



Paper to Mobile: How Wilmington University Doubled Donations

BACKGROUND

Background

Wilmington University is a private university offering both undergraduate and graduate degree programs in a wide range of areas. After starting out as a class of 194 students in 1968, Wilmington University's diverse student body numbers more than 18,000 annually.

WilmU is committed to providing access to education for all. To fuel their mission, WilmU provides tuition assistance to students in need, funded through fundraising and scholarship funds.

Brandi Purcell, Manager of Special Events at Wilmington University, believes that fundraising is a year-round journey. She and her team are passionate about producing high-quality special events and campaigns that support student scholarships.

CHALLENGE

Challenge

Prior to using OneCause, Purcell conducted fundraising with paper bid sheets and Excel, using them to track the team's special events. This meant she and the team faced many common challenges produced by manual fundraising, including:

- Printing, organizing and tracking bid sheets
- Long hours spent keying information in Excel
- Emailing files back and forth between users
- Struggling to close and reconcile auction winners
- Long lines at checkout
- Lack of data for post-event analysis

Perhaps their biggest challenge was the paper bid sheets themselves. Using bid sheets limited donors' ability to be fully engaged in the bidding process, because they had to choose between being at the auction tables and socializing or participating in the event programming. They couldn't do both.

The bid sheet process also meant that guests had no way of knowing when they've been out-bid, hindering the bidding wars that can help skyrocket auction proceeds.

“ We felt so limited. The manual process was preventing us from growing our event, engaging our donors, and bringing in more dollars. That's when we started to look for a new solution, and it was clear to us that it was OneCause,” said Purcell.

SOLUTION

Solution

WilmU switched from paper to OneCause mobile bidding. The Green and White Scholarship Ball was the first WilmU event powered by OneCause. The ability to bid via phone created instant bidding from anywhere, introduced a competitive element, and streamlined fundraising process dramatically for the team.

“ OneCause has been a lifesaver. We love it – and so do our donors. It was the user-friendly experience that made it so easy for them and for us. It took our events to the next level and because of that it took our proceeds to the next level,” said Purcell.

Perhaps one of the biggest improvements the WilmU team saw was in the checkout process. WilmU had problems in the past where donors would bid on a silent auction item and leave the event, forcing Purcell and her team to spend hours (even days) tracking down people and payments.

Even when donors were present, uniting them with their winning item and collecting payments from them was a time-consuming hassle.

“ With OneCause, everything is in one place. You aren't looking at a million spreadsheets. You aren't looking to find who purchased this, that, or the other. The manual process is removed for us and the time spent in long lines was eliminated for the bidders. It helped our team make everything so much easier,” said Purcell.

Using OneCause allowed WilmU to not only streamline the process and guest experience, but also expand their donor reach. Because guests could access the auction via their phones, individuals that were unable to attend the event were still able to participate and contribute to the fundraising from anywhere.

To get remote bidders and attendees engaged early, Purcell utilized the texting feature before the event to create momentum before the doors even opened.

“ We sent out a text message the morning of so that people could start bidding and we saw huge success. We had hundreds of bids before the event even started. Plus, everyone was engaged in the auction, making for more fun and competitive bidding the night of,” said Purcell.

For those nonprofits wanting to switch from paper to technology, there is often the practical question of learning curves. Is it hard? Do we have time to take it on? All real questions for fundraising teams of all sizes.

For the WilmU team, the switch from paper to technology was seamless because of the online tools and support OneCause provides its customers. Purcell took advantage of OneCause University and the variety of online training courses that made learning easy.

“ The great thing was, I was able to teach myself from the videos you provide. If I got stuck, it was great to be able to call or text the support line and get instant help. It made the learning easy and fast so that I was able to start fundraising,” said Purcell.

RESULTS

Results

Making the switch to OneCause mobile bidding made it things easier and faster, and it helped the event surpass previous fundraising levels:

- Increased Green & White Scholarship Ball silent auction proceeds by 150.2%.
- Increased silent auction proceeds at the Golf Classic by 280.8%.
- Boosted total raffle proceeds at the Golf Classic by an additional 15.4%.

When asked what she would share with nonprofits who are thinking about using technology for the first time, Purcell shared:

“ Technology streamlines the event process. Sure, you're taking on another element, but in the end, it makes your job easier. Everything is in one place. You aren't looking at a million spreadsheets. You aren't running around gathering bid sheets. The manual process is removed, and the results of that will show in your fundraising.”