

Are You Fundraising For Your Kid's L.A. Private School? Read on!

Description

This post was previously published on September 13, 2013

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Fabulous Auction Items

- Restaurant Gift Cards
- Vacation Getaways
- Celebrity memorabilia
- Sports tickets
- Gift Baskets
- Wine
- Handbags and Jewelry
- Backstage passes to hot TV shows
- Kid's artwork
- Designer sunglasses and handbags



Hard To Sell Items

- Anything used (people will donate their ancient junk)
- Professional services (one workout session)
- Golf outings with too many restrictions (i.e. must be scratch golfer)
- Shoes in only one size
- Items only two families can afford
- Clothing in only size OO
- Items with expiration dates that expire right away
- Anything that requires overwhelming logistical hurdles
- CDs and DVDs



Not So Fabulous

When my daughter was in 1st grade, I co-chaired the auction at The Willows School. This is the school's biggest annual fundraiser and I knew it would be a lot of work. So, I was thrilled when I found out who my co-chairs would be. They were a talented group of professionals who had skills beyond my wildest dreams. We worked together for about nine months from start to finish. When the event was over and the totals were tallied we raised more than \$200,000. It was like a full-time job for many of us and at times our nerves frayed, we argued and stress took over. Yet in the end, the event was lovely and successful. We took risks by moving the event to a new venue. We solicited items the

school had never auctioned previously. We drank, bid, ate and partied the night of the auction. A fun time was had by all.

Hereâ€™s what I learned.

- School auctions (private and public) range from fancy to low-key and everything in between. *The culture of your school will set the tone for the event.*
- Create a great theme and tagline and use to brand the event by ensuring that all materials related to the event carry the theme throughout.
- Use a professional graphic designer for the invitation and collateral materials. If you donâ€™t have one at your school, inquire if there are any parents with expertise or contacts in this area.
- Donâ€™t be afraid to try new ideas. Fundraising is about what has worked in the past and fun, new ideas. It doesnâ€™t have to be fancy, but it does need to be professional and uncomplicated.
- Look at the websites of schools similar to yours. What type of auctions/galas have they done? Thereâ€™s no need to reinvent the wheel when it comes to fundraising. Best practices are very useful for school auctions.

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2. Mexico Luxury Vacation

Set in the midst of magnificent landscaped grounds at the foot of the majestic Volcan de Fuego, the incredibly luxurious 19th century hacienda is tucked away in the highlands of Western Mexico. Spend 2 nights in a suite, with ground transportation to and from the Colima airport. Suites are 540 square feet with great amenities. The two-story hacienda lies on a 470 acre expanse with a 5000 acre working ranch, organic farm and coffee plantation. Activities available at Hacienda San Antonio include horseback riding, mountain biking, volcano excursion and more. Complimentary gifts include: a bottle of house tequila, sunset margaritas, a picnic for two at Epazote Lake at the Ranch, and a tour of coffee plantation and cheese factory. Daily international flights to Guadalajara, Manzanillo and Mexico City are available. Hacienda De San Antonio is 2 ½ hours by car from Guadalajara and 40 minutes by car from Colima. There is a private grass airstrip at the property. Valid March 18, 2008 through March 18, 2009. Blackout dates: December 15, 2008 through January 15, 2009. For more information, visit www.haciendadesanantonio.com



Value: \$4,000.00

Live auction item

- Create a schedule that takes you from the current date through the date of the event. Stick to it. Schedule regular committee meetings. Keep an online folder and binder of all your materials (this can be given to the next parent who chairs the event).
- Make a list of what the school will not accept for donations (used items, etc.). Otherwise, your auctions risks becoming a dumping place for items that have been stored in somebodyâ€™s garage for the past decade. This isnâ€™t a garage sale!
- Start soliciting auction items by putting together a team of experienced volunteers who have been successful in past years.

- Find the best person to ask a family for a donation if itâ€™s not you. Often being asked by a friend means the difference between a â€œyesâ€™ and an unreturned call. Start by asking for donations from the vendors where you shopâ€”and ask well in advance of your event. Youâ€™ll be surprised how willing they are to help their customers.
- Learn what will/will not sell at your school. Restaurant gift cards are always a hit. Professional services are a harder sell. Include a mix of high end and affordable items so everyone will come and shop!
- Donâ€™t accept junk like used shoes, even if they are designer. It lowers the quality of your auction.



Brentwood benefit concert with Maroon 5 on Jan 13, 2013 – pics via
@jjnewbee11 @mzjprince

- Party Books are a fabulous way to raise money. These are parent-hosted events like dinner parties, wine tastings, lunch events, kids events that each attendee pays to attend and the proceeds benefit the school.
- Avoid offers of discounted items and used items. You want full donations and new good.
- Create a compelling, professional letter with the schoolâ€™s letterhead and all the information a donor will need.
- Review the schoolâ€™s database of donors (if it exists). If not, create a list of potential businesses, friends of the school that you will solicit by mail, email and in person.
- Book your event location as far in advance as possible.
- Consider how you will publicize the event to school parents and stakeholders like alumni. Whatâ€™s the best way to reach them? How many times will you contact them about the event?
- Create a website, private Facebook Group or a page on the schoolâ€™s website for all auction information (donation forms, volunteers needed, event date, location, items needed, etc.).
- Make it easy for parents to find information about the event!
- There are good software programs specifically for school auctions/fundraisers.
- Remember that youâ€™re a volunteer and so is the committee. If you get overwhelmed, ask the school for more volunteers.
- Be kind to volunteers who donate and solicit items, even if the donation is not what you hoped for.
- Have fun, meet friends, work hard and relax when the event is over.

Here's my post about the scoop on private school galas on [The Daily Truffle](#). (Also published on [The Huffington Post](#).)



Check out [A Mom's Guide To School Fundraising](#). Sarah Barrett, an experienced mom, covers everything from lemonade stands and bake sales to auctions. And, she has an AUCTION SUCCESS KIT! You can read my write-up of the book [here](#).

Category

1. Beyond The Brochure

Tags

1. Culture of L.A. Private Schools
2. Los Angeles private school auctions
3. private school galas
4. raising money for L.A. Private Schools

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