



Jazz Arts Group of Columbus

The Jazz Arts Group of Columbus (JAG) is America's premier not-for-profit arts organization dedicated to producing, performing, and promoting jazz. JAG's mission is to advance and celebrate the art of jazz through performance and education opportunities and divides its resources between these two efforts in order to transform lives through the power of music. They are committed to offering lifelong-learning opportunities for individuals of all ages, interest, backgrounds and abilities. They achieve these goals through their education and community programs and Jazz Academy activities.

Highlights

- Implementing Greater Giving eliminated the majority of data entry errors.
- Reports were easy to pull together and allowed the Board of Directors to see results in a timely and organized manner.
- Payment collection time was shortened from days to only a few hours.
- Ticket sales and sponsorships were fast and easy to process through online registration.
- Sponsors received additional promotion on JAG's website.

Challenge

For more than 10 years, JAG organizers had been working from basic spreadsheets to manage their annual fundraiser. This antiquated record keeping created bottlenecks, omitted important information, and caused many recording errors to occur, including assigning bid numbers on the wrong line. After the event had concluded, these spreadsheets were difficult to use and took days to reconcile, delaying payment collection and sometimes even forcing organizers to ask for outside help from friends of JAG to locate guests in order to complete the transaction.

In 2015, an attempt to streamline the process was put into place by JAG's gala planner Kimberlee Goodman. She created a payment solution she felt would solve their problems, but its failure only served to assure her she must look for a better solution outside their organization. She did her research and asked other event planners what tools they used and, several demos later, decided Greater Giving provided the best solution to managing all the moving pieces of their event. Now Goodman and her JAG team of organizers utilize Event Software Online, Online Payments and Auctionpay to keep their fundraiser running smoothly, before, during and after the gala.

Solution

For the first time in their history the JAG fundraising team was able to register their attendees online, rather than the night of the gala, and the numbers proved to be accurate throughout every step of planning and execution. Furthermore, payment collection took a total of three hours instead of several days and, within only a few weeks, JAG organizers had reliable reporting ready for their board to review.

A feature Goodman cited as being particularly helpful was the easy to use Go Time check-in and check-out feature. She prepped herself prior to the gala by watching the video demos many times and asking questions, so she was surprised to witness how quickly the staff understood the process handling registrations with only sixty to ninety seconds dedicated to each guest. Even JAG's elderly supporters found the technology easy to use. This was an amazing sight for someone who had struggled with the process of registration for years. "It was such a surprise to see how difficult we had been making it for ourselves before using the Go Time solution," Goodman enthused, "It was magic!"

A bonus of using Auctionpay was effortlessly collecting the contact information from 250 guests. This eliminated the need to follow up with guests later on in order to locate donors who'd purchased something at the auction. And, it has put them one step ahead of next year's guest list, too.

After the gala, Goodman found great value in the ability to acknowledge and extend her gratitude to her sponsors through the website constructed by Greater Giving. It was the first time Goodman felt she was able to thank them in a meaningful way and it backed up the relationship she had with the groups who support JAG.

Results

The Jazz Arts auction hosts a cocktail and appetizer hour, VIP reception for the sponsors, a cork pull, silent and live auctions, and a fund-a-need event. Throughout the busy night, they were able to get everyone checked in and do all their data entry with ease. This was, in part, due to the collection of registrations and credit card information through the website prior to the gala. Goodman also came to rely on the knowledge of the Greater Giving support team to answer her questions throughout the process—and her staff was so happy with how smoothly the evening went they swore they would never go back to spreadsheets again.

The success of the Jazz Arts fundraiser exceeded their expectations and surpassed their fundraising goals, raising \$20,000 over last year's total! With only two people on staff to manage the event, using a tool that cut down on the workload was an invaluable cost saving tool. Next year JAG plans to add Online Bidding to their process.

Tips from Jazz Arts Group of Columbus

- Involve others in the planning of your website design to create a look, feel and flow that connects with visitors and works best for your event.
- Treat your guests like VIP's. Set up the delivery of large items ahead of time, rather than having guests carry their auction items home in their evening clothes.
- Use the resources provided by Greater Giving to get comfortable with the tools prior to the event. Watch the videos and take the "event night" training.
- Greater Giving support is a great resource for help. Give them a call if you have questions.
- As you are becoming familiar with the tool create a few sample "people" to practice the check in and purchase processes, so you'll be ready to move through the processes quickly when guests arrive.