



CASE STUDY

Westside School Surpasses Fundraising Goals with Virtual Auction

Fundraising in Uncertain Times

Fundraising in times of economic crisis can be...awkward. Do people have money to give? Does it seem insensitive to have a fundraiser right now? Although these questions are valid, the health and education of students are as important as ever. Schools are changing and many are looking for ways to adapt.



Taking an Event Online

In Westside School's case, their annual auction was their biggest fundraiser and largest community event of the year. The fundraiser was important in reaching their funding goals as well as bringing the community together to unite and engage their supporters. Instead of canceling the event, they transitioned the in-person event to a virtual auction.

How to Create a Virtual Auction

There are many options and formats for a virtual auction -- live-streamed, pre-recorded, hybrid event, etc. depending on wants, needs, and capabilities. Westside School decided on a hybrid event, meaning a combination of live videos and pre-recorded video put together and streamed in real-time through the school's Youtube channel.




In order to make it feel interactive, they had a live chat and auctioned off four items in real-time. To do this, they used an online auction software and a screen was put up in front of the live auctioneer so he could see bids as they came in and pit the bidders against each other.


The pre-recorded segments featured feel-good videos from teachers, students, and staff singing songs and giving shoutouts. What really gave the event a community feel was the live portions of the event were held in the school's theater, connecting students, teachers, and parents back to the school they loved.


The Results: Raised More Money, Lowered Expenses & Increased Attendance


How did the virtual auction compare to past in-person fundraising auctions?


Westside School was able to raise more money with the virtual auction than the in-person event last year, lower their expenses for increased net revenue and increase attendance and access to the virtual event than years past.

 **Raised over \$240,000 with the virtual auction**, surpassing their original fundraising goals and exceeding last year's in-person funds raised. Increased net revenue by \$80,000. The cost savings of doing a virtual event was large as Westside's normal in-person event costs them \$90,000, whereas the virtual auction was only \$10,000.

 **Increased event attendance.** The virtual event allowed grandparents and extended family to watch and bid on items. Overall, there were 154 views of the auction but many of these being family units. Actual attendance is estimated between 300-500 people versus last year's in-person event of 225.

 **Extended event time for longer giving.** People were also able to bid on items before and after the event as well as watch the event after the live portion ended.

 **Positive feedback from the staff, parents, and students.** Responses included "that was the perfect event"; "fun to watch"; and "wish it were longer."

 **Decrease in staff time.** There was also a decrease in staff time and time commitment to organizing the in-person auction, freeing up staff time.

Virtual Events in the Future

With the success and positive results from the virtual auction, what will Westside School do next year?

"Since the event was a success, it has started a conversation about how to do this again? With the cost savings and the decreased time commitment, it made us think: could we do a combination of in-person and virtual (event) next year?" said Shoshannah Hoffman, Westside School's community development officer.



Schools and education are vital to our community and it's important that fundraising doesn't take a backseat during these times. But even more important, is ensuring that we are still fostering the community of the school even when distance keeps us apart.

Need Help?

Live Oak is here to amplify our community and help plan your next virtual event. To learn more about how a virtual auction or fundraiser could work for your school or nonprofit, contact us.

orders@liveoakav.com | 206-548-9822
www.liveoakav.com

LIVE  OAK
AUDIO VISUAL