



Loveland Living Planet Aquarium

The Loveland Living Planet Aquarium is a non-profit organization that inspires people to explore, discover, and learn about Earth's diverse ecosystems. The organization provides living "classrooms" to immerse people in natural ecosystems, bridging the gaps between education, entertainment and conservation to help people understand and appreciate their connection to the global system of life. The Aquarium's motto is, "Explore, Discover, Learn."

Highlights

- Attendees were able to register online for the event for the first time with Greater Giving Online Payments.
- With the centralized, all-in-one software, Loveland Living Planet Aquarium could store all the event's item and attendee information in a single place, helping the night go smoothly.
- Access to live support kept the rookie staff on track while they prepared for their first event.
- Greater Giving Mobile Bidding was fun, easy to use, and event attendees loved getting into bidding wars with it.

Challenges

Each year, the Aquarium visits every fourth grade class in Utah—and every three years, all second grade classes. At the Loveland Living Planet Aquarium's last annual Scales & Tales event, which funds the elementary education program, the group had just moved to a new facility, and they wanted to show it off to their community of supporters.

At past events, the Aquarium used imprint machines to capture credit card information, which meant a staff member had to enter a lot of manual data to process the night's transactions. But in their classy new venue, this wasn't the image the Aquarium's Controller, Chris O'Meara, wanted to present. The organization needed a secure credit card processing solution for the annual auction that would suit their new space.

The Aquarium's former method was running the auction through their existing point of sale system. O'Meara wanted to ditch the Excel spreadsheets, and abandon the constant wondering about whether someone had the correct version or not.

But a one-stop, all-inclusive solution seemed like a pipe dream. The main thing the Aquarium wanted, O'Meara said, was to add mobile bidding to their auction.

Solution

While evaluating a number of mobile bidding companies, O'Meara came across Greater Giving. "It gave us so much more than just mobile bidding," he says. Greater Giving wasn't just a top-notch mobile bidding solution, but O'Meara found it could fix their credit card and Excel spreadsheet woes too. The whole package offered seamless credit card processing, event management software, and an online registration system they could use year-round for other Aquarium events.

But the organization had an entirely new staff this year, and none of them had experience putting on an auction. Taking on something so big could be challenging. They needed a solution that would suit their new venue, and that the staff could learn quickly and put to use right away.

Greater Giving fit the bill perfectly.

Results

This year, the Loveland Living Planet Aquarium transformed the look of their annual Scales & Tales event with a James Bond theme. It gave the beautiful new Aquarium setting a lounge look and feel, and they offered casino games to complete the experience. The event contained only a silent auction.

The Aquarium's new staff ran the whole event themselves, without hiring anyone from Greater Giving to help with the software or the mobile bidding portion.

"And it went so well," said O'Meara. "The event was seamless. Check-in and check-out ran without hiccups. Guests greatly enjoyed bidding on their phones. Two women even stood side-by-side at the auction, bidding against each other on an item. Bidding wars added tons of fun to the evening, which became its own form of entertainment!"

Their favorite feature of the software? The ability to store everything event-related in one place, instead of in fragments on pieces of paper. The software ensured the evening flowed smoothly and it became their one-stop, all-inclusive solution. The simple reporting and information flow made things much easier for the staff.

Of the whole evening? "Just perfect," said O'Meara.

TIPS

- Get online ticket sales going early, and market Mobile Bidding on your website and in your mailings to encourage pre-registration.
- Create a "Mobile Bidding How To" page on your website, and advertise your new technology to your attendees in advance of the event.
- Open bidding before the event starts, so people start bidding early and get familiar with the tool before the big night.