THE GALA IN 2021 IS STILL VIRTUAL: YOUR GUIDE TO BETTER VIRTUAL GALAS

Share your city, state and weather in the control panel in the Q&A box.
LEAH WEINER

Event Experience:
500+ workshops, events, fundraisers and conferences hosted since 2016

Individual Experience:
• Doctorate in Education from Pepperdine University
• Background in adult education, fundraising, event management, and curriculum development
• Director of Nonprofit Learning Lab

How training was developed:
• Research, best practices and our own experience

info@nonprofitlearninglab.org
GOAL FOR TODAY

BETTER VIRTUAL GALAS IN 2021!

“LABGISTICS”

MAKING SURE YOU CAN LEARN BEST

Type in content questions into the question box and we will respond.

Recordings, handouts and slides will be emailed to you.

Do you need tech support? Type into question box and we will respond.

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

WHAT WE WILL COVER TODAY:

- Top 10 lessons learned from virtual galas in 2020 based on participating in and supporting 50+ galas
- How to engage your audience in a virtual gala
- How to incorporate pre-recorded videos versus live speakers and presenters
- How to incorporate silent auctions and live asks into a fundraiser
- Methods to incorporate hybrid options in 2021 when some of your attendees may be willing to gather
NOW YOU: DO A QUICK POLL

When is your next virtual gala?

- Next week
- In a month
- Three months away
- Soon but no date yet

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TOP 10 LESSONS LEARNED
LESSONS LEARNED

#1 HAVE A PLAN & RUN OF SHOW
A plan ensures everyone knows the goals, theme and what to do. The Run of Show provides you a detailed minute by minute overview of what is happening and who is responsible for the task during the virtual gala.

#2 IF YOU DON’T KNOW THE TECH, GET HELP
Get the tech help you need to support the virtual aspect of your gala from video editing, back end support on day of event to prep and understanding all the planning that is required.

#3 HAVE A THEME & CONSISTENT MESSAGE
Your call to action should be consistent in social media, email, direct mail and donor cultivation meetings.
LESSONS LEARNED

#4 IT TAKES TIME EVEN IF IT IS VIRTUAL
The amount of time that you spent finding a venue, catering, invites, etc must be allocated to a virtual event.

#5 CLEAR DIRECTIONS TO VOLUNTEER COMMITTEES
Keep your committee structure. Be clear about volunteer tasks. Provide detailed directions. This is new for you & them.

#6 1 TECH SUPPORT PER 75-100 PEOPLE
Would you serve 100 meals, greet your guests, run the gala program and ask for donations at the same time? You bring in help.
LESSONS LEARNED

#7 DIGITAL COMPETENCY
Do your guests know your event platform? How many login, webcam or audio issues will guests have prior & during event?

#8 KEEP YOUR VIRTUAL EVENT SHORT
45 to 90 minutes & incorporate interaction if longer than 45

#9 DONOR CULTIVATION IS IMPORTANT
Call your donors. Engage your donors in advance of the event. Have a clear “call to action” before, during and after.

#10 EVENT PLATFORMS ARE NOT TV
Quality of streaming depends on the internet of you, your presenters and attendees’ internet bandwidth
NOW YOU: DO A QUICK POLL

What is your fundraising goal for your next virtual gala?

- $10,000-$50,000
- $50,000 - $100,000
- $100,000+
- Not sure yet
AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT
HOW TO ENGAGE YOUR AUDIENCE

- Polls
- Chat box
- Goodie bags
- Access to content experts
- Breakout Rooms
- VIP Experience
- Special guest

https://www.philanthropy.com/article/How-to-Raise-Money-if-Your/248390 How to Raise Money if Your Nonprofit Isn’t Responding Directly to the Pandemic

Coronavirus Forces Large-Scale Volunteer Fundraising Events to Innovate: https://www.philanthropy.com/article/Coronavirus-Forces-Large-Scale/248392
NOW YOU: DO A QUICK POLL

Do you plan to engage your audience during your next virtual gala?

- Of course!
- No idea
- Leaning towards it!
- Depends on platform
AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

POLLS

• Ask questions that are relevant to your audience and the content of the event.
• Plan them in advance
• 2-3 per hour.
AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

CHAT BOX

• Decide if you want the chatbox public for all or not.
• If chat box is for public viewing, have volunteers or board members model good examples of comments.
• Tech support to assist with chatbox is a good idea!
GOODIE BAG

• Drop off a themed goodie bag to your VIP Donors.
• Non-perishable items are easier for distribution and take less coordination.
• Have attendees take a selfie or hold up their items during live event for photo
VIP EXPERIENCE

- Access to something special such as content experts, special gift, food or drinks delivered
SPECIAL GUESTS

Are there community leaders, special guests or individuals that your audience want to hear from? Have them be part of your event!
ACCESS TO CONTENT EXPERTS

• Are there experts that your community wants to learn from who have interesting and relevant information to share?

• Have them be part of your event!
BREAKOUT ROOMS

Curate an experience

Have a purpose, plan, tech support and someone to lead the breakout rooms

You can do a toast, conversation, a game, an overview of accomplishments, how to get involved, conversation and more.
BREAKOUT ROOMS

What to do in a breakout room?

• A toast
• A conversation
• A game
• Sharing of accomplishments
• How to get involved
• A themed conversation
BREAKOUT ROOMS

Who can lead a breakout room?

• Table captains
• Volunteers
• Staff
• Board members
• Neighborhood leads
NOW YOU: DO A QUICK POLL

Do you have volunteers to serve as “break out rooms” hosts?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- Not sure we have volunteers that are good enough with the technology
BREAKOUT ROOMS

Have table captain that do the following:

– Lead a toast
– Facilitate a conversation
– Lead a trivia game

Give your table captains a training so they know what to do.

Practice breakout rooms in advance.
BREAKOUT ROOMS

Every platform is different but you can do “breakout rooms or tables” in:

- Remo
- Zoom
- Hopin
- GatherTown
- LetsLunchPool
NOW YOU: DO A QUICK POLL

We know what platform we are choosing for our event and why...

- Yes
- No
- Still figuring it out!

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BREAKOUT ROOMS

Design to the platform. Tech is different than a ballroom.

Don’t know how to do the tech? Requires you to get someone who knows how! Contact us.
PRE-RECORD VERSUS LIVE
Do a Mix of Pre-record and Live

- Ensures that you are more prepared
- Reduces risk of no-show for speakers
- Decrease your reliability on someone’s technology
- Ensures a tighter schedule
- Allows for editing
- Easier on everyone’s schedule
Pre-record Videos

• Keep them short
• Use b-roll from the past to mix in with pre-record
• Edit the video so it looks professional
• Give the person talking points or a script
• Layer in music and slides when transitioning from pre-record to live
Live Speakers

- Do a practice with your live speakers
- Humans are not robots
- Tech check in advance
- Internetspeedtest.net
- Microphone check
- Seating location in their home or office
- Script or no script
NOW YOU: DO A QUICK POLL

What is your plan for your virtual gala?

- All pre-record
- All live
- A mix of both!
SILENT AUCTIONS & LIVE ASKS
NOW YOU: DO A QUICK POLL

Will you have a silent auction this year?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
Silent Auction: 
Item Management During COVID 

Keep it Local 

Not only will bidders feel more comfortable staying local, you will also be promoting supporting local business during hard times.
Silent Auction: Item Management During COVID

Tangible Items give bidders a chance to participate even when they are practicing safer at home.

- Autograph memorabilia
- High End Goods
- Housewares
- Jewelry
- Custom Artwork

Pets: There has been a surge of pet adoption during Covid-19. Having pet items in your silent auction will be key this year.
Silent Auction: Item Management During COVID

Housewares

People are spending more time at home and redecorating or gardening. Houseware and gardening items in your auction will be more popular than past years.

In-Home Activities

At home spa day, wine tastings, and large meal/catering packages, at home workout packages are all great items.
Big Careful with These Items

- Long Distance travel
- Tickets to large gatherings such as sports games, concerts, and special events.
- Gym Package
- Flight Packages
How to Make the Ask

1. The first ask is always hard
2. Know the prospect
3. Ask a question
4. Propose a specific item to donate. Do the work.
5. Let prospect know this is an opportunity
6. Inform item donor that you are a dedicated volunteer, or staff of your organization and what your organization does for the community
7. SAY THANK YOU: A LOT
Tips and Tricks

Target businesses you know and love! Give them praise!

Set sometime aside each week/month to send ask emails.

They can be the same email with different tweaks to personalize the ask.
Pricing Your Items

• Start bidding at 30 or 40 percent of retail price.
• An item with a $100 value, start the bidding at $30 or $40.
• Bid increments at least 15%
• Setting bid increments high, can turn away donors.
• Low increments generate excitement & maybe a bid war!
• Research & make sure the value of the item is reflected

Note: A donor might inflate the price of the donated item because it’s special for them
Marketing your Silent Auction

Share your feature items that will be in the silent and live auction before the auction starts, even months in advance to get people interested. This can be on social media, eblast or direct mailers.

Include photos from previous events to get everyone excited, even if it’s a virtual event.
Silent Auction Platforms

onecause™
POWERFUL FUNDRAISING SOLUTIONS

bidCoz

School Auction.net

GiveSmart®
by communitybrands

greatergiving

AUCTION METHOD
FOR AUCTIONEERS, BY AUCTIONEERS

A Global Payments Company

Promena

RainWorx software
End Time for Silent Auction

• End the silent auction late at night and a few hours after your virtual gala.
• Give folks time to participate in your event and still bid.
• Ideal end time at 10 pm
After the Silent Auction

Troubleshooting Payment

What happens if a donor doesn’t pay?

• Reach out to them to see if they would still like the item.

• Politely ask if they are interested and if they say yes, ask them how they would like to pay for the item?
After the Silent Auction

Unwanted Items

What happens if the donor doesn’t want the item anymore?
Contact the second and then third place winners on item and see if they are interested in purchasing the item at their bid price pledged.

What happens if no one want the item?
If there is not an expiration, great you just got your first item for next auction.
LIVE ASKS & DONOR CULTIVATION
Donor Cultivation is Important

Doing Advance Prep

- 1:1 donor cultivation prior to the gala is important
- Work your donor list and create a goal for yourself in terms of individual outreach and donor asks
- Prepare an internal list of donors that you are cultivating for mid to large size donations

How many donor meetings are you having a week?
Donor Cultivation is Important

Doing Advance Prep

Pull your donors list from last 10 years

- Remove do not contact
- Remove anyone that gave a major gift in the last 3 months
- Gift of $100 or more
- Attended an event
- Affinity scores
Donor Cultivation is Important

Doing Advance Prep

- From pulled donor list: put together your goals for your event
- If you want to raise $50K or $250K think of this as a campaign & have momentum going into the event
- Cultivating is building 1:1 relationships with donors NOT posting on social media

Spend more time cultivating than you think
Make it Easy to Donate

We can only do one thing at a time.

When online, giving has to be made easy.

Want folks to donate live?

- Dedicated link in chat that attendees can click
- Text to Give: Grab your phone and text "$100" to 12345
- Write a check and model on screen
Thermometer

- Thermometer at the start, middle and end of event
- Show the financial progress your nonprofit has made
- Demonstrates what you are still trying to achieve

Visuals can help!
Screenshare a thermometer
NOW YOU: DO A QUICK POLL

Will you do a live ask during your virtual gala?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
WHAT DOES HYBRID LOOK LIKE FOR GALAS
HYBRID EVENTS

• An in-person component and virtual component.

• Some donors may not be ready for in-person for a while or may not have time to attend an event

• Continue to engage everyone

• Small in person gatherings and larger online events
HYBRID EVENTS

- Follow local community health guidelines
- What **you** do on your own time is not the same as organize a large in person event
- Keep it low risk in case you have to cancel or no shows.

Examples:
- Small gathering in outdoor venue
- Small gathering in donor’s backyard
- Consult with point person for liability
Tips on Hybrid

Create an experience for virtual attendees

• A hybrid event is NOT videotaping an in-person happy hour and streaming that for a virtual audience
• Good visuals
• Call to actions for those experience the virtual aspect of your event
• Two experiences
QUESTIONS?
ASK AWAY!

NEED MORE ASSISTANCE?

The Nonprofit Learning Lab assists with:
• Creating online experiences
• Assistance with online event curation and management
• Tech support for your events

We are here for you!