Pandemonium: Auction Style

While I’m disappointed to say we’ve entered our fourth month of learning to live and do business during the COVID-19 pandemic, I know our industry will survive. Auctioneers are made to adapt. These skills are on display on a daily basis in the work we do and frankly, these are the qualities I so appreciate in each and every one of you. There is no doubt that 2020 has been far from anything that you and I could imagine and our adaptability will provide invaluable service to auction customers across the board.

Recently, I conducted my first virtual fundraising auction for a nonprofit organization. While there was plenty to fear and work through, the new challenges created by the pandemic provided an opportunity for professional growth and honestly one of the most rewarding experiences of my auction career. If you work in benefit auction fundraising, I encourage you to embrace the new challenges to continue to provide value to your clients who so dearly need your expertise especially in this time. Despite the fact we are unable to meet in large groups in indoor spaces and changes to these policies seem distant, nonprofit organizations have ever-growing needs as collectively they seek to serve more people who are in need. Our obligation as their fundraising specialists is to provide the consultation for a nonprofit’s continued success.

Live auctioneers take pride in our chant and our ability to perform before large crowds and raise as much money as possible for a given cause. Unfortunately, the virtual fundraisers we have had to adjust to are not conducive to live auctions the way we have traditionally known. This is hard. But in this moment, let’s swallow our pride and continue to assist our customers in raising as much money as possible. The long term relationships with our customers will only strengthen so long as we are willing to adapt with them.

The next fundraising season is already on the horizon and consultations are being scheduled ahead of the fall’s virtual events. Working hand-in-hand with the nonprofits you partner with, the consultation has multiplied in importance and preparedness for a virtual event. Through your conversations, every angle of the virtual event needs to be considered: from the length, advertising, silent auction, games, additional entertainment, and so many more aspects far too descript to outline in this article. Regardless, always take the time to intentionally invest in the long term relationship with the organization to cover all of the bases for their virtual event. Then, if given the opportunity to present during the virtual event, I have two key pieces of advice: 1) rehearse, rehearse, rehearse and 2) perform larger than life. If you think your body language is big, make it huge. Because in the end, you will have the opportunity to embrace a larger audience than the organization has ever seen before and the audience will respond to your best.

Isaac Schultz

MSAA Director