

The Importance of Having the Right People in the Room

One of the biggest misconceptions about fundraising events is that success depends primarily on the auction items or the entertainment. While those elements certainly help, the single most important ingredient is **having the right people in the room**.

Building the right audience begins months before your event. Starting early gives your committee enough time to identify, invite, and personally cultivate guests who believe in your mission and have both the desire and the capacity to support it. Waiting until the last few weeks often leads to simply filling seats instead of filling the room with supporters.

Another key ingredient is achieving **critical mass**. Live auctions and Fund-a-Need (Paddle Raise) campaigns thrive on energy. When enough enthusiastic supporters are engaged, generosity becomes contagious. Guests are inspired by one another's giving, bidding becomes more competitive, and momentum builds throughout the room. Without that critical mass, even great auction items and compelling stories can struggle to reach their full potential.

One challenge many organizations overlook is sponsor tables. While corporate sponsors are invaluable, a table of eight or ten guests isn't always an advantage if those seats are filled with people who have little connection to your cause. Guests who are attending simply because they were invited by a company may enjoy the evening but may not actively participate in bidding or the paddle raise. This can reduce the excitement and giving energy in the room.

Encourage sponsors to invite clients, employees, friends, or community members who share an interest in your mission. A room filled with passionate supporters will consistently outperform a room filled with attendees who simply came for a free dinner. Should you have a room that includes tables bought by sponsors, your messaging during the evening becomes VERY important. The goal is to convert those attendees to donors, no matter what revenue stream they participate in. Remaining in contact with those attendees throughout the year can often lead to new faces, aligned with your mission statement in future years.

Remember, fundraising is as much about **who is in the room** as it is about **what happens on the stage**. Start early, focus on attracting mission-minded guests, and build the critical mass that turns a good event into an extraordinary fundraiser. And reach out to all attendees a few times during the year, to cultivate and build a stronger more aligned audience for future years.

I'm looking forward to speaking with you

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