



Using Your Website to Promote Your Auction

I recently talked with my friend Jewel, owner of Cobb Web LLC, about the interactions between the Internet and auctions...

Q: How can organizations use their existing website to encourage people to attend their auction?

Jewel: In the time leading up to your auction, you'll want your auction information in a prominent, high-visibility spot on your Home Page. Make it easy for your website visitors to find the auction information on your website. Have information about the auction clearly visible on your Home Page. Make it apparent as to when and where the auction will be and if there are any admission fees involved. Maybe give some "teasers" about some of the great items that you have (you can mention both bigger and smaller items). Graphics are great--especially if you can show some graphics from your prior year's auction.

Give a "Call to Action" -- do you want them to click somewhere to get the nitty-gritty details? Or, if you have an admission charge, you could have an obvious link to "Purchase Your Seat Now!" Be sure to make your calls to action stand out -- you won't want to bury them in the middle of a paragraph. Again, graphics can be your friend here.

Q: Can we use our website to encourage donations too?

Jewel: Absolutely! Again, on your Home page some well-placed graphics, along with great text, can encourage people to donate items. Make it easy for them with (yes, again...) a "Call to Action." Consider having a secondary page with all of the details on how to donate. Some web-based auction data systems (like Community Auction Services' EasyAuction) have specific web pages where donations can be made online. It's easy to add a graphic to your web page pointing to this page.



Q: If we want to open our auction up to the wider community, how can we make it more visible on the web?

Jewel: This can be tricky. Putting something on your website doesn't mean that Google (or Yahoo, Bing, etc.) is automatically going to find it and make it show up in a search. That being said, your website content (text) plays the biggest role here. Without getting into boring techno-jargon, search engines like Google have programs that visit your website to see what it's all about. It then uses that information to determine what kinds of search terms you will be found under. But there's a catch -- these programs can only do 2 things: 1) they can read text and 2) they can jump from link to link (much like you do when you click on links on a website). But what these programs CAN'T do is read text that's been put into a picture (a graphic). So if you only use graphics to talk about your auction on your website, then most likely Google is going to have no idea about and it won't show up in any search results. That's why you need to have good content along with your graphics.

Social media is another avenue that you can use to help the visibility of your auction. Facebook in particular can have a huge reach. If you can have a business Facebook page, get as many of your staff and volunteers to "like" your page. Post on it often and encourage your staff and volunteers to share that information on their pages. It's likely that old 1980's shampoo commercial -- you share with some people on social media and they tell 2 friend and they tell 2 friend and so on!

Editor's note: Watch for the next newsletter where we will have a whole article on social media.

Thanks to Jewel Cobb for her great advice this month! Visit her [website](#) for information about the services she offers. If you're looking for a web designer, I recommend her highly!