



Mobile and Online Bidding Best Practices

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Silent Auction Pro™

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Advantages of mobile bidding / running a paperless event

There are several advantages to offering mobile bidding at your event.

- It expands your attendance to people not physically present
- It adds an element of excitement as people receive outbid text notifications
- It eliminates bidding results data entry allowing bidders to instantly know if they have won after the auction closes
- It eliminates or minimizes the need for printers at your event

Before your event

Should you offer mobile bidding?

Online and mobile bidding are becoming very popular at charitable fundraising events. There are several advantages and some disadvantages you should consider before committing to a fundraising event using online and mobile bidding.

Demographics

If your audience is older and/or less comfortable with technology you may want to forego offering mobile and online bidding at your event and instead offer traditional paper-based bidding.

Another option would be a **hybrid approach** where you offer online and mobile bidding as pre-bidding for your event and then switch to paper-based bidding at the event. Silent Auction Pro easily facilitates this by automatically printing the highest online bid on printed bid sheets when switching over to print.

Cell service quality / reliability

Silent Auction Pro's mobile bidding is simply a mobile optimized website. In most cases it's easier and better for attendees to use their cellular connection for online bidding rather than trying to get everyone connected to the venue's WiFi. Using the cellular network spreads the load to the cellular network and multiple providers rather than potentially saturating the local WiFi. The mobile pages rendered by Silent Auction Pro are relatively small thereby eliminating data usage issues. (See the Technical info - mobile bidding page sizes section for information on typical page sizes.)

Other considerations

Social Aspect / Feel of the Event

Mobile bidding will likely change the dynamic of your event. With mobile bidding attendees may spend more time looking at their devices than socializing. However, offering mobile bidding will also likely increase the amount of money you make on your items. With mobile bidding people stay more engaged with your program and don't have to wander the room to place bids on paper. Through Silent Auction Pro bidders may also place max proxy bids where our system will automatically bid for them up to their maximum specified bid.

Distractions

Distractions at your event reduce the amount of money you raise on a silent auction. Common distractions include live music, dancing, sit down dinners, games, etc. Offering mobile bidding at your event will help in these cases as people do not need to be physically in front of an item to place a bid AND they get notified if they have been outbid on an item.

Verify cell reception at your venue

Verify cell reception inside the building at your venue if you plan to have bidders use the cellular network for bidding.

If you plan to use WiFi as a backup – make sure the venue’s WiFi will accept enough connections and has the bandwidth to support mobile bidding.

Verify wireless connectivity

Make sure you have a reliable internet connection for the check-in / check-out computers. This is a requirement whether you are running a mobile based or paper-based event.

Define the event and set expectations

Tell bidders when bidding starts

We recommend starting your online bidding several days to two weeks before your event. This will help maximize the number of people who pre-register for online bidding.

Tell bidders when bidding ends

You can set the bidding end time for your time zone from the Manage Online Bidding page. This will enable a count-down timer that will count down the days, hours, minutes and seconds to bidding end.

To minimize distractions, end online bidding before you start a live auction or Fund-A-Need.

Will you offer Bid Extend?

Silent Auction Pro offers a “Bid Extend” option that will automatically extend the online bidding for all items if any item receives a bid in the last 10 seconds of bidding. Bidders have learned to wait until the last few seconds of an auction to place their bids to buy items at the lowest price. Using Bid Extend will allow other bidders to place bids if someone tries to steal a bid in the last 10 seconds. You may set the bid extend time anywhere from 1 to 5 minutes. We recommend setting this to 2-3 minutes for the best mix of extended time and a timely close.

How will people check out ?

It is important to set expectations on how people can pay for their items, and what happens if they do not pay after a set period of time.

Once the bidding ends, bidders who wish to pay using a credit card may self check-out on their mobile devices or full browser computers. Bidders who wish to pay using checks or cash will need to be checked-out by a group member using the AuctionDay page.

How or where will people pick up their items?

Clearly define how people will pick up their items and how winning bidders will show that they have paid for their items.

NOTE: Silent Auction Pro will generate a receipt showing a zero or outstanding balance and a list of all items won. This receipt is available on the bidder's mobile device and may also easily be pulled up on a computer or tablet by volunteers distributing items.

How will people who don't have a mobile device place bids?

Not everyone at your event will have a smart phone or device capable of accessing the internet. For those who don't have a device, you can offer kiosk bidding where the bidder places their bid using a bidding kiosk on a computer, tablet or any mobile device at the event.

Get bidders pre-registered

Getting bidders pre-registered will significantly streamline the check-in experience. There are several ways people may pre-register.

Sell tickets online through Silent Auction Pro

When you sell tickets online through Silent Auction Pro, buyers are automatically registered as online bidders, their contact information is captured in your contacts database and their credit cards are held securely on file.

Send bidders to your public online bidding page

If you aren't selling tickets, you can still send people to your online bidding page and encourage them to pre-register. Do this by posting links on your organizations home page, in social media such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as by sending out email blasts advertising your event and encouraging people to pre-register for your event.

Check-in

Ideally a large percentage of your attendees will have bought tickets for your event and will have already created their Silent Auction Pro user account and be pre-registered for your event.

For those who have not pre-registered, you have options on how to step them through the process.

NOTE: The simplest way to tell someone how to sign up is to:

1. Have them go to *m.silentauctionpro.com* on their mobile device
2. *Enter your group number in the group number field*
3. Tap the *Sign-in or Register* button and complete the process.

Separate the pre-registered and not pre-registered

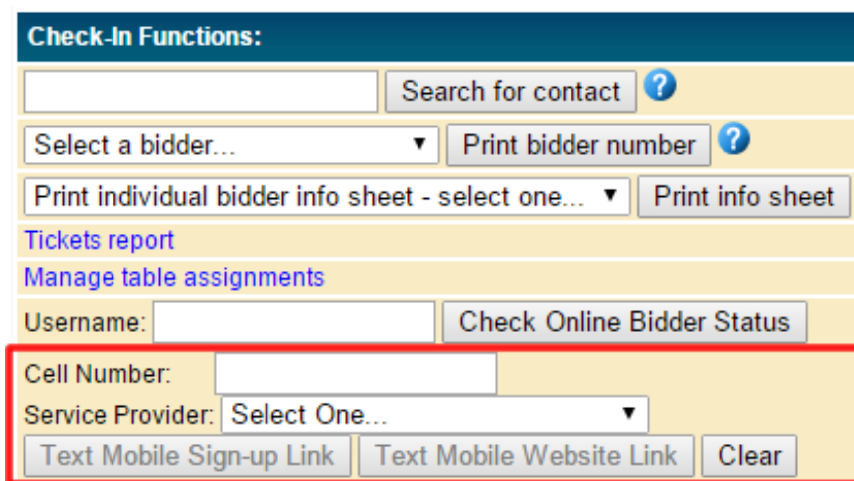
The first step is to get those who have pre-registered out of the registration line! People will see a line and go stand in it. Have good signage and volunteers directing people where to go as they come in to your event. If you are doing a live auction and need printed bidder numbers, pre-print those numbers and have them fanned out on a table AWAY from the check-in computers. Direct people who have pre-registered to the pre-registration table to pick up their bidder number and then have them proceed in to your event.

Post signage with instructions on how to register

Post signage on the way in to your event that tells people how to register for online / mobile bidding. Silent Auction Pro will print out an 8.5" x 11" sheet of paper that includes instructions and a QR code that people can scan to jump directly to your public online bidding page.

Text the sign-up link to bidders

Silent Auction Pro makes it easy to send a text message with the appropriate link to sign up for online bidding. The feature is available from the Check-In Functions table on the AuctionDay page:



Simply enter the person's 10 digit cell number, select their service provider, then click either the "Text Mobile Sign-up Link" button or "Text Mobile Website Link". The mobile sign-up link sends them directly to the sign up page. The website link allows them to preview items before deciding to bid.

Reconciling first time bidders


First time bidders MAY need to be reconciled before they can bid. Bidders are AUTOMATICALLY reconciled (added as a contact and bidding set to enabled) if:

1. There is no other person already in your contacts with the same last name.

OR

2. If the new bidders first name, last name and email exactly match a contact already in your contacts database.

If a person cannot be automatically added / reconciled, Group Administrators will receive a notice and will be presented with a warning dialog box on their home page:

 You have unreconciled ticket purchases or requests for online bidding. [Click here to reconcile these requests.](#)

Reconciliation need only be done once for any contact. For your subsequent events, those contacts will be granted immediate access to bidding.

Note: DO NOT reconcile spouses into the same contact record. Each person should have their own contact record and bidder number. If spouses wish to bid using the same bidder number / account they may do so by logging in using the same user account.

Notifications

Silent Auction Pro will automatically notify bidders when they have:

- Been approved for bidding
- Been out bid by another bidder
- Won items

Silent Auction Pro uses the cellular provider's email to text capability to send text notifications. **To receive text notifications, the bidder must have both a cell phone number and their service provider.** The service provider must also support email to text capabilities.

Check-in at events offering a live auction or Fund-A-Need

If you are holding a live auction or Fund-A-Need cash pledge as part of your event, decide how people will bid. There are three different options:

Bid by paddle

Bidding by holding up a bid paddle with a bidder number is the traditional way of running a live auction or Fund-A-Need. Winning bids are captured on a tracking sheet (created by Silent Auction Pro) and bids are entered into Silent Auction Pro from the AuctionDay – Enter Bids form.

There are several advantages to having your bidders bid by raising their paddle:

1. A live auctioneer can better promote the item, encourage bidders to bid and help you raise more money.
2. With a Fund-A-Need the bidder gets recognition for their contribution and there is an element of peer pressure for others at the same table to contribute. Again this is an area where a live auctioneer can add value and help you raise more money.
3. It's more exciting and fun!

If you are running a live auction or Fund-A-Need we strongly encourage you to use a professional auctioneer. If you do not already have an auctioneer we can recommend one.

Bid electronically

With Silent Auction Pro you can set up different Fund-A-Need bidding levels and people can place those bids using their electronic devices. You can also project a "leader board" showing the bidders and the amount you have raised.

You may also offer pre-bidding on live auction items.

Hybrid approach

In some cases it's possible to implement a hybrid approach.

Pre-bidding on live auction items

Due to the speed and pace of bidding during a live auction, we don't recommend trying to offer live bidding and electronic bidding at the same time. However, it makes perfect sense to let your online bidders pre-bid on live auction items and let the highest pre-bid be the starting bid in the live auction for that item.

NOTE: Silent Auction Pro will automatically handle this for you and will print the highest proxy bid for each live auction item on the tracking sheet so that the live auctioneer has a starting bid.

Fund-A-Need

While not recommended, you could have preset levels of Fund-A-Need set and have a live auctioneer call out the levels and let people place those bids on their electronic devices.

The best practice is to let the live auctioneer drive the Fund-A-Need and to capture bids by number as described above.

Assigning bidder numbers

Silent Auction Pro will assign bidder numbers for each bidder. On mobile devices that number is shown in the upper left corner next to the person username. A larger version of the number may be accessed from the *More* tab on the mobile device. Depending on the size of the device, the larger number may or may not be big enough to use in a large room.

If you are holding a live auction or Fund-A-Need, the best practice is to print out bidder numbers on paper from Silent Auction Pro and to have those bidder numbers available as attendees arrive at your event.

Promoting your auction

The success of your event is dependent on many things including how well you promote the event. Silent Auction Pro's AuctionPromoter component makes sending out customized email and text blasts simple.

As described earlier, the best practice is to start your online bidding several days to two weeks before your event. Direct people to your public online bidding page as their starting point. This allows them to preview your auction items and when they find an item on which they want to bid, they can sign in or register at that point.

Website / social media

When promoting your event on your website or in social media, provide links to the full browser version of your public online bidding page. If you are selling tickets to your event, provide that link as well. After people purchase tickets to your event they will automatically be directed to your public online bidding page.

Email

Keep in mind that emails may be read using either a full browser or a mobile device. Provide links to both the full browser version of your online bidding page as well as the mobile version of your online bidding page. These links can be found on Silent Auction Pro's Auction Admin page in the Reports, Links and Export table.

Text

When sending a text message, only provide the link to the mobile online bidding page. Again, this link may be found on Silent Auction Pro's Auction Admin page in the Reports, Links and Export table.

Kiosk Bidding

Attendees who do not have a mobile device or who do not want to place a credit card on file may bid using a bidding kiosk. To be a kiosk bidder a person must be entered as a contact and marked as a bidder. A credit card on file is recommended but not required.

Laptop / tablet kiosks

Group members with a member level of Auction Assistant or higher may launch a bidding kiosk from the AuctionDay page. Depending on the demographics of your event, have a couple stationary bidding kiosks using laptops or tablets, and a couple “roving” kiosks using a tablet and a volunteer.

Mobile device kiosks

To ensure that bidding is readily available to everyone at your event, any mobile device with a Silent Auction Pro account may be used as a bidding kiosk. To access the mobile kiosk, tap on the *More* tab and then *Launch Bidding Kiosk*.

Intentional or unintentional fake bids

The fact that any mobile device may be used as a bidding kiosk raises the question of what happens if someone accidentally or intentionally places bids for another person without their knowledge.

Silent Auction Pro logs every bid including information on how that bid was placed and from what device. You may use that information to review bids if you receive a complaint and to disable bidding from a particular account. You may also easily revert or delete a bid.

Checking bidding status

Bidders with a Silent Auction Pro user account and a valid email and/or cell number and service provider will receive email and text notifications when they have been out bid. Bidders may also check the bidding status in one of three ways:

Bidders home page

Bidders may check the status of their bids from their home page in Silent Auction Pro. Bidding results refresh every 10 seconds.

Display all results

If you have an extra computer and projector, you may project the current bidding status using the *Display bidding status* button on the AuctionDay page. This page refreshes every 30 seconds and will present a grid of bids ordered by bidder number. It includes the bidder number, item number and current bid.

Bidding kiosk

Bidders who do not have a mobile device may also use the bidding kiosk to check the status of an item by simply entering the auction item number.

Check-out

Silent Auction Pro significantly streamlines the whole check-out process. Before check-out may begin, items must be marked as sold.

Marking items as sold

Items must be marked as sold before they will appear on a bidders invoice. Once items have been marked sold, bidders may check-out and pay for those items. Bidders may also check-out multiple

times if they win multiple items. Silent Auction Pro simply keeps a running tally of items won, amount paid and amount owed.

Items are marked sold in a variety of ways:

- **Bought by Buy-It-Now:** Any bids placed using the Buy-It-Now option will immediately be marked as sold to the winning bidder.
- **Fixed priced items:** Fixed price items such as ticket parties (wine tasting trip) or direct sale items are automatically marked as sold when a bid is placed on that item.
- **Notifying winners:** If you are not using Bid Extend and have the automatic notifications option set, once the bidding ends, Silent Auction Pro will automatically mark all items with bids as sold and will send out email and text notifications. If you are using Bid Extend you must notify winners using the Notify Winners option on the AuctionDay page in the Section Close functions table. You may manually notify winners by section number or all results.
- **Entering bid results:** Using the Enter Bid Results form available from the AuctionDay page will automatically mark items as sold. For an event using electronic bidding this form would normally be only used to enter live auction or Fund-A-Need results.
- **Marking as sold on the Manage Online Bidding page:** You may also individually mark items as sold from the Manage Online Bidding page.

Self check-out

Mobile and online bidders may use the self check-out feature from their home page. Prior to the end of bidding, Silent Auction Pro presents a *Make a donation* button at the bottom of the bidder's home page. After the bidding count-down ends, the text on the *Make a donation* button changes to *Check-out*.

Self check-out users pay using a credit card.

Assisted check-out

If you choose to offer assisted check-out, bidders may check out and pay via cash, check or credit card by coming to your check-in / check-out area and working with a staff member. Assisted check-out is available from the AuctionDay page.

Technical info - mobile bidding page sizes

The largest page load with Silent Auction Pro mobile is the "All Items" page which lists all auction items with pictures. After the first load of this page, most mobile browsers will cache the pictures so the page load reduces dramatically as does the size of lower level pages due to image caching. Use the following for a worst case page load sizes:

All Items page: (number of auction items) X 40KB

Detail pages: 30KB

Home page: 20KB