

Dos and Don'ts

OF PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISER

Do lock in your venue early

It is best to start your venue search 9-12 months prior to your event. If you are deciding between a few dates or a few venues, you can ask the venues to put a hold on certain dates and give you the first right of refusal. It is also important to lock in your venue early because you can then make other arrangements such as site visits and tastings.



Don't forget to ask for concessions when you book your venue

Before you sign a contract with the venue, ask for concessions. Concessions can include waived room rental if you meet the food & beverage minimum, donated desserts if you have a dessert dash, comped parking passes and/or discounted event rate for valet/parking, discounted corkage fee, donated hotel stay for an auction, hotel room for staff, and hotel points. After you sign a contract, you are less likely to receive any of these concessions so be sure to get your concessions squared away before contracting with the venue.



Do use a professional auctioneer

Bring in the pros! Sometimes, organizations depend on volunteers, friends, board members, or co-chairs to take on some of the event roles that truly should be left to the professionals. A professional auctioneer will offer consultations and guidance throughout the event planning process and can help you with putting your auction items in order. They can also help you strategize how to raise more money at your event. Check out our [“Top Four Reasons to Hire an Auctioneer”](#) blog for more on this subject!



Dos and Don'ts



OF PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISER (CONTINUED)



Don't ask a volunteer to do AV or lighting

On the day of your event, you want everything to run as smoothly as possible. Therefore, it is important to hire professionals to handle your audio visual needs. You will need tech support to cover speakers, mics, stage, pipe and drape, lighting, and more. If you are showing a slide deck, playing videos during your program, or having speakers on stage, you want to make sure that you have someone to properly run these tasks.



Do connect with donors on a personal level prior to your event

Make phone calls to your donors, thank them for their support and invite them personally to your event. Within a few days of making a phone call, follow up with an email to keep your event in front of them. The more touchpoints you make with your donors, the more likely they are to engage in your event.



Don't wait to collect pre-pledges for your RTP

Relying on your donors to engage solely on the day of the event may not help you meet your fundraising goals. Contact your top donors in advance, thank them for their support, and ask them if they have thought about what they will give this year. You will be in better shape on the day of your event if you already know that you are 50-60% of the way to your fundraising goal.



Do plan to schedule a tasting at least three months prior to your event

It is important to schedule a tasting three or more months out from your event so that you can select your menu and share it with your guests. A tasting is an opportunity for you to try appetizers, starter salads, entrees, and desserts. The tasting usually involves meeting the chef and going over the menu and making any alterations to the menu as requested/needed.



OF PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISER (CONT'D)



Don't forget to ask for dietary restrictions from your guests

Be sure to ask your guests in advance if they have dietary restrictions. Include a question about dietary restrictions on your registration form. When your guests let you know of any dietary restrictions, you can then pass this information on to the chef or catering company so they are informed and can prepare special meals accordingly.



Do create a smooth check-in process for your guests

You want your guests to have an incredible experience at your event. Do your best to capture as much information from your guests in advance as possible to ensure a seamless check-in experience. In addition to asking for contact information, encourage them to put a card on file so they won't have to put one on file when they check-in.



Don't choose a software platform without assessing your needs first

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INTERESTED IN COLLABORATING ON YOUR NEXT EVENT?

Let's connect! [Click here to schedule a consult](#)

