

Self Enhancement, Inc.

Self Enhancement, Inc. (SEI) is a 29-year-old, nationally recognized non-profit that helps underserved youth realize their full potential. Based in Portland, Oregon, SEI serves more than 2,500 youth and their families annually in comprehensive in-school, after-school and summer academic programs to opportunity for personal and academic success.

Highlights

- SEI's 2009 event raised \$1.9 million, making it one of the most successful single-night fundraising events of the year in Portland, Oregon.
- Using Auctionpay card readers and Greater Giving Event Software allowed for the fastest check-in and check-out in the history of the event.
- Since successful bidders had pre-registered their credit cards at check-in, and they no longer needed to phone in authorizations, long check-out lines were avoided allowing for a smooth check-out process.

Challenge

The largest fundraiser for SEI is the Art + Soul Gala, which attracts more than 500 attendees to the popular event held at their facility. Due to limited parking, event attendees are shuttled to the venue from a nearby hospital parking lot, with as many as 60 patrons arriving for check-in at one time. The sudden influx of 60 guests arriving at check-in at once created a significant bottleneck and slowed guests from entering the event—which reduced the time they could spend reviewing the items for bid in the silent auction area. The staff was looking for a way to reduce auction check-in time that was easy to use for its team of volunteers. That's when some of their Board members, who had seen Greater Giving products at work at other community auctions, recommended Auctionpay and Event Software to help speed auction check-in, improve the guest experience and maximize revenue.

Solution

SEI first selected Greater Giving to improve on-site check-in and payment processing at its 2003 gala by using Auctionpay terminals. Impressed with the technology's benefits, the organization tapped Auctionpay in subsequent years to assist with on-site registration and payment processing for its silent and live auctions, as well as sales of smaller items like raffle tickets and table centerpieces.

"What first piqued my interest were Greater Giving's lower processing rates. But after seeing Auctionpay in action, I was sold on the whole convenience factor, and how much it improves the payment process," said Marcella McGee, Self Enhancement's Finance Director. "It's just fantastic compared to when we had to take people's credit cards manually. In the past, someone from our finance department had to be on the phone getting authorization for every single credit card payment generated from our auction, which takes a significant amount of time when you have 500 attendees. For us, to have an automated process is a big advantage, not only in helping speed reconciliation, but in creating a better experience for guests."

Tips from Self Enhancement, Inc.

- Publicize use of Auctionpay and Event Software in pre-event materials and on-site signage, letting guests know that efforts have been made to make the process quick and easy.
- Make it simple for people to give to your organization by utilizing Auctionpay for both auction items and smaller offerings like raffle tickets.
- Tap into Greater Giving's knowledgeable staff for ideas on how to orchestrate check-in and check-out processes.

Results

SEI's 2009 event raised \$1.9 million, making it one of the most successful single-night fundraising events held in Portland, Oregon that year.

Utilizing Auctionpay card readers and Event Software helped make this year's check-in the fastest registration in the history of the event allowing attendees to spend more time in the silent auction. Since successful bidders had registered their credit cards at event check-in, long check-out lines were avoided.

Auctionpay significantly reduced the amount of time spent collecting receivables post-event. Self Enhancement, Inc. now uses Auctionpay card readers and Event Software for all their live fundraising events, including the annual Art + Soul Gala and the annual Here + Now fundraiser.

All in all, Greater Giving has helped Self Enhancement, Inc.'s record-breaking fundraising efforts become even more successful by positively impacting the guest experience.