



American Cancer Society — Seattle, WA

For more than 100 years, the American Cancer Society has been leading the fight to end cancer. With your support, they have helped usher in an era where more people survive cancer than ever before. By translating their research findings into action, they've seen a 21% decline in US cancer mortality rates since the early 1990's.

As the largest voluntary health organization in the United States, the American Cancer Society is passionately committed to saving lives from cancer. They combine their relentless passion with the wisdom of nearly a century of experience to make the vision of a cancer free world a reality, and they get results. They save lives by helping people stay well, helping people get well, by finding cures, and fighting back. Thanks in part to this work; nearly 14 million cancer survivors and countless others who have avoided the disease will celebrate another birthday this year.

Highlights

- Event attendees found Greater Giving Online Bidding to be fun and simple to use.
- In ACS's first year using a mobile bidding platform, the organization saw more money raised at their event than in any previous year. Then, upgrading to Greater Giving's integrated Online Bidding platform made it centralized and easy to manage.
- Access to live support kept the rookie staff on track while they prepared for their first event.
- This year, with an integrated event software and mobile bidding solution, ACS exceeded their event fundraising goal by \$70,000.

Challenge

The Seattle, Washington chapter of the American Cancer Society has been using Greater Giving's event software and credit card payment solutions for several years. This year, they were expecting more than 350 guests at their event, and their venue was maxed out. With space at a premium, Allison Brock, Development Manager, knew they needed a new solution to ease congestion.

Brock also knew there was a vast well of untapped potential in their silent auction, and they weren't making as much money on it as they should. Sales in the silent auction had been underperforming. Brock figured the best way to make more money on the auction was to give guests space to bid on more items, and allow them more time to bid, so bidding had the opportunity to get competitive.

Brock felt comfortable and confident using the event management software, so in 2014, she decided to add a mobile bidding solution from another vendor to ACS's annual event—to save space and to fundraise more. Brock hoped that eliminating the need for paper bid sheets would make a more efficient use of the space, and that the cool, easy-to-use new technology would appeal to a younger demographic with more cash to spend. Unfortunately, the committee encountered a few challenges with the mobile bidding vendor they chose.

The mobile bidding solution had no method to integrate with ACS's existing Greater Giving software, but the software was necessary to managing all other aspects of their event—from registration to collecting payments, to reporting at the end of the night. To make up for it, the auction staff had to manually enter item descriptions—complete with HTML code—into the mobile bidding platform. It was more technical than Brock felt comfortable with, and proved difficult for an event as large as theirs. On event night, volunteers had to enter each winning bid individually into the software in order to bill guests properly and generate receipts.

Brock says she and her team spend the entire year preparing for their annual event.

And with 350 attendees expected the following year; bidding on 150 silent auction items; 17 live auction items, a Fund A Need; and a Heads and Tails game, Brock needed to find a better mobile bidding solution to carry the event forward.

Solution

Brock had heard that Greater Giving offered an integrated Online Bidding solution. After their negative experience with another vendor, and since she was already fluent in using the Greater Giving software, Brock says moving to Greater Giving for mobile support was a “no-brainer.”

The change was easy to make, she says. First, ACS Seattle utilized the Greater Giving online event registration tool to build a website where they could sell tickets and sponsorships. On event night, they also used the Greater Giving Go Time event night interface to quickly register guests; enter live auction sales and special appeal donations as they happened; and check everyone out at the end of the night. And Online Bidding integrated perfectly, so nothing had to be done for silent auction sales to appear on guest receipts.

The biggest expectation for adding Online Bidding was it would increase silent auction sales—so the team threw themselves into designing the event around the new solution, and then tirelessly promoting it. They opted to open bidding earlier in the day so everyone, including volunteers, staff and committee members could bid before the event doors opened.

Leading up to the big night, the ACS Seattle team worked together to advertise the event on social media, on their website, in newsletters to sponsors, and through several smaller “feeder” events. Thanks to their efforts, all their event guests arrived knowing what to expect.

Results

Thanks to Greater Giving Online Bidding, Brock and her team could open the auction earlier in the day, prior even to the scheduled event start—giving guests more time than ever to peruse the catalog and start bidding. Because the mobile solution was already integrated with Greater Giving Event Software Online, administering the event was simple. Attendees couldn't stop talking about how much they loved the mobile bidding experience—and how easy it was for them to use.

With more time for guests to bid, and bidding now easier than ever, bids were driven higher and higher—and the silent auction exceeded its fundraising goal by several thousand dollars. Brock said, "You know you're successful when people pay over fair market value for an auction item at a fundraiser!"

There was an interesting mesh of age groups at the ACS Seattle event, and Brock says some older guests still wanted paper for bidding. Luckily, the auction committee had brought on "Bidder Buddies," a group of outgoing, tech-savvy young professionals who'd volunteered to assist with bidding on their mobile devices. These volunteers bridged the gap with older attendees, helping them place bids and use the new technology.

Brock also says she adored the support she received from Greater Giving leading up to the event. The ACS team had weekly calls with client services to make sure they were staying on track and ensure no detail was missed. On top of it all, the Greater Giving team made suggestions about things Brock hadn't even considered. She says following their advice "made our lives much easier at the event." Brock and her committee felt very supported during the event planning process, and the event itself was spectacular.

Tips from American Cancer Society of Seattle

- Recruit Bid Buddies! Contact a young professionals group about volunteering to help assist your older demographics. ACS brought in a group from Amazon who were social, outgoing, and tech-savvy.
- If you're managing an event with more than 100 attendees, software is a must for maintaining a database and stewarding your repeat donors. Software is a priceless tool for growing your event, as well as your supporter base.
- Don't try to figure it all out yourself—use the Greater Giving support team.