

GO CHARITY

First in Fundraising



SIDELINE INSIGHTS

Choosing the Right Fundraising & Auction Partner

What Nonprofits Should Ask Before Their Next Gala

SERIES 2

Building Partnerships That Last

1. Introduction – Why the Right Partner Matters More Than Ever

Planning a successful fundraiser auction has never been simple. But today, the margin for error is smaller than ever.

Budgets are tighter. Donors are more selective. Boards are more cautious. And expectations for event performance continue to rise. In this environment, the partners you choose can either strengthen your mission or quietly limit its potential.

Many nonprofits only focus on what they're offering at their gala. Fewer pause to see who they're working with behind the scenes.

That's a costly oversight.

According to current data from the *Association of Fundraising Professionals*, nonprofits that report strong vendor and partner alignment consistently outperform peer organizations in both event revenue and donor retention. The difference isn't just about experience. It's trust, transparency, and shared accountability.

This white paper is designed to help nonprofit leaders ask the right questions before their next event. Questions that reveal if a vendor is just selling a service or truly investing in your success.

2. Vendor vs Partner — Understanding the Difference

Not every company involved in your fundraiser is a partner.

And that distinction matters.

A vendor delivers a product or service.

A partner helps you achieve an outcome.

Vendors typically:

- Focus on fulfilling a contract
- Offer standardized solutions
- Exit once their scope is complete

Partners, on the other hand:

- Invest in your event's performance
- Adapt to your audience and goals
- Share responsibility for results
- Stay engaged before, during, and after the event
- In live fundraising, this difference shows up clearly.

Events with engaged partners see higher auction performance, stronger donor experience, and greater post-event goodwill.

The most successful nonprofits choose partners who care as much about the mission as they do about the execution.

3. The Real Cost of Choosing the Wrong Partner

When a partnership is misaligned, the effects are rarely seen immediately. It shows up quietly, over time.

Our documented Industry data indicates that:

- Silent auctions with poorly curated items see 40% lower bids
- Events without post-auction fulfillment support experience higher donor dissatisfaction and lower return rates
- Donors who have a negative experience are up to three times less likely to attend the same event again

These are not operational issues.

They are relationship issues.

A partner who disappears once the contract is signed leaves your team holding the weight of donor expectations, logistics, and brand reputation.

And in fundraising, trust is everything.

4. What Strong Fundraising Partners Actually Do

The most successful fundraising partners bring more than just inventory or services.

They bring perspective.

Strong partners help nonprofits:

- Evaluate whether a strategy fits their audience
- Understand what items or experiences will truly perform
- Protect donor trust with transparent pricing and communication
- Support fulfillment so the donor experience extends well after the event is over
- Learn from each event and apply those insights forward

Donor trust and transparency are now among the top factors that are influencing repeat giving, especially among younger donors.

In other words, the partner you choose isn't just supporting your event. They are shaping how donors experience your organization.

5. The 10 Questions Every Nonprofit Should Ask

Before committing to an auction partner, vendor, or consignment provider, ask these questions openly and directly:

1. How do you evaluate whether an event is the right fit?

A strong partner is willing to say no when something doesn't serve your mission.

2. How transparent is your pricing and revenue structure?

You should understand exactly how funds flow before the auction begins.

3. Do you customize your approach based on our audience?

Generic solutions rarely deliver exceptional results.

4. What data or experience informs your recommendations?

Look for partners who rely on insight, not guesswork.

5. How do you support donor experience after the event?

Fulfillment matters as much as the auction itself.

6. What role do you play during the event?

Are they present, invested, and accountable, or absent once items are listed?

7. How do you collaborate with our auctioneer/planning team?

Strong partnerships require alignment across all players.

8. What happens if something does not perform as expected?

Partners share responsibility for outcomes, not excuses.

9. How do you protect our brand and donor relationships?

Every interaction reflects on your organization.

10. Why do you do this work?

This may be the most important question of all.

The answers will tell you everything you need to know.

6. How Go Charity Approaches Partnership

At Go Charity, partnership begins with listening.

For more than 25 years, we have worked alongside nonprofits of every size, helping them raise more while protecting donor trust and mission integrity.

Our approach is built on:

- Transparency at every stage
- Custom strategies aligned to audience and goals
- Collaboration with auctioneers and planners
- Concierge-level donor fulfillment
- Shared accountability for results

This is why over 90% of our nonprofit partners return every year. Not because they need us, but because the partnership works.

7. Closing Reflection — One Question Worth Asking

Before your next gala, before the contracts are signed, before the items are selected, pause and ask yourself:

**Are we choosing partners who simply support our event?
Or partners who strengthen our mission year after year?**

The difference may not be visible on auction night.
But it will be felt long after bids close and the room clears.

The strongest partnerships are built on trust, shared values, and a commitment to impact that goes beyond a single event.

If you are ready to build partnerships that last, asking the right questions are the place to start.

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