



Using Social Media to Promote Your Auction

Last month we discussed how you can use your organization's website to promote your auction. This month we'll continue with an interview of Jennifer Whitton, owner of [Energine Marketing](#), about how you can use social media to help make your auction more successful...

Q: How can we use social media to help market our auction both to our existing members and the community at large?

Jennifer: The main goal of social media is to connect people who share common interests. For non-profits, this is especially important. Having a community of passionate people who believe in your cause is part of what contributes to the success of any fundraising campaign. Social media can help non-profits build awareness for their mission and organization, develop a community of passionate supporters, and reach out to new people with their messages.

Q: Could we use social media to help get donations as well as advertise the auction?

Jennifer: Absolutely! Once you grow your social media community, you have a ready-made group of people who are interested in what you do and passionate about helping your cause. Asking them to donate to that cause through a campaign is the obvious next step. Advertising upcoming events, such as an auction, is a natural fit for social media. It provides your followers the opportunity to do something fun for a great cause.

Q: What are some do's and don'ts when using social media for a nonprofit organization?

Jennifer:

Do's:

- Be patient. You won't grow a huge audience overnight. Give social media time to grow and build excitement.
- Talk with your audience, not to them. Ask questions, tell stories, show pictures...do anything you can do create conversations.
- Find the passion. People will talk about and engage when they are passionate. This is a perfect fit for a non-profit. Tap into your audience's passion in each of your posts.

- Give your audience the “Why.” In other words, share success stories. Show pictures of how your non-profit helps. People want to feel like they’re helping do something good. Show them that they are.
- Acknowledge your audience. Give credit when your followers donate or help out in some way. Again, people like feeling like they’re doing good, and when they do good, they like to be recognized.
- Give your audience variety. Don’t just post the same thing over and over. Post photos, contests, questions, blog posts...Give folks several ways to get involved!

Don’ts

- Do too much at once. Just because there are many different social media applications doesn’t mean you need to do all of them. Pick just the ones you can manage successfully within your schedule and budget.
- Have one-way conversations. Again, social media should be social. When someone talks to you, talk back. Ask people questions. Start discussions.
- Make it all about money. Don’t make all of your social media campaign about raising money. It should be about building community, with fundraising as one piece of the puzzle.
- Forget to measure success. You can’t know if your social media is working if you’re not tracking your results.

Q: Which social media are best for promoting an auction—Twitter, Facebook, etc.?

Jennifer: This is not a one-size-fits-all answer because it really depends on who your audience is. Each of the social media applications has a different primary audience. Know who you are trying to reach, and choose the social media application that makes the most sense to reach them. Also take into consideration how much time you have available. Some applications, such as Twitter, require more time commitment.

Q: How much time does it take to use social media to promote an auction? Should we keep it up all year, or just start a little before the auction?

Jennifer: Because people are likely to get bored if you post the same information over and over, wait to promote your auction until it is actually time for the event. You’ll want to build momentum, so don’t wait until the last minute, but a month in advance would likely be early enough to start promoting.

If you need more help with organizing your social media campaign, here’s some more information about Jennifer and the work she does:

President of [Energine Marketing](#), **Jennifer Whitton, MBA, CPSM**, has been marketing in professional services industries for 11 years. With a focus on small businesses, Energine’s team of experts helps business owners understand their marketing and social media challenges and find the best solutions to meet their needs. Jennifer teaches workshops on social media and marketing strategy to small businesses and provides

expert one-to-one social media training via her Kick Start Program, designed to tailor social media activities to each client's specific needs.