

Investing in event planning software is an important decision. The right software will provide years of stress-relieving efficiency and will enable your organization to consistently exceed fundraising goals. MaestroSoft embraces the fact that non-profits always compare products and services before making a purchase, so we've created this guide to help you ask the right questions.

## ✓ **ASK ABOUT CONTRACTS AND AGREEMENTS**

When purchasing event planning software, make sure you ask about the contract that your organization is entering into. The contract may be as long as *five* years in length, so be sure to look it over.

### **BE SURE TO ASK:**

- Will we be *required* to use your services if we commit to you?
- Am I agreeing to possible legal action if we want to switch companies before our term is up?
- What happens if next year's auction chair wants to use a different company or service?
- Can you use our name in advertising and marketing materials without asking first?
- Does the contract automatically renew without us being asked first?
- Do you take a percentage of our final auction revenue?

## ✓ **ASK ABOUT PAYMENT PROCESSING**

Credit card processing is an essential component of successful events. It enables your auction team to quickly and accurately accept payments, and it allows your supporters to donate more willingly. When choosing a payment processing solution, examine ease of use and long-term costs.

### **BE SURE TO ASK:**

- What is the minimum I have to pay to rent or borrow equipment for my event?
- How much does extra equipment cost?
- What are the fees for accidentally keeping equipment longer than four days past the event?
- How many days do I have to reconcile and double-check my work before incurring fees?
- How much does it cost if we accidentally lose or break the equipment?
- How long do I have to keep signed receipts on file?
- If a card is worn or cracked, how much is the *additional* fee for keying in that card manually?
- Can I process credit cards for registrations and table purchases *before* the event?
- Can I process miscellaneous charges after the event without physical equipment?
- Do I have to have an internet connection or phone lines at the event?
- If I want to host a simple year-round donation page, how much does that cost?

## ✓ **ASK ABOUT THE QUALITY OF THE SOFTWARE**

- For how long have you been making event software, and how often do you update it?
- I need to share reports – can I create Word, Excel, and PDF exports of any report?
- Can I sell a table to someone who isn't attending the event?
- If someone donates an item *and* attends the event, can I print **one** statement covering both?
- How long does it take to enter in bids and *split bids* on the fly?
- How many statement, bid sheet, catalog, and gift certificate options will I have?
- Can I *preview* statements, reports, and other material before printing it?
- Can I track individual expenses and milestones during my event planning?

## ✓ **ASK ABOUT SERVICE AND SUPPORT**

Aside from the quality and reliability of its products, a software company is defined by the support and service provided, and the willingness to provide that support and service at all times.

### **BE SURE TO ASK:**

- Do I get free private training with my initial software purchase?
- How many years of support are included with the software purchase?
- When I call night of event support, where is the tech support center located?
- Can I call you for tips on running my event?
- What kind of auction and event planning experience do your employees have?
- Does my software stop working when my tech support expires?

## ✓ **ASK ABOUT WEB SERVICES**

Taking your event online adds ease for both your team and your guests – especially with a system in place that can easily allow guests to pre-register credit cards and seat guests at their own table.

### **BE SURE TO ASK:**

- How do your web services integrate with the software?
- Will I have my own dedicated and customizable website for my events?
- Can our auction team enter people, items, and other data from any location?
- Can supporters register to attend an event online and put a credit card on file?
- How much do the credit card processing rates differ with online credit card payments?
- Can supporters seat their guests at their own tables online?
- Can I host an online catalog?
- Can my online catalog host a sponsors' area to sell ad space?
- If my site becomes too popular, will I be billed for additional "bandwidth"?

## ✓ **ASK ABOUT ONLINE AUCTIONS**

Online auctions are great to host on their own, or as a part of your annual gala. You can have an online auction prior to your in-person event to generate excitement, run an online auction on its own, or hold one after your in-person event to sell unsold items – or all three!

### **BE SURE TO ASK:**

- What is the closeout fee at the end of *any* online auction?
- Can I customize the email winning bidders receive?
- Can all of the online auction activities come back to the software for receipting and billing?
- Can bidders be automatically notified by email when they're outbid?
- If my *online auction* becomes too popular, will I be billed for additional "bandwidth"?
- Can I use the same web site to host people and item entry, online registrations, table sponsorships, cash donations, merchandise sales, and an online auction all in one place?

## ✓ **ASK ABOUT ELECTRONIC BIDDING**

Electronic bidding increases your bids by providing immediate out-bid notifications. This allows guests to immediately place a higher bid or start bidding on a new item. Be sure to ask your software provider about integrated electronic bidding, and compare costs.

**Call us anytime at 1-800-438-6498 x1**

*We'll be more than happy to answer any of these questions!*