



Oops Auction Fun-Raiser

Oops Auctions – Turning Mistakes into Moolah!

There you are shopping with friends, all of whom are in love with the same dinnerware. Each of you buys it in a different color. You don't want to be left out, so you buy a set, too. You get it home only to realize that this is the fifth set of dinnerware you have purchased this year and wonder, "What was I thinking?" Or, it's your birthday and Auntie Myrtle has sent you a wallet for your birthday—EVERY birthday.

Situations like this call for a garage sale or a donation. But if a garage sale is out of the question, a charity is just the ticket for off-loading these still usable and lovely items. And the easiest, heck-of-a-lot-of-fun way to do it is at an "Oops! Auction" such as AWG Paris holds every January. You too, can use this great idea as a fun-raiser.

Here's how it works in 10 easy steps:

- 1) Advertise at least two months ahead of the event and explain the guidelines.
- 2) Request everyone bring only items that are new or "gently used", clothing dry-cleaned, etc.
- 3) Ask that each piece be accompanied with a card giving a bit of history or anecdote to help 'sell' the item, example: "My Aunt Myrtle remembers me each year with a new wallet. I am still using the one she gave me when I turned 21. Here are the other 19 I haven't used." See how easy this is?
- 4) Hold it in a venue that can be had free-of-charge. Your clubhouse's meeting room is perfect. AWG traditionally uses a member's apartment with a fairly large living/dining room area. This allows 100% of the proceeds to go to your charity. And it's okay for folks to sit on the floor. This isn't an auction house – this is having fun for a good cause.
- 5) Have a table set up where people can bring their goods to be displayed, and for everyone to examine. Have clothing hanging but still accessible for ladies to try on. Give 30 – 40 minutes for folks to arrive and deposit their treasures and look over everyone else's. This is the best time to generate competitive enthusiasm for items. A used Louis Vuitton handbag can really get everyone's attention, and the bidding war gets fierce!
- 6) If there are quite a few items, try 'bundling' them to get a bigger return rather than having small bids galore. Examples would be putting together belts with handbags, create a desk set from odd pieces, offer three pairs of shoes as one lot, group children's items together.

- 7) Make certain to have the bidding rules clear: minimum bids for precious articles, appropriate increments when raising the bid.
- 8) There should be a designated auctioneer – someone who is at ease and can have fun with it, two “Vanna Whites” to walk the items around the group, one or two treasurers annotating (use a laptop if possible) who won the bid at what price and the item description, and at least one person feeding the items to the auctioneer.
- 9) Speaking of “feeding” the items . . . make certain you mix the pace. Don’t have all your top attractions at the end or at the beginning. And be flexible. If it’s slowing down, bring up something fun and funky or highly desirable. Have surprise packages. Play “what’s behind door #2.”
- 10) Serve champagne or punch to help people get in the mood. Don’t forget to collect the bid money immediately after the auction.
- 11) Do not accept IOU’s!

This requires so little in the way of pre-organization as it’s all delivered on the day of the event. At the end of the event, if items are not purchased, they can be returned to their owner or given to charity. Cost is almost non-existent as the members are cleaning out their closets to contribute, as well as donating the space to hold the affair. And the requirement to find volunteers is minimal as not that many is needed to conduct this event.

So, when your own Aunt Myrtle sends you (yet again) one more wallet this year, don’t despair! Bring it to an “Oops! Auction”.

Good Luck!