

eCommEd™
Supplement 028
Twelve Steps to a Successful Online Auction

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1. Identify charitable and volunteer groups in your school and community that regularly raise money to support their activities.
 - Survey your entire class to see whether any student is a member of these groups or if any student has a relative or close friend who is a member.
 - If there is a student with a connection to the group, have this student act as your company's liaison to that group. His/her assignment will be to find out whether that group would be interested in sponsoring an auction at your company's ScoresUp.com website.
 - If no student is found for a specific group, the responsibility for contacting that group and convincing them to sponsor an auction lies within the company's sales and marketing team.

2. Brainstorm items that would make good auction items. Be creative and be practical.
 - Make sure if your Company includes an item on the list that you also include ideas for obtaining the item.
 - Once again, survey students in your Company to find out if any of their relatives or friends have business contacts that could make obtaining the item much easier.
 - As you're brainstorming about possible items, remember that what you auction is critical to how many people bid during your auction. If you can select items that people really value, it will be easier to get bidders to bid. Likewise, if you can select items that interest or amuse people in your community, more people will bid. A question to ask the class during this item nomination process is whether our local media find the item compelling enough to do a report about the auction. You want to select items to auction that create a "Buzz".
 - Keep in mind as you brainstorm that it will be possible to pay something to businesses that agree to donate an item for auction. For example, if a distributor of kitchen appliances is willing to donate \$100 worth of product, your Company can auction off a dishwasher that costs the distributor \$300 and pay the distributor \$200 from the auction's proceeds.
 - Here are some creative auction-item ideas
 - The Principal of your high school will serve a local family a dinner catered by a local restaurant
 - A select group of students in your class will wash a house-full of windows (with proper adult supervision of course)
 - Free tickets to your school's next football game plus dinner for the family after the game at a favorite local restaurant
 - One month worth of tutoring an elementary school-age student in math or reading
 - A full-page ad in your local newspaper....

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3. Split students in your company into four teams:
 - Marketing
 - Creative
 - Website Operations
 - Management & Finance
 - Marketing team will be responsible for:
 - Soliciting auction sponsors
 - Soliciting donors of auction items
 - Selling banner ads at site
 - Promoting the auctions
 - Developing partnerships with other websites
 - Creative team will be responsible for:
 - Developing Copy for Site that defines mission and rules
 - Developing Feature Stories about auction Sponsors
 - Developing Profiles for auction Sponsors
 - Develop Feature Stories about donor organizations
 - Develop Profiles for Donor Organizations
 - Develop written descriptions of items being auctioned
 - Secure photos for items being auctioned
 - Write all publicity releases
 - Write model sales letters for soliciting Sponsors and Donors
 - Write e-mail messages to be distributed to site's Bidders' e-mail list
 - Website Operations Team will be responsible for:
 - The overall operation and maintenance of the website
 - Placing all content at site
 - Making sure all content is kept updated
 - Supervising operation of live auctions
 - Maintaining the site's Bidders' e-mail list and distributing messages to list
 - Management & Finance team will be responsible for:
 - Monitoring implementation of the Business Plan including goals for each team
 - Creating a budget for the business
 - Negotiating as needed with Auction Sponsors and Donor Organizations
 - Establishing rules for each auction
 - Providing support as needed to each of the other three teams
4. Plan Strategy for Obtaining Sponsors and Donors and Write Business Plan

Once publicity release appears in media, Marketing team should begin solicitation of potential Sponsors and Donors using mail, telephone, and personal visits. As soon as the Marketing team has secured the required components for the initial auction, they should begin promoting it in school and community. Also, once all components for first Auction are in place, including scheduled dates for the auction, a publicity release about the event needs to be created and distributed to all local media.

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5. Develop Initial Content for the Auction Website

Creative team should provide content for the initial version of the website, using the “Yourtown” demo site as a model. Purpose of initial version of site is to explain to potential bidders, donors, and sponsors the key reasons why each group will want to participate in the auctions. Make sure your initial site includes contacts potential Donors and Sponsors can use to find out how they can participate at the site.

6. Obtain Necessary Information from Sponsors and Donors

Creative team should interview Sponsor and Donor organizations to secure the information necessary to prepare the feature stories, profiles, item descriptions, and e-mail copy necessary to implement first auction and then develop the content.

7. Release a Press Release

Creative team should develop a general publicity release describing your business and informing the community of your mission. Publicity release should include benefits Sponsors and Donors will receive when they participate in an auction.

8. Develop Stage Version of Auction Website

Website operations team should put together initial version of the auction site once material needed to do so is received from the Creative team.

9. Initiate Marketing Campaign to Generate Potential Bidders for Auction

Marketing team needs to begin campaign to develop Bidders list at site. Each member of class should be responsible for getting a minimum of five e-mail addresses to add to the site’s bidder list. Each class member will be responsible for getting permission to do so from each e-mail addressee. Family members, teaching staff, fellow students, and friends should all be asked to join Bidders’ list.

10. Co-market Auction with Site's Sponsor

Marketing team needs to remind the Auction’s sponsor and donor to help promote the auction and suggest cost-effective ways to do so.

11. Review and Finalize Terms of Auction

Management team should make sure the Class Company, Donor, and Sponsor are in complete agreement about the terms of the auction and how revenues derived from the auction will be shared. Management team should finalize schedule for the Auction.

12. Monitor Auction and Ensure Satisfaction with the Results

Once Auction begins, the Website Operations team is responsible for monitoring bidding activity and making sure features of site perform as expected and Auction rules are followed. When an Auction has ended, the Management Team is responsible for making sure winning Bidder, Sponsor, and Donor are all satisfied with results.