



Medical University of South Carolina (Hollings Cancer Center)

The Medical University of South Carolina Foundation (MUSCF) was chartered in 1966 as a charitable, educational foundation to support the education, research, patient care and other programs at the Medical University.

Since its inception, the MUSC Foundation has sponsored endowed professorships, scholarships, awards in honor of academic excellence, and acquired and developed campus facilities to serve student, teaching, research or clinical needs. In addition, it has encouraged achievements in biomedical research, and made an enduring and meaningful difference in the lives of many in South Carolina.

Highlights

- With the help of Greater Giving Event Software, the MUSC Foundation was able to combine the fundraising activities of several different departments into one central location.
- The cloud-based software gave volunteers the flexibility to work remotely, and answer questions or pull reports on their schedule.
- Multiple departments can now run projects simultaneously, with many users working on their projects at the same time.
- The MUSC team can now build webpages to sell tickets and advertise sponsors all on their own—saving them tons of time!

Challenges

The MUSC Foundation used Greater Giving Auctionpay to manage credit cards at their annual Gourmet & Grapes event for several years; however the organization had a different PC-based software for event management—which presented efficiency challenges.

The software could only be accessed via a private network; and to enter ticket sales, items and perform other event management tasks, volunteers had to be on-site sharing computers with one another. The team responsible for the event was never sure whether they were working on the correct version of the data or an outdated version, and it was difficult to take data off-site for remote work.

But clunky software wasn't the only problem facing Kiki Cooper, Director of Special Events at the MUSC Foundation, and Lauren Whiteside, Stewardship and Communications Coordinator. Multiple groups conduct fundraising events within the foundation—and each group was using a different event management solution, which cost the organization far more than it should on an annual basis. And with all three groups vying for the attention of a single webmaster, responsible for the entire hospital and college website, everyone experienced long, frustrating wait times even for small changes. They wanted to sell tickets online themselves, without relying on someone else for help.

Cooper and Whiteside knew they needed a new solution—one that would satisfy the needs of all departments within the organization, and allow for many users to work simultaneously without being tied down by the office. They also wanted a mobile bidding solution for their big annual event.

Solution

The MUSC Foundation’s annual Gourmet & Grapes event, a wine and food festival covering several days, delivers about 50% of the entire department’s fundraising goal. The weekend consists of a Saturday luncheon with 80 guests, who then attend a seminar; it’s followed by a black tie dinner with 120 guests, or an auction gala with about 400 guests; then on Sunday, 120 guests attend a golf outing and brunch. Some guests attend events all weekend, and some only sign up for one. It’s a busy weekend!

The gala is the main event. In addition to 100 silent auction packages at the gala, 15 live auction packages, and a special appeal, they also sell chances to win a special prize, where guests have to guess how many corks are inside a vase. Many of the packages they offer contain wine or chef experiences to tie in with the wine and food theme. One such package? The Nebuchadnezzar, a giant bottle that holds the equivalent of *twenty bottles of wine*, and is displayed in its own crate.

With so much going on during preparation and over the weekend, Cooper and Whiteside wanted a solution that would allow them to see their data in real-time during the event. After surveying all of the departments that would benefit from a new solution and creating a comprehensive list of needs, Cooper and Whiteside started researching.

The consensus: everyone in the organization wanted software that was user-friendly. And after experiencing slow response times with their previous software solution, accessible customer support was key. Cooper and Whiteside also knew they wanted mobile bidding as an option for some of their events.

Greater Giving met all of their requirements, and on top of that, was budget-friendly—especially when split among all the departments who would be using it.

Results

Their first year using Greater Giving, the MUSC Foundation exceeded their fundraising goal by more than \$10,000. Cooper, Whiteside, and their staff found the software user friendly and intuitive, and were thrilled to share the system with three other departments—because they could all work within the software simultaneously. “We don’t have to wait on someone else to do our job,” said Whiteside and Cooper.

And they love that this extends even to their website. “We can do it ourselves,” they say, “instead of waiting on one person supporting the entire hospital and college.” All ticketing for the event went through Greater Giving Online Payments, where the team set up web pages for all parts of the event. They also accepted online item donations and sold sponsorships through their website.

The MUSC Foundation markets Gourmet & Grapes mainly through personal invitations sent out via direct mailing, social media outreach, and through their media partners (a local newspaper, a TV station, and a wine magazine). A do-it-yourself platform like Greater Giving allowed the group to display sponsor logos on their website, an additional benefit they can offer to potential sponsors.

The team also took full advantage of the full support Greater Giving offers, reaching out to customer service by email, telephone, and chat. Even though Event Software was new to them and offered so many features, Whiteside and Cooper agreed that it was intuitive and easy to learn.

Best of all, they love tracking their data in real time, because anything they enter is immediately available for questions or reports during crunch time—no waiting or confusion!

TIPS

- Before the event, email your attendees a linked “How To” page of information about using Greater Giving Mobile Bidding.
- Open bidding early to allow attendees to access the system and get comfortable with it in advance.
- Have Bid Helpers available to help and visually identifiable—MUSC called them “Bid Butlers” and gave them all chefs hats, so they could be seen from anywhere in the venue.
- Do a dry run of your event with the volunteers and test mobile bidding.
- Give volunteers links to watch Greater Giving videos appropriate for their jobs, so they can prepare in advance.