



32nd Annual MS Dinner Auction

Auction Item Acquisition Tips & Strategies

Gathering Prospects

Create a list of prospects and requests including:

- Family and Friends
- Neighbors
- Personal/Social contacts (clubs, church, sports teams, school, committees/boards)
- Business Contacts (vendors, clients, coworkers)
- Businesses that you frequent (dentist, salon, grocery store, restaurants)
- Social media/Networking site contacts (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)
- Contacts one or two degrees away from you (a friend of a friend, a parent of a coworker, a sibling's in-law, etc.)
- Don't forget to ask people or businesses that have asked you to donate in the past

Tips for making the Ask

- Utilize the tools that have been provided
 - Fact sheet and MS materials
 - Customized letters (hardcopy and electronic)
 - Sample messages/emails
 - Donor form (hardcopy/electronic/hyperlink)
- If you do not have a direct contact at a company, make sure that you are asking the right person. In most cases, this is the general manager, marketing director, charitable contributions manager, or owner. If you are calling, ask to speak to the assistant to the general manager or the person that handles donations.
- **One of the easiest ways to get donations is to ask when you are in the role of the consumer. Solicit donations from hotels that you stay at frequently, restaurants that you eat at often, and business where you do repeat personal or professional business.**
- Often companies will require a formal request on letterhead, the charity's tax identification number, or a copy of the 501 c (3). These items are all in the online toolbox. They may also ask you to submit on line. These submissions are usually more extensive; please contact Melissa FitzGerald for assistance at melissa.fitzgerald@nmss.org or 760-448-8432.

Popular Item Ideas

- **Entertainment** - tickets to plays, sporting events, movies, or concerts. These items go very fast!
- **Restaurants, hotels, resort area condo rentals, spas** - gift certificates for meals, stays, or services. These are often our top sellers.
- **Everyday items** – electronics, groceries, cleaning services, auto detail, etc. People are often happy to donate a service or item to help, and it could mean a new customer for them as well.
- **Donations from vendors** – Office supplies, printing, coffee services, or catering, to name a few.
- **One-of-a-kind items** – the possibilities are endless – lunch with a local celebrity or politician, trips on private boats and planes, signed books or memorabilia, or a guest appearance on a television or radio show. These are always a huge hit!
- **AmEx, Starwood, Chase, or other “points”** – Donations of “points” to the Chapter is great. We can then redeem them for airfare, hotel accommodations, or gift certificates. This is extremely helpful when we are rounding out packages.
- **Gift cards from retailers** – these are very popular; Target, Macy’s, Best Buy, Starbucks, Barnes & Noble... These go fast and generally go for the retail value.
- **Review the Past Silent & Live Auction Catalogs in Toolkit**

Things to remember when soliciting

- Donations are 100% tax deductible
- Proceeds go to benefit the Pacific South Coast Chapter of the National MS Society and national research to find the cause, treatment, and cure for MS.
- Donors will be recognized at the event, providing free advertising to an influential group of Southern Californians and promoting the organization as being philanthropically minded.
- Donation may result in new clientele for donor.
- **Many companies have season tickets/boxes or subscriptions to local sporting events and cultural and entertainment venues and corporate accounts with hotels and airlines that they use to entertain clients and do corporate business. Most will donate to Charities if an employee/customer asks.**

Following up

- Make calls, emails, and repeat visits
- Offer to pick up donor form and item or notify NMSS to do so
- After donation is made, provide appropriate thank you (email, note, call, etc.) (NMSS will send a formal thank you letter after the event that can be used for tax purposes)
- If they show any interest in sponsorship, notify Director of Leadership Events and NMSS will follow-up

Sometimes it takes 2-3 asks to get results. Don't be shy! **ASK! ASK! ASK!**