

giving away the house

how to **professionally manage** and ease the administrative tasks of **the donation process**

by Kaijsa Kurstin

Attractions and Parks remain a popular place for non-profit organizations to request donations for charity events with a steady stream of requests for free admission tickets, meals and merchandise all year long. These charity requests have been around for quite some time and will not be going anywhere anytime soon, leaving park managers wondering if there is a proper way to address these requests. Who receives donations and what kind of donations? Is there a professional way to handle these requests and what do I get in return for a donation? These are all questions park & attraction managers have asked time and time again.

Most parks pride themselves as being socially responsible and want to give back to their communities whenever possible. They have administrators accept donation request letters and faxes and some even have a formal application for the requesting party to complete and mail back in with a formal request letter. The time it takes to process

these requests can be anywhere from 6 to 8 weeks to a year. Not a very good use of time. The trick to processing these requests is to do so in a timely fashion and in the most professional manner available.

Forward thinking attractions, such as the Aquarium of the Bay in San Francisco, have decided to take charge of their donation requests process. They have implemented a system onto their website called AIRS (Automated Item Request System) from BiddingForGood, the leading cause-related e-commerce platform connecting consumers and marketers to non-profit fundraising auction events. The system creates forms that a charity seeking a donation can electronically fill out, detailing the donation request, and all of its contact information. The AIRS system responds immediately with an automated e-mail confirming the receipt of the donation request, and later on with an e-mail either approving or denying the solicitation. It's being used by other businesses such as The

Florida Aquarium, Wachusett Ski Mountain, and retailer Brooks Brothers.

With the AIRS system, attractions handling requests are able to track how much exposure they receive in return for a donation while significantly reducing the time spent handling requests. The system offers a central dashboard of information including how many donations have been processed, which ones are still pending, how much has been donated and to whom the items have been donated to. It also features charts on how much has been donated over periods of time.

Parks and attractions administrators can appreciate the time saved using AIRS. "As one of San Francisco's most popular destinations, Aquarium of the Bay receives dozens of donation requests each week. Our goal is to support every nonprofit organization that comes to us, and the time that BiddingForGood has saved us makes this a much less time-consuming task," says Erin Coy, spokesperson for the Aquarium of the Bay.

So what do attractions get in return for the donations? Often, nothing. However, early reports show that AIRS allows businesses to leverage second revenue streams that are vital in today's economy. In fact, The Liberty Hotel, a nationally recognized hotel located in Boston, MA, is reporting that 73% of requests are now asking for information on event space providing a steady flow of leads.

ipm

BiddingForGood is offering a FREE implementation of their interactive Auction Item Request System (AIRS) to manage item donor programs more effectively. For more information, please email airs@biddingforgood.com or call (866) 918-0305.

