

People & Community

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[Real People: Auctioneer Mike Grigg](#)

By **Hillary Haenes**

Since he was a kid, Mike Grigg, 31, has enjoyed entertaining an audience, so it was only natural when his dad asked him to be a part of an auction company.

"When my dad approached me almost 11 years ago with the opportunity to be part of a real estate auction company we would build from the ground up ... I was all in," Grigg said. "I knew that I wanted to be our auctioneer, and that it would be a good fit for me."

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Mike Grigg conducts a live auction for the Honor Flights fundraiser.



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Mike Grigg works the live auction at the Petroleum Club to raise money for the Honor Flights fundraiser.

Their real estate auction company, Elite Auctions, has now conducted hundreds of auctions all throughout California. About six years ago, Grigg started Mike Grigg Auctions, which primarily services nonprofit organizations and private schools with fundraising events. And Grigg has become the face at local events supporting nonprofits such as Make-A-Wish Foundation, CASA of Kern County and JJ's Legacy.

Grigg gave a Bakersfield Life a peek into the life of a live auctioneer:

Why is it that auctioneers talk so fast? Is this something you had to learn or is it a natural talent?

Auctioneers talk fast or chant for a couple of reasons. First, more items can be sold in a shorter period of time. And secondly, the speed creates urgency, which results in competition, which results in higher prices. Plus, the audience always loves to see a good auctioneer in action because it's fun! I am always practicing to get better. Many times I find myself chanting while I drive and upping the increments as I pass each telephone pole or even chanting to the beat of a good song. I obtained my basic skills by going to auction school, and now every auction I do improves my skills further. I have also entered many bid calling competitions to go head-to-head against other auctioneers.

As an auctioneer, you're also an entertainer. What is one of the craziest things you have done to get the audience to bid higher?

I love to make people laugh and try to take a slight stand-up comedian approach to my bid calling. I think most people and organizations appreciate this and respond by raising their card more often. One of the craziest things I've recently done to get the audience to bid was by selling a glass of ice water to the highest bidder to benefit a local nonprofit organization. Needless to say, I sold one to the highest bidder and one to the backup bidder for \$1,500 each! That is \$3,000 raised in less than a minute that the organization never would have seen.

At the beginning of the auction, do you get a sense of what the night will be like and how generous people will be?

If the organization did their job and recruited the right audience (members who have the capital and passion for the cause), then the night will always be spectacular. However, you can never predict how awesome a night will be. I was recently a part of a \$1.7 million night for one of my clients in the San Diego area, which was \$300,000 more than they made in the previous year. Sometimes organizations think they had a good night without using a professional auctioneer and they don't realize how much they actually left on the table. Professional benefit auctioneers know all the secrets in the business to maximize the event's profit.

What's the secret to your success?

There are three major secrets to my success: being fair, honest and knowledgeable with my clients. When nonprofits come to me and need my help to improve their results, I have the training and knowledge to take their events to the next level, and many times, double or triple their previous results. Many people ask me what my fees are, but they should be asking, "What will it cost *not* to hire a professional benefit auctioneer?" My training will show you spectacular results at your fundraiser.

You must be exhausted after an event. How do you relax?

I am generally exhausted after an event, but I love what I do and wouldn't change it for anything. I love to wind down by playing golf whenever I can and just hanging out with my wife, daughter and dog. A little vacation mixed in never hurts as well! I'm a firm believer in work hard, play hard.

What has been your favorite auction?

I have called hundreds of auctions and raised millions of dollars over the years, so it is impossible to have just one favorite auction. The best auctions are the ones where my clients are happy with the results and hire me back for next year. I have had some very unique experiences over the years dealing with many celebrities like Pamela Anderson and Rudy Giuliani and even selling props from "Star Trek," "Iron Man" and "Battlestar Galactica."

You recently published a book, what's it about?

My book is titled, "Maximizing Your Charity Event's Bottom Line," and was written to assist all of my clients and anyone interested in improving their fundraiser's profit. It tells some of my secrets and helps organizations to streamline their current process so they can get the best bang for their buck. It is available for purchase on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) or you can visit my website mikegriggauctions.com and input your email address for a free eCopy of the book.