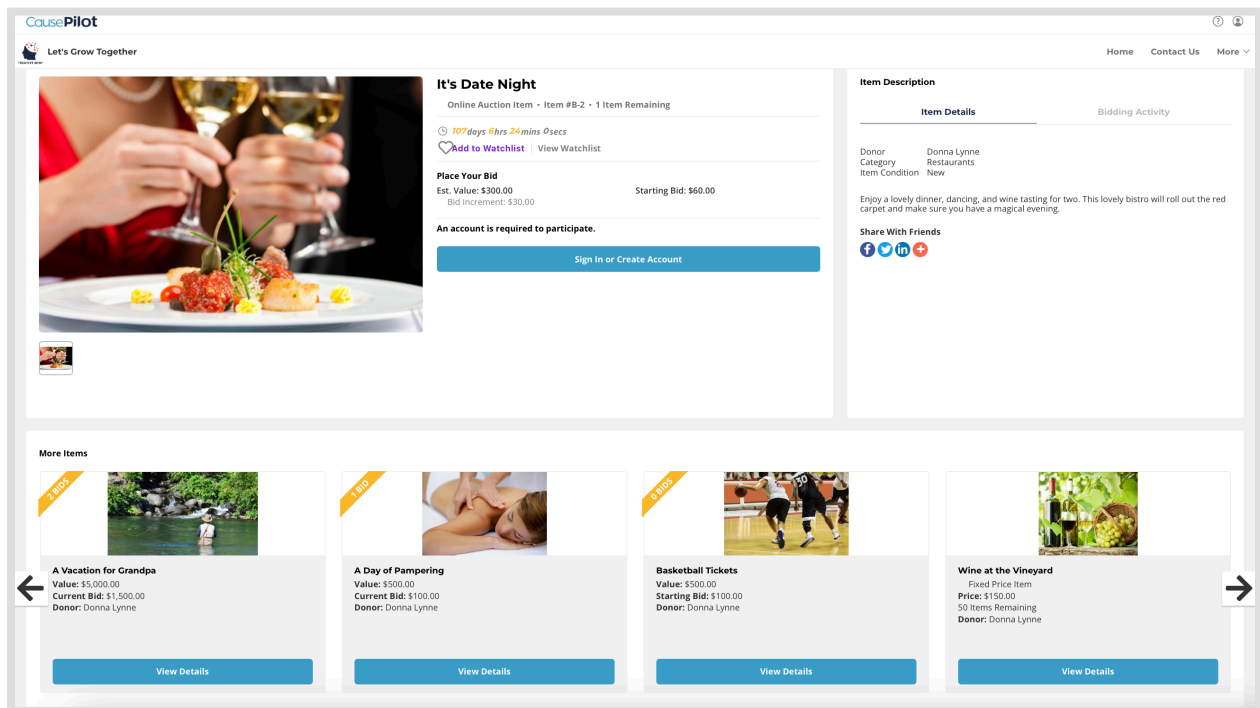
It might seem like a lot of work, but it's worth it when things go smoothly on the event day. This is how you actually reduce stress and anxiety. Everybody knows what you have, where it is, and it's easily retrievable. Plus, your event team can use the spreadsheet to quickly plan their event set-up.

*TIP: Consider your numbering system in advance. Numbering will help you find items later when it's time for distribution after your auction is over.*

*For example, what will your categories be? You might have categories A, B, and C. Then, number your items A-1, A-2, A-3, etc.*

*When you display items marked with an A, you know they should be grouped together on your display tables or in your inventorying area.*

[DOWNLOAD: Auction Item Spreadsheet >](#)



Example of an item's detail page in an auction catalog

## Step 7. Thank You Receipts

*“Shake the hands that feed you.”*

Be sure to send each donor a thank you letter or email to tell them how much your organization appreciates their support. Insure it contains the item’s name, estimated value, and your organization’s nonprofit tax ID so it can double as a receipt for tax purposes.

These receipts will come in handy later when you are preparing your tax forms for the auction. If possible, as you are picking up items, hand-deliver the thank you/ receipts along with a small gift, and thank the donor in person. It’s a nice personal touch, and they will appreciate it!

Another option is to provide a thank-you receipt at the event or as donors drop off their items. This is a great way to thank them on the spot and ensure you have all the information you need for your records.

[DOWNLOAD: Thank You Receipt Template >](#)



## BONUS

### I. Display Auction Items

*“Make it pretty and appealing.”*

Although not part of the procurement process, if you’re hosting an in-person event, your auction and events team will need all of the same item information to create display and/or bid sheets for the auction items.

Display and bid sheets are typically used at an event to encourage bidding and create an excellent presentation. The better your display matches your guest's expectations, the more likely they will open their wallets!

But that doesn't mean it has to be complicated or expensive. Get creative with what you have on hand and use your imagination! But, for the best looks think like an interior decorator and keep the look consistent with decor and color.

To create exceptional displays, you will need tables, table clothes, decor, and display stands to hold Display sheets.

Display sheets provide all the detail of the auction item like donor name, item name, description, picture, and value.

If you are hosting a bid sheet auction, you will also need bid sheets and pens for each auction item.

Bid sheets, minus the picture (no room and the item is right there to see in person), typically include the same information as a display sheet. It will also include the starting bid and incremental bid amounts, on the table for bidding.

Silent auctions typically use bid sheets, while live auctions typically don't. Live auctions use bid numbers whereby a Master of Ceremonies or an Auctioneer calls

out for bidders to raise their paddles to bid. Winners are written down and, if using software, entered into the system manually.

*TIP: Pens walk away, and it's hard to read some people's handwriting to know their bid number or their bid. To solve this problem, consider providing each bidder with a page of small stickers with their bidder number printed on them.*

*TIP: Mobile auctions also use Display Sheets to provide guests with all pertinent information about the item and can include a QR code to your online catalog for quick bidding. With mobile bidding there's no need for bid sheets as all bidding is done via their phone and everything happens "magically".*

[DOWNLOAD: Display and Bid Sheet Templates >](#)





## BONUS

### II. Promote, Promote, Promote

*"Here....more is merrier."*

Now that you have all your auction items, it's time to start promoting your event! Ideally, you should start promoting about 6-8 weeks in advance. Think "save the date" and then teasers as you sell tickets.

There are many ways to promote your auction. You can use social media, postcards, emails, and even personal invitations. No matter what method you choose, be sure to include all the crucial details about your event, such as the date, time, location, and how to purchase tickets.

You can also promote specific auction items to generate excitement and encourage attendees to bid high. Provide a link to your online auction catalog for quick and easy bidding.

Inviting notable community members, such as celebrities, athletes, or politicians, can also help increase interest in your event.

*TIP: Use creative marketing techniques to make your auction stand out from the rest. Brainstorm with you team. It's fun and you never know what you can come up with.*

For example, you could hold a social media contest where attendees can share their favorite auction items for a chance to win a prize.

You could also create a special hashtag for your event and encourage attendees to use it when posting about the auction on social media. Provide incentive to do so.



## BONUS

### III. Make The Event Unforgettable

*“It’s your time—make it count.”*

Your procurement journey is coming to an end, but the actual hosting of the event work is about to begin!

Now it’s time to focus on making your event unforgettable. From when your guests arrive to when they leave, you want them to feel welcome and have a great time.

To ensure your event is successful, like with the procurement process, it’s essential to have a well-organized plan and a team of volunteers to help execute it.

Your event plan should include everything from decorating the venue to lining up entertainment.

Assigning each task responsibility, and knowing when they are to be completed, will help ensure everything runs smoothly on the big day.

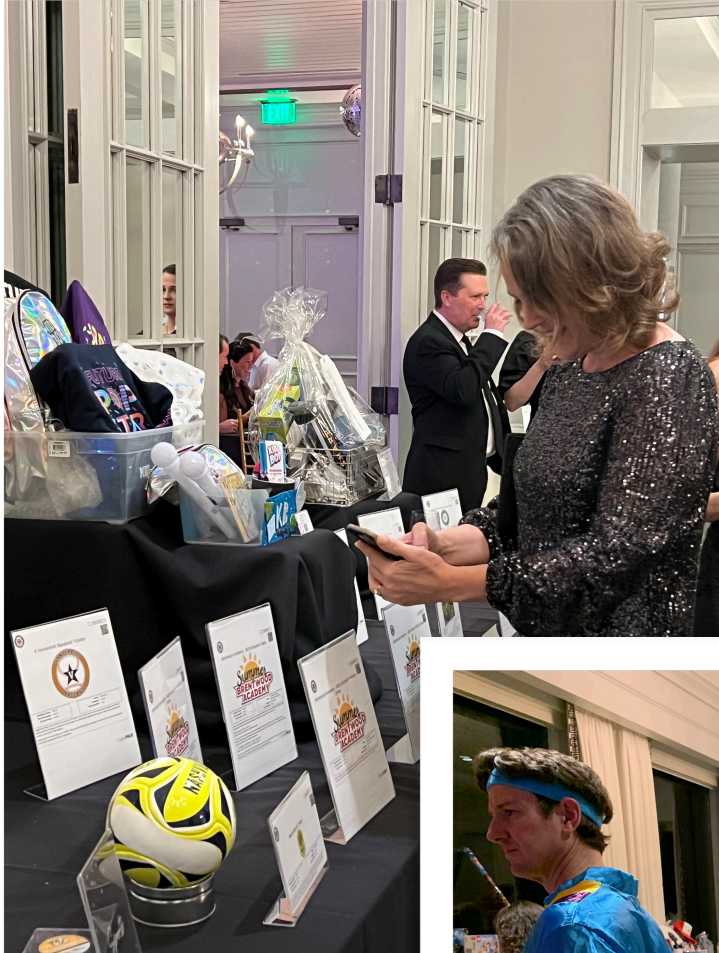
If you're having speakers, enjoying food or drink, or hosting a live auction, you'll need to plan accordingly. Create an agenda, share it with everyone (team and guests), and stick to it to the best of your ability.

Thinking through the smallest of details will insure things run smoothly. Make sure you have everything you need well in advance, so you're not scrambling at the last minute.

*TIP: Have a contingency plan for everything! You never know when something might go wrong, so it's always best to be prepared. Having an outdoor event? What if it rains? The WiFi goes down, use your cell phone's WiFi with your laptop to manage your event.*

*You're in a cement basement and cell reception isn't great? Have bid sheets ready to go so you don't miss a bid. You get the idea!*

By following these steps and putting in the hard work, you'll be well on your way to hosting a successful auction that raises lots of money for your cause.





## BONUS

### IV. Mistakes to Avoid

*“Always be prepared.”*

Being prepared is not just a Boy Scout motto. It should apply to your fundraising event. Here’s a list of the biggest mistakes I’ve seen in my many years of helping nonprofit charities, schools, and foundations host auctions and events.

- **Require Credit Cards.** Not requiring credit cards in advance for a quick checkout. Sure you can have people enter their credit card at the end of the event or write a check (but who has those on them these days!). But, think about how long that takes when everyone is ready to leave....and some already have.
- **Auction Item Distribution.** Not having a well thought out plan and team to distribute auction items to winners at the end of the evening. Everybody is ready to go home after a fun night, the last thing they want to do is stand in a disorganized line waiting for someone to bring them their auction items.
- **Secure Auction Items.** Not having auction items in a secure location. It’s hard to watch what is going on at all times but auction items can walk off. Keep this in mind and keep auction items secure from mischief or inebriated guests. Consider having an area that can be closed when the auction is closed.
- **Entering Live & Silent.** Not having a well thought out plan to quickly enter live and/or silent winners. In the throws of an auction things can feel chaotic. Minimize the chaos by making sure each volunteer has a task and they have been trained.
- **Check-in & Check-out.** Waiting until the night of an event to train check-in and check-out volunteers. Even when your software seems super easy to you, it may be because you’ve had weeks or months to work with it. Some people are more tech savvy than others but even a tech genius needs a minute to acclimate to a new tech environment and feel ease and comfort.

- **Learn & Practice.** Not taking the time to learn how to use their auction software. If hosting an online auction, one person can easily manage the whole process. But, if you're hosting an auction event, have more than one person who has experience with your software. Spread the love by asking different people to watch training videos and practice in each area of your software. Then, keep a list of who your experts are. Untrained people can be a hinderance rather than a help.
- **Helping Guests/Participants.** Not taking the time to know how to help guests get logged in and bid. This is pretty simple and is for most people. But, there are always a few guests that struggle because they have an old or broken phone, or just feel uncomfortable with tech. Be ready to help them or just place their bids for them! Know how to do these two things.
- **Long Lines.** Not doing everything possible to avoid long check-in and check-out lines. There are many things you can do. Number one is simply having a great system in place to manage the process. Number two is having enough volunteers and staff to manage the number of people. Number three doing as much as you can in advance....getting your guest information into the system, and their guest information as early as possible.
- **Organization.** Not being organized and/or only one person knowing where things are. Share your organization method with volunteers and staff so they can help. There's nothing worse than people coming up and saying "I won a gift card for X" but no one knows where the gift cards are. Share this information with those that will help distribute auction items. This also includes a good list of who to go to for what, their names and phone numbers. (Venue, vendors, and staff)
- **Plan B.** Not having a "plan B". Think rain on an outdoor event, WiFi going down, or vendors not showing up. Sometimes it's about rolling with the punches and making the best of a bad situation but, having options is always a good thing.

## Conclusion

Now that you have all the information you need, it's time to start! As I mentioned above, it's never too early.

The most important part of hosting a successful auction and event is having a well thought out plan and then flawlessly implementing that plan. Set a goal, build a great team, set a budget, find the right auction item donors, promote your event, and make it unforgettable for your donors and guests.

Although it can be a bit stressful at the time, by following our advice, you'll be well on your way to hosting a successful auction that can far exceed your goal expectations and create a system that you can build upon year after year.

Don't forget to have fun and enjoy the process!

I hope you found this guide helpful. Please use any of the links throughout the resource to aid in your auction procurement journey.

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This guide was brought to you by:



CausePilot is auction & event software that provides all of the tools you need to host a successful fundraiser - including a great procurement component. I'd like to invite you to visit our website and see how we can help you, your team, and organization to take your mission to new heights.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT > <https://causepilot.com>