

# Russ Williams

Professional Charity Auctioneer

★ *"Russ you have covered all our questions, brilliant!"*  
**Cathy Hill MD, Lambournes**

★ *"Russ you make this look simple, you have a real skill that raises a tremendous amount of money. Thank you again."*  
**Danny Lee - Automotive Events**

★ **Presents his FREE  
Auction Tips & Tricks**

★ *"This document is a must for anybody considering running a charity auction !"*  
**Micky Cantwell - Director, The PBA**





**Russ Williams** has been conducting auctions for over 15 years. Here are his tips and tricks to ensure you get maximum funds from your auction.

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**1. Know your audience and do the research.**

Why would you want to sell a signed West Ham shirt to an Arsenal supporter? When thinking about an auction take time to find out who is in your audience and their hobbies. The simplest way to do this is to ask when they are booking their tickets, are you a sports fan? Rugby, Cricket, Football? If so what team? When most of the tickets have been sold, you will have a good idea of your target audience. Now source the items that appeal to them. If you do the correct research and buy the correct items, half the battle of selling the item on the night has been done and you will now be relying on the prowess of your auctioneer to sell it for maximum money.



**2. Sourcing the auction items.**

There is no better item than a free one, however it is not always the best. Items generally donated do not have a good resale value. For example if a company donates you a digital camera worth £80, would you pay £1000 for it at an auction? So in my opinion it is better to spend a few pounds and buy something that is exclusive to you. Again for example a Chelsea shirt, signed by the current squad, your purchase price £200. This will attract good bidders at the auction as this is not an item you can walk around to the corner store and buy, it's exclusive and should return you a good profit.



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### 3. **Buy genuine authenticated items.**

If you are buying signed memorabilia it is vital you know its source. Do not buy just anything from eBay or off the net without knowing the background of the item. How do you know who signed it? Does it come with a Certificate of Authenticity? Can it be verified? Where did they get it? Do they have a photo of the person signing the item? Again do your homework and it will save any embarrassing moments on the night of the auction. If you are stuck for items call me as over the years I have built up a good network of genuine memorabilia suppliers who can source and supply beautifully framed pieces at competitive prices.



### 4. **How many items should you have?**

My recommendation is ten. This will take approx. 45 minutes to sell and is long enough for people to be sitting at the end of a dinner. Please remember your guests have been sitting all night through the meal, the after dinner speaker, the presentations and now the auction. It needs to run quickly, lively and be entertaining.



### 5. **Description and Presentation.**

This is absolutely vital in making your auction work. If you are going to cut corners do not cut this one, this will decide whether you take big money or not. Add your ten items to the table program or make a separate table program/listing for every table. Make sure you list the items clearly starting with a low to reasonably priced item to get the ball rolling, and then moving onto your more expensive items.

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**The description is vital.** This is your chance to sell the item to the person before the auctioneer stands up. More often than not the person knows what he wants before the auction starts, then it's just a case of how much? Below I will give you an idea of an auction lot and what you should be saying.

**Lot 5 – Golf for 4 at Loch Lomond in Scotland.**

*A chance for 4 golfers to enjoy the beautiful handcrafted and exclusive Loch Lomond Golf Course, voted 11<sup>th</sup> in the Best Golf Courses of the World. Your experience will include 4 return flights from Heathrow, all transfers, a round of golf for 4, your evening meal and accommodation for 1 night. Must be taken by the end of Oct 2008. Accommodation is 2 double rooms, subject to availability. Excludes bank holidays. **This is a chance of a lifetime for any golfer !***

Please use the same feel for every item. Sell it! Remember we are trying to raise money!



**6. Make it easy for people to pay.**

This is another vital area that I would suggest you pay particular attention to. The more options you offer the customer the better your chances of selling the item. I will now list the most popular ways of accepting payment:

- ❖ Cash
- ❖ Personal Credit/Debit Card
- ❖ Company Credit/Debit Card
- ❖ Personal Cheque
- ❖ Company Cheque
- ❖ Invoice The Buyer

In an ideal world we would all like the cash but it's just not going to happen. For example if an item sells for £700-£800 it is most unlikely that anyone would have that sort of cash in their pocket. In my experience payment is normally by a credit card.

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You do not have to be a company to accept credit cards. You can open a simple Paypal account at [www.paypal.co.uk](http://www.paypal.co.uk) to accept credit/debit cards. On the night you will need an internet connection to process the payment immediately and remember Paypal will charge you a handling fee to process the payment, normally around 5%.

**IMPORTANT:** If you have to process the payment the following day make sure you have a **CONFIRMATION SHEET** (see no 9). This way if the payment does not go through or the cheque bounces you have a form of re-address, especially as they may already have the goods! In fact if you are unsure of the bidder personally do not let the goods go. In extreme circumstances you can always dispatch the goods the following day once payment has been cleared.

Finally, state clearly at the bottom of your auction sheet how you accept payment and if any terms & conditions apply, eg: handling fee's etc.



#### 7. **Make sure the items are on show.**

At the side of the stage or presentation area, erect a table and place the items on show just as a normal auction would do. Put any framed items on easels. Make it easy for the person to see and look at the items, not forgetting to also display their lot items clearly. If it's tickets for a concert, print a picture of the band etc. On many corporate functions video screens are erected for the awards presentations. Why not use them and make a power point presentation by putting the lots on the screens one by one with their descriptions. This will help the items to be sold. When the auctioneer starts to sell have a member of staff willing to walk around holding up the item. This will give people a chance to have a final look during the bidding.



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## 8. Spotters.

Another vital role! Spotters are the eyes and ears of your auctioneer in a room full of people. In a large function room with 40 tables your auctioneer cannot see everyone at the same time. A spotter should be equipped with a flag or something similar, so when they see a person bidding in their area it is their job to ensure the auctioneer also sees that bid. Remember every lost bid is lost money, so a spotter's role is important.



## 9. Confirmation Sheet.

When the hammer falls it is paramount you get a member of staff to the winning bidder with a confirmation sheet straight away. This should include:

- ❖ The lot number
- ❖ Description of the item
- ❖ The amount it sold for
- ❖ Space for the bidder to write their name and address
- ❖ Their table number
- ❖ A tick box on their preferred method of payment
- ❖ Space to write their credit card details if required
- ❖ Their signature confirming they have bought the item for the agreed price on XYZ date

Once again, this will solve many problems after the auction. Sometimes the following day when people have sobered up they can't remember bidding, or have an excuse like "*It was not me it was Fred*". If this happens you will be left with the item which you could have initially paid out for. ☹



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#### 10. The Auctioneer.

As you can see all the hard work is done before the auction takes place and if you have done the research, planning and got the correct items you are well on your way to raising lots of funds. The next step is the right person to sell it. **Russ Williams** has been in the entertainment business since the age of 14 and a Professional Comedian and Auctioneer for over 15 years. His style, panache and wit will make an auction fun to take part in and fun to watch.

Please click the link below to see Russ in action recently at the Kentucky Fried Chicken UK Conference where over £50k was raised on the auction.

[www.charityauctioneer.co.uk](http://www.charityauctioneer.co.uk)

**Finally, do not gamble all your pre-auction hard work on someone who cannot sell, what is the point? I appreciate you will have to pay an auctioneer, but a good auctioneer is worth every penny and will raise you £1000's as opposed to £100's.**



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Below are some of the quotes **Russ Williams** has received.



Just wanted to drop you a note and say a really big thank you for last night - we raised over 56k on the auction – just so much more than we ever hoped for! You were absolutely brilliant – everyone really enjoyed themselves.

**Fiona McCarthy – PA to Head Franchise Operations**



Russ Williams was the consummate professional throughout the entire evening. I am still getting people ring me 3 weeks later as you made the auction so amusing. The auction raised £5,500 for Sue Ryder Care which I thank you so much. I will not hesitate in booking for next year's function.

**Dave Panter – St John's Hospice, Sue Ryder Care**



I wanted to say a huge, huge thank you to you. You were a fantastic auctioneer and we were so pleased with the money that was raised. There will be a cheque handed over to Children In Need tonight for over £50K and the auction contributed £15,000 to the total raised. Thank you again for all your help with the show, before, during and after. Your advice has been invaluable and we would like to wish you all the very best for the future.

**Kelly Lynn - Finale Producer, Celebrity Scissorhands BBC1**



You were a great hit and I have already had people praising your comedy routine and slick auction skills: I have not laughed so much for a very long time!! You contributed a great deal to raising a good sum for the benefit of disadvantaged children in Suffolk. It is not surprising that you are so much in demand, and I hope that we shall be able to engage you again in the future.

**David Ives - Suffolk Wooden Spoon Committee**



Russ, brilliant again! You are the first person I book when arranging our ball and next year will be no different. In five years you have raised over £120,000. Once again thank you for all your hard work.

**Colin Osborne - Orchid Cancer Trust**



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## **SILENT AUCTIONS**

A silent auction is a fundraising technique frequently used at charity events. It differs from the typical auction conducted by an auctioneer who calls out the prices for items and then takes the raised hands or paddles of people as bids at a certain price. It's often a preferred means for raising money at charitable events because it does not detract from the entertainment provided at the event.

Usually, a silent auction is conducted by setting up tables or displays of items or services upon which people can bid. A minimum bid may be set, especially when the item is of high value. Paper is located near the item, which allows for people to write down their names and bids. This gives people a chance, during the event, to tour the different items available for auction and decide upon which items they would like to bid.

**There are advantages to both the silent auction and the regular auction.**



A silent auction conducted for a charity means the charity doesn't have to pay a professional auctioneer. One drawback of a silent auction is that items may generate lower bids because people have more time to consider the purchase.



A regular auction often takes advantage of the impulse buy, and a good auctioneer will spur people on to contribute more than they normally would for items. Knowing that others will be aware of what is being spent may also influence people to bid more at a regular auction as well as silent auctions with open-book bidding. Some charitable events offer both, to gain full benefit from both systems.

Finally, advice is **FREE!** If there is anything that I have not covered within my eBook or you have a question don't leave it to chance, ask a professional.

*Here's to a successful auction!*

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