Giving More Than Money  
  
By now I’m sure you’ve all been asked countless times to give your services up for free as a donation. For me, personally, I’ve already got a “They just asked for my career for free smile.” It’s tried and true, and so far no one has caught on that it’s a special smile that I made just for this. I’m sure that many of you who have been in the industry significantly longer than me have a similar smile/practice/line to say. In this article I hope to give you some inexpensive ideas on how giving back can further your business.

I’m not going to add to that list. Everyone has their own voice, and should say theirs in their own way. Today what I want to write about is how giving your time and expertise can be as valuable (or more!) than a monetary donation.

Becoming an active member of a board of directors is often a great way to gain visibility in a community, and if you’re young, many boards will nearly kidnap you to get you to join. However what I’m doing is different.

I’d suggest giving free education. Through your career you’ve accumulated knowledge of your industry. Give it away. Find a good partner in your community whose goals run alongside yours. For me it was the Chamber of Commerce. The important thing to remember is to not sell yourself during this education, but to have services that could parallel theirs if the time ever came.

For instance, I personally specialize in Benefit Auctions. What that means for me is over time I’ve become quite knowledgeable about Silent Auction item acquisition. This is NOT where I make my money; however, my information - which is typically one of my services - would prove useful to many nonprofits whose Silent Auction makes up a large portion of their event. This is a great way to potentially build a client list; but more than that it puts you in potential clients’ minds as a knowledgeable professional, which is something very difficult to do especially for newer auctioneers who are looking to inexpensively further their business.

“I’m not a Benefit Auctioneer. I sell real estate and I can’t give anything away.” Really? Be creative. I don’t know your industry, but if I was a potential first-time home buyer I would want to know the area, costs involved, which regions of the area are more expensive, less expensive, and why. Would it be possible to create a presentation on the last three years with where you see the potential market going? Sometimes we as professionals assume people know what we know when they don’t. People are busy.

I hope you’ve thought about how you can give something more than money, and how it might help you be remembered down the road. And don’t forget to smile.

Michael Imholte

Director