

Promoting Value

For this first website essay, I thought that I would write a short story discussing my benefit experience leading to my designation over the years and use my favorite Auction to illustrate how to strategize experience to gain proper compensation.

Over the past three years, I have been doing a benefit Auction in the Twin Cities for a non-profit organization that will not be named. It started from a referral from the Board Director of another Benefit Auction that I had been doing which had been paying well and the client had been happy with my work. This organization was established but has now grown large enough to sponsor a Gala Banquet with a silent and live Auction--typical of what we usually see and do now. Receiving a great referral, it was on my shoulders to prove my worth. What had helped me the most was having done many small benefit Auctions thus far and thus preparing me for this bigger event. This head of the Board was nervous herself to pull off a successful fund-raiser and I had to convince her I would help her accomplish this goal. I told her of my many years of working with now-retired NAA Hall of Fame member Auctioneer Jack Hines, competing in the MN and WI State Auctioneer competitions along with the National Competition in San Antonio, TX. I told her of all that it takes to obtain the CAI designation and the more recent BAS specific to the type of Auction that she needed.

So the interview was going well, and it seemed like I was going to land the contract. Then we got to the topic of my fees and apparently, they were not used to paying for this service. Rather, they limped along for years with volunteers from the Board of Directors. The funds raised were from the meal tickets, donated items, and silent auction that netted between 10K and 12K yearly. They were fairly happy with that but were open to a live Auction for entertainment value.

Long story short, she liked me and wanted me to do the Benefit Auction but wasn't willing to pay me my regular fee. This was the final hurdle to overcome. So, my experience, and credentials got me to the final step of the interview-- but it was my sales experience that taught me to think fast and come up with a compromise.

I learned at BAS class never to shortchange your worth as an Auctioneer--Hold fast to your price! So, I did, but feeling like I was going to lose the Auction, I suggested that I would do the first Auction for half of my usual fee. I also told her I was confident in my skills and that I would increase her total revenue this year. If I then she could fire me for next year. I made it so she had nothing to lose and everything to gain. I continued to show her my confidence and gained her trust. I also introduced her to the

concept of "fund of need" Her eyes lit up on this idea and when I was done explaining this idea, she was sold on the deal!

Fast forward to Auction Day, the live Auction raised 7K over the previous year and another 13-14K on the Fund of Need. When I had started at a 5K bid, the lady looked at me very nervously as we got no bidders. So, dropping to \$2500--I got three hands up, then at \$1K 3 more bids, then finished up in increments of \$500 and \$100. When the dust settled, they raised 12K more on that event with 7K on the live Auction. In the end, the lady who had interviewed me came over and was crying and hugging me and thanked me for talking her into hiring me. She was then more than happy to pay me my fee. This year I did the event for the third time and there was no argument on my price/fees. This event keeps growing also, going from an outdoor pavilion and this year now to a fancy banquet hall with a full course meal instead of a box lunch--the air conditioning was also a great plus.

This is proof that you should not give in on your price/fees and if you do the hard work--enter contests, earn designations, etc. You will become confident in your skills and you will land increasingly lucrative Auction events that will pay you the professional wages fitting an NAA and MN Auctioneer. This lady and I started out tense and nervous, but the past two years have been fun for us both and helped her organization really benefit and grow.

I hope you enjoyed my short story on utilizing experience, Designations, and strategy for proper compensation.

Thanks!

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