

Client Stories

Art in the Loft

Be Remarkable. Be Amazed.

Art in the Loft began in 2001 when a group of businesspeople decided to create a “pop-up” arts center during the holiday season. But before they could hold their first meeting, the events of 9-11 shocked the nation. While many people were focused on the news, a small band of artists, business owners and volunteers worked to transform a dusty, vacant loft into a magical, colorful art-filled gallery. When the doors opened a few weeks later, people were amazed at the power of art and community to transform people, places and attitudes. Nine years later, Art in the Loft had evolved into a full-fledged nonprofit dedicated to increasing public participation in the arts through exhibits, classes, workshops... and of course fundraisers.

“Glamour and Gourmet” is their main event, held every fall, and contributes 40% to their annual efforts. It gives this rural Michigan community a chance to dress up for the night, share great food and support a wonderful cause that focuses on the work of local artists.



Highlights

- Raised more money by moving from paper bid sheets to mobile bidding.
- Saved time by managing all record keeping in the event software.
- Gained insights by running reports on donors and the event itself.

Challenge

While the Glamour and Gourmet event was very successful, the paper trail it generated was more like an avalanche. Everything was done on paper, from package descriptions and bid sheets to tracking who won each item. Invoices, donations sheets, thank you letters... the pile of paper was immense. Organizing the event had become quite labor intensive and time consuming.

When the organizers also realized their guests weren't bidding in the silent auction because they couldn't get past the crowds clustered around the items, they knew they had to do things differently.

Solution

Art in the Loft chose Greater Giving because it was an all-in-one system and helped them streamline their process. Using the Greater Giving tool, they created an online registration site, which eliminated manual data entry of guest information.

As they procured auction items, their business manager entered the information into the software, which allowed them to either generate bid sheets for paper bidding, or, better yet, populate their mobile bidding platform with photos and detailed descriptions of the items.

Art in the Loft fully embraced mobile bidding for their silent auction, eliminating logjams at the auction tables. Guests were free to view the items from anywhere in the room and bid while socializing. Not only that, they could easily keep track of the bidding on particular items and increase their bids as needed.

Results

Moving to Greater Giving event software made a huge difference for Art in the Loft, raising more money than in previous years.

Replacing paper bid sheets with mobile bidding changed the logistics of the event and allowed more people to bid in the silent auction. Rather than fighting clusters of people gathered around auction items, guests could view the items in a relaxed atmosphere. Mobile bidding quickly and accurately recorded the last bidder and the winner of each item, which allowed the organizers to optimize the cut off time for the silent auction.

Using Greater Giving event software largely eliminated the enormous paper monster generated by the fundraiser. Their system was now streamlined and digital, saving both time and frustration.

The email functionality allowed them to communicate with their supporters throughout the year, sending reminders and details about the event beforehand and following up with them afterwards.

Because all of Art in the Loft's data was now digital, everything was searchable. They could run reports on the results of the fundraiser and see how each part of the event was performing. These reports also provided valuable insights into how much donors were contributing and how much revenue each auction item generated.

Art in the Loft had a few hesitations about the system in the beginning, but they soon discovered how user friendly it was. Once each guest was registered, all they needed was their bidder number and they were good to go. The system also made checkout a breeze: no more sorting through all that paper. Guests just presented their bidder number and picked up their winnings. Everyone was happy.

By corralling all that paper, Art in the Loft was able to streamline their event, provide a better experience for their guests and generate more revenue. Now they can do even more to bring art to rural Michigan.

Tips from Art in the Loft

- Offer a high-end travel package from Greater Giving's Auction Boosters for that "wow" factor.
- Utilize the connections of your board members to procure great items.
- If your nonprofit has a community space, utilize it for special auction packages, like a dinner experience.
- Build a website using the Greater Giving tool—it saves time.