BIGGEST MISTAKES
98% OF ALL NONPROFITS MAKE WHEN PLANNING A POKER EVENT

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TDA CERTIFIED TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR
Producer of America’s Most Profitable Charity Poker Tournaments
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Aces & Angels was founded in 2008 by Michael Eakman, a highly experienced fundraising executive with a Rolodex full of high profile celebrity contacts. Michael’s unique skill set was developed over 31 years of fundraising experience for hundreds of nonprofit organizations.

Michael is one of 170 poker executives worldwide with certification from the Poker Tournament Director’s Association and one of less than a handful of certified professionals that are not employed by a casino and available to assist nonprofits, associations and corporations.

Mr. Eakman produces the annual Aces & Angels event at the Super Bowl as well as the World Series of Poker Experience in Los Angeles. Aces & Angels events have been hosted by Gene Simmons, Kim Kardashian, Phil Hellmuth and a who’s who from Hollywood, the music industry, high profile professional athletes and poker stars. His Super Bowl event and subsequent trip to Ft. Hood with Gene Simmons and Shannon Tweed was featured on the Aces & Angels episode of “Gene Simmons Family Jewels” that was broadcast in 86 countries around the world on the A&E television network. Aces & Angels and Mr. Eakman were also featured on another A&E hit show “Shipping Wars”, highlighting the peculiarities of shipping quality poker tables.

Organizations that Mr. Eakman has raised funds for include: The Jewish Federation of Greater Houston, The USO, Wounded Warrior Project, Veterans of Valor, Jewish Community Center of Southern Nevada, California State Firefighter’s Association, Culver City Police Relief Association, Burbank Police Officers Association, California Organization of Police & Sheriffs, Los Angeles Firefighters Relief Association, Los Angeles Police Department, Texas Peace Officers Association, Harris County Deputy Sheriff’s Association, The Muscular Dystrophy Association, Big Brothers & Big Sisters, United States Marine Corps Toys for Tots, The Federal Firefighters Association, Baton Rouge Police Association, Louisiana State Troopers Association, The International Union of Police Associations, Orange County Firefighters Association, the Fire Safety Training Institute, Honolulu Police Association, Honolulu Firefighters Association, Kauai Police Relief Association, Boys & Girls Club of Hilo, and many more.
THE 5 BIGGEST MISTAKES
AND HOW TO AVOID MAKING THEM

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5 Biggest Mistakes 98% of All Nonprofits Make When Planning A Poker Event
By: Michael Eakman

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EXPOSING THE FIVE BIGGEST MISTAKES THAT COULD COST YOU $100,000 OR MORE

Every nonprofit should hold a charity poker tournament. They can be great fundraisers if done correctly. Did you know that, according to the World Poker Tour, there are more than 60 million poker players in the United States and more than 100 million worldwide? More people play poker than play golf, billiards or tennis. Poker players are young, educated and passionate. The poker playing donor is simply too valuable a demographic to ignore.

Every year we hear from hundreds of organizations just like yours that are well intentioned and looking to raise funds with a charity poker tournament. The problem is they don’t understand the nuances of how to produce a SUCCESSFUL fundraising event. In this guide, you will learn about the Five Biggest Mistakes and why 98% of nonprofits make them.

You have a limited opportunity to raise funds for your organization. Investing time and resources into an event like a charity poker tournament should only be done in conjunction with the best guidance and professional assistance you can get. Your net earnings depend on the decisions you make. The goal of this guide is to provide valuable information that you can use when making such critical decisions.

Without this information, you will be just like 98% of the nonprofits in America. You will not have the information you need to make the most informed decision for your organization, and unfortunately it will cost you revenue. You will miss the mark on this very lucrative source of income if you hire the wrong company for your tournament.

“We initially got great response from our alumni. The first year we had 300 players but we only saw 150 players in year two. We used a local casino night company to produce our poker tournament. They had bad tables and the dealers were event worse.”

Bob Leaumont
Director of Corporate Sponsorship and Revenue
The University of Houston Alumni Association

“I flew halfway across the country to host a “celebrity event” for a local charity. The organization was great, but unfortunately they hired a local Casino Night company to produce their poker tournament. It was a horrible mistake. Cheap tables, cheap chips, bad dealers and no real tournament directors. They turned what would have been a great fundraiser into a nightmare. Everyone was disappointed.”

Phil Hellmuth, Jr.
13 Time World Series of Poker Champion

Poker Tournaments are great fundraising events that can earn hundreds of thousands of dollars for your nonprofit organization if run right. But, if you make the wrong decisions, they can be mediocre at best. In my 31 years of fundraising experience, I have seen countless organizations make very costly mistakes. The problem is, they just didn’t have the information they needed to succeed at the highest level. This is important information that will help you sift through the clutter where every vendor looks alike and they all say exactly the same thing. If you are serious about raising funds with poker, please take a moment and read this guide. It could mean the difference of hundreds of thousands of dollars. I hope you find the information useful.

Michael Eakman, CEO - TDA Certified Tournament Director
Executive Producer
Aces & Angels, LLC

The Aces & Angels Dealers, CEO Michael Eakman and President Bill Clinton prior to an Aces & Angels World Series of Poker Experience event in Los Angeles that was co-produced by Caesars Entertainment and the World Series of Poker
1. USING A “CASINO NIGHT” COMPANY TO PRODUCE YOUR POKER EVENT

Using a “Casino Night”, “Monte Carlo Night” or “Las Vegas Night” party company to produce your poker tournament is one of the worst decisions you can make. You’ve gone to the internet and searched. Dozens of companies pop up. They all say the same thing. They all are “the best”. They all use “casino quality tables”. They all say how great their staff is. How could this be true? The fact is that it is not. In my 31 years of fundraising experience, I have not encountered a single “Casino Night” company (or poker specialty firm) that has even one real casino table. All of them have either been built at home or are cheap imported Chinese tables that look OK in photos, but are the furthest thing from real casino tables.

INSIDER TIP: Most casino night companies do not even have enough of the cheap poker tables to service a mid-sized tournament let alone a large tournament. If you sell more seats than they have tables, what are you going to do?

As to dealers, tournament directors, chip runners and other tournament support staff, you should insist that your event is staffed by poker professionals that have been trained at a poker dealer’s school. Most companies do not require any experience whatsoever only “basic card handling” skills. Read their employment section on their websites. Professional poker dealers have a much higher level of skill. In addition, request that all dealers have major casino tournament experience.

The last thing you want to do is have “Bobby Blackjack Dealer” make dealing mistakes during your event that result in complaints and player/sponsor dissatisfaction. It’s a well known industry fact that any poker dealer can deal blackjack, but very few blackjack dealers can properly deal a poker tournament without formal poker dealer school training. The tournament director is the most important person in the room. Your Tournament Director must be experienced and certified by the Tournament Director’s Association (http://www.pokertda.com). Note: The TDA is the national certification organization for professional poker tournament directors.

In addition, you must make sure to employ enough staff to run the tournament. Inexperienced companies will bring a ratio of one dealer per table and minimum tournament support staff. This is where many of them drop the ball in order to give you the cheapest price. In order to make the experience of your players and sponsors the best it can be, it is critically important that these support positions and extra dealers for breaks etc be included in your contract. You should have one Tournament Director (TDA Certification Mandatory), an Assistant Tournament Director for every 6 tables, a Chip Runner for every 10 tables and 1.2 Dealers per table. In addition, a quality tournament requires a volunteer for every two tables and a supervisor for the volunteers. Anything less could be problematic.

Insist that the company you select has a dealer manual that clearly defines policies, procedures and what to do if issues arise, in advance so that your charity poker event is not negatively impacted by poorly trained, inadequately supervised and inexperienced dealers.

All casino night companies contract by the hour. The vast majority of these firms charge for a three or four hour event. There is no way that any tournament, other than a two table tournament can be completed in three or four hours. These companies leave you in a bad position, you must either prematurely end the event, field dozens of complaints and have your reputation attacked in social media, or agree to pay sometimes double time labor for dealers to stay to finish...
the event. The overage can often result in an increased bill of 300% or more. You must insist on flat rate pricing no matter how long the tournament takes.

You don’t need blackjack, craps, roulette or slot machines at all. In fact, poker players couldn’t care less about these low quality “imitation” Vegas games. Poker players play poker. It’s that simple. Save your money and do not order any other casino style games – even for non-players. Women are the fastest growing demographic in poker. Those that are not playing in the tournament will find plenty of entertainment in watching the action.

SOLUTION: NEVER USE A CASINO NIGHT COMPANY TO PRODUCE A POKER EVENT. YOU SHOULD INSIST ON A COMPANY THAT IS EXCLUSIVELY A POKER SPECIALIST WITH ACTUAL CASINO POKER TABLES. ASK TO SEE THE TABLES. ASK WHO THE MANUFACTURER IS. THERE ARE VERY FEW MANUFACTURERS THAT ACTUALLY MAKE POKER TABLES FOR THE CASINO INDUSTRY AND THEY ARE ALL LOCATED IN THE USA.

MAKE SURE YOU ASK FOR AND THEY SEND YOU A COPY OF THEIR CERTIFICATIONS FROM THE TOURNAMENT DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION, MEMBERSHIP IN THE POKER PLAYERS ALLIANCE AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, THEIR DEALER MANUAL. MAKE SURE THEY DO NOT CHARGE BY THE HOUR. YOU WANT A TURNKEY PRICE FOR YOUR TOURNAMENT REGARDLESS OF HOW LONG IT TAKES TO FINISH.

THESE ADD-ON LABOR CHARGES CAN REALLY EAT INTO ANY PROFIT. FINALLY DO NOT ORDER ANY BLACKJACK, CRAPS, ROULETTE OR SLOT MACHINES. IF THEY DON’T AGREE TO ALL OF THIS, CHOOSE ANOTHER COMPANY. YOU HAVE FAR TOO MUCH AT RISK FOR ANY OTHER OPTION.

BONUS INSIDER TIP: Most of you reading this article are fellow fundraising professionals and even certified by the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFPnet.org). You are professionals in what you do to develop income and donations for your nonprofit organization. Why didn’t your organization simply just hire the janitor or receptionist to do this important task? Why did they hire you? Because you are an experienced professional and the nonprofit thought you were the best at what you do. Why would you employ a party vendor to run your poker fundraiser and risk alienating your donor base with a sub par event? An experienced poker tournament company is as trained and experienced at what they do as what you do. Let the janitor do what he does and let’s make your poker fundraiser be a commanding accomplishment in your endeavors and for your organization.
2. HIRING A POKER TABLE & DEALER RENTAL VENDOR THAT DOES NOT OFFER SPECIALIZED FUNDRAISING, DEVELOPMENT & MARKETING ASSISTANCE

You have the opportunity to earn hundreds of thousands of dollars with your poker event. It is absolutely critical that the company you select has the best equipment as well as extensive proven marketing plans, promotional material templates (both print and electronic brochures, registration forms, flyers, postcards, posters, invitations, thank you cards etc.) and the ability to guide your team to successfully execute a proven fundraising campaign. In addition, you need a firm that provides unlimited fundraising consulting, from the time you sign the agreement until you send the post event Thank You cards. That way your team can simply activate proven strategies, turn the donation faucet to high and keep those sponsor/donor dollars flowing, year after year.

In a recent survey of 300 Casino Night companies in Los Angeles, Dallas, New York City and Chicago, none had the ability to assist the nonprofit client with any of the following:

- Sponsorship Package Development
- VIP Ticket Pricing and Benefits
- G.A. Ticket Pricing and Benefits
- Sponsorship Sales Strategies
- Ticket Sales Strategies
- On-Line Ticketing Portal
- Advertising & Promotion Strategies
- Advertising Material Design & Development
- Event Accounting & Tracking
- Legal Compliance Food & Beverage
- Prizes & Trophies
- Sponsor Recognition

INSIDER TIP: Even though initially a full service firm may appear more expensive, they are almost always less in the long run. Remember, it’s about NET Dollars. Your organization, your sponsors and your donors deserve a quality production and full marketing/fundraising support.

I have personally contacted all of the charity poker firms (specialists) that I could find and none offer any kind of fundraising assistance, graphic design, logo development, professional promotional photos & pre-produced marketing videos, marketing consulting or any of the other elements that you MUST succeed at in order to have a highly successful fundraiser.

Re-buy & Add-on Donations…..This is another critical aspect of your event. Unfortunately, nonprofits are unaware as to how important it is that the re-buy and add-on donations be handled correctly and legally. These additional donations can result in a staggering amount of additional revenue for your organization. Ask any company that you are considering hiring, for a copy of their written policy for re-buy and add-on donations as there are also important compliance and legal issues that you need to be aware of. This cannot be left to chance, it is just as important (possibly much more important) than selling of tickets to the event. You must be able to take credit cards tableside. It is also important to be able to print a receipt for each customer quickly. Having to walk the credit card to a table because you do not have wireless credit card processing can cost you thousands. Using Square on an iPhone or iPad is not ideal as it requires the internet and does not allow you to print a receipt. Most importantly, you never want the player to leave the table. You need to go to him to collect his donation. If the player leaves the table, there is a high probability that he stops making additional donations.

I have produced charity poker tournaments where the re-buy/add-on revenue has been as much as $1.2 million in just an hour and a half! This is not a time to learn. It is not a time to leave it up to the Casino Night vendor. It’s time for an experienced team to guide your staff & volunteers in the execution of a well thought out game plan. This period of your event is the “Super Bowl of Fundraising.” Make sure that you are prepared and have selected the best company to “Win".
In addition, to proven fundraising, marketing and add-on/re-buy expertise and guidance, the firm you select should provide additional services as a part of their package. Those additional services should include:

- Development of Website Promotion & Marketing
- Integration with a Proven Online Ticketing Portal/Solution
- Staff & Volunteer Utilization and Training
- Execution of a Smooth Check-In Experience for Guests & Sponsors

Finally, hiring a full service firm can result in significant savings. Not having to use an Audio Visual (AV) company to provide the necessary sound and video display for a professional poker event (see below), can save you up to $10,000. These are the hidden costs that a Casino or Poker Rental Company will not tell you about, and if you are not experienced with poker fundraisers, you would be unaware of this important additional equipment and it would show at your event.

- Wireless Credit Card Processing with Receipt Printing in the Tournament Area (not Square etc)
- Professional Public Address (P.A.) System with Wireless and Coded Microphones
- Custom High Quality Real USA Made Casino Chips
- Multiple LCD Jumbo Large Screen Video Monitors
- Professional Tournament Clock & Tournament Management Software
- Red Carpet and Step & Repeat/Sponsors/Media Banners

In the event the company you choose does not have these abilities, your costs increase and in most cases, the ability to maximize revenue is seriously compromised.

**SOLUTION:** NEVER HIRE A COMPANY THAT IS NOT A POKER SPECIALIST. YOU SHOULD INSIST ON A COMPANY THAT IS MUCH MORE THAN JUST A TABLE & DEALER RENTAL COMPANY. YOUR SELECTION OF A HIGHLY EXPERIENCED TEAM OF FUNDRAISING EXPERTS WILL MEAN THE DIFFERENCE IN POTENTIALLY HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS.

MAKE SURE THAT YOU FIND A COMPANY THAT CAN ASSIST YOU IN THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF YOUR FUNDRAISING, SPONSORSHIP SALES, TICKET SALES AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A PROFESSIONAL TICKETING SOLUTION, CHECK IN AND THE CRITICALLY IMPORTANT RE-BUY AND ADD-ON GAMEPLAN.
3. HIRING THE “LOWEST BIDDER”

It’s unwise to pay too much, but it can be devastating to pay too little. When you pay too little, you oftentimes lose everything, because the services you purchased and the company you went with were incapable of doing everything you need to have done in order to be highly successful. The common law of business balance prohibits paying a little and getting a lot. It can’t be done.

This is particularly important with the nuances and idiosyncrasies of a first class charity poker fundraiser to be held year after year. The worst part is as a nonprofit (even an experienced fundraiser), poker is so unique that the old saying “you don’t know what you don’t know” is something that every nonprofit should keep in mind when considering a poker tournament.

I have spoken with hundreds of nonprofits who have had poker tournaments. They all had extensive fundraising experience but very little, if any, poker tournament experience. Of these, 92% of the tournaments left the nonprofit disappointed. Their complaints were ranked as follows:

1. We didn’t know what we were doing and could have raised so much more money with better guidance.
2. We did not hit our fundraising goals.
3. The Dealers were unprofessional.
4. The Poker Tables were cheap, flimsy, overcrowded and tattered/stained.
5. It was a lot of work for the little money we raised.
6. The Tournament was poorly run, mismanaged etc.
7. Our prizes were not attractive enough to draw a great turnout.
8. We were stuck with numerous “hidden” costs and fees.

Always Invest in the BEST VALUE…. Your only concern should be which producer provides the best value. This is critically important when it comes to charity poker tournaments. The difference in spending more money to ensure that your organization has ALL the tools to be highly successful pales in comparison to the additional revenue for your organization when you do it right.

This is not the time to cut corners. Hire the best and get the best results. If you were just purchasing a commodity like chairs for example; you could easily publish specifications in a request for bids and select from the lowest bidder whose product meets your specs. Running a successful charity poker event and fundraising campaign is not a commodity and you should not approach it as such.

INSIDER TIP: Professional poker dealers average $60/hr (wage + tips). That means for each table in your tournament, the dealers should earn $360 in wages (and that doesn’t include Tournament Directors, support staff, and relief dealers). Why would a professional dealer work for minimum wage? The truth is they don’t. There are 23 states in the US that have Casinos. They would simply take a full time job (+benefits) dealing poker at one of the 1507 casinos in the US. Don’t be fooled by a low bid. Again, something has to give.
Selecting the Lowest Bidder means Sacrifice. Something has got to give. Poor quality dealers & tables, understaffed tournaments and of course what nearly all producers leave out......The fundraising, sponsorship & ticket sales and marketing assistance & consulting.

It is important to keep in mind that when you decide to use a poker tournament as a fundraiser (Congratulations, you have made an excellent choice), there are many factors to consider which are affected by the critical decision of who you hire to run your event. Besides the obvious, “how much net revenue will we end up with”, there are numerous other important things to consider. Some of them include;

- The Reputation of your Organization
- Your Sponsor’s Experience and how it Impacts your ability to Retain them for Future Fundraisers, and their level of giving
- Will your decisions negatively affect your ability to sell your Sponsors into Other Events
- The Value of your Patrons having an Exceptional Experience
- The Ability to Execute a Successful Re-buy/Add-on Donation Strategy
- Will your Donors and Sponsors want to Come Back Next Year
- The Risk of Negative Social Media and Internet Comments and Reviews of your Event and Organization

SOLUTION: NEVER HIRE THE LOWEST BIDDER. EDUCATION IS THE KEY TO BEING ABLE TO WEED THROUGH THE MAZE OF MISINFORMATION; INCLUDING LOW BALL PRICING AND OUTRIGHT LIES. READING THIS GUIDE IS A GREAT WAY TO START THAT EDUCATIONAL PROCESS.

ONCE YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT TO LOOK FOR AND HOW TO “SHOP”. YOU WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE THE BEST DECISION FOR YOUR NONPROFIT. CONSULTING WITH THE INDUSTRY LEADER IS THE LOGICAL NEXT STEP.

SEE PAGE 22 FOR A SPECIAL BENEFIT EXCLUSIVELY FOR OUR GUIDE READERS.
4. NOT UNDERSTANDING HOW A PROPERLY MANAGED POKER TOURNAMENT WORKS FOR A NONPROFIT

This one is designed to teach you some of the pitfalls that you probably do not know about and what to do about them. If you are like more than 90% of the clients I work with, you have little or no knowledge of how to execute a professionally run poker tournament let alone a top flight charity poker tournament.

A Charity Poker Tournament is very complex. Unlike a golf tournament, most players take the event very seriously. This is where many nonprofits make additional serious mistakes. It’s understandable, when you do not have the training and experience, no one can expect you to know all the details. That’s where hiring a firm that does makes all the difference in the world, a difference that is almost always reflected in the bottom line.

INSIDER TIP: These are some of the details that trip up all but the most experienced poker tournament producers. Don’t leave the success of your fundraising event to chance.

Legality: You must have competent legal counsel. In many states, gambling is illegal. You must make sure that your event is not violating any laws. The problem here is that there are very few Attorneys that are experts in gaming law. Most do not understand what even constitutes gambling. A call or email to the District Attorney, States Attorney or Attorney General is equally frustrating as most will tell you that holding a poker tournament is illegal. This is not true. It’s Illegal Gambling that is against the law.

Poker is legal in every state in the United States and throughout Canada. You just have to have the correct structure. We protect our clients by having a dedicated legal team of expert gambling law attorneys that have thoroughly researched the laws in all 50 states and assisted us in the development of a non-gambling structure that is used in any state where gambling is illegal. The structure has been approved and is legal in all 50 states and Canada. We guarantee 100% compliance with all state gaming laws.

Make sure that any firm that you engage has done the same. Most will take a “hey we didn’t have a problem before” attitude. This is the last thing that you want to do. Your reputation is on the line. Falling into the grey area is another no-no. You must clearly be on the correct side of the law.

To violate the law could put an organization’s nonprofit status at risk. The laws in Texas are quite similar to those in most other states that do not allow gambling. In Texas and most other states even most casino nights are illegal. In most cases, awarding raffle tickets as a result of casino night “wins” and then drawing for prizes is illegal gambling. Of course the casino night companies won’t tell you this.

Event Structure: It is important that you are able to look at the entire event structure. Load in, set up, check-in, food & beverage, seating, any informational program (speakers), red carpet, poker tournament, final table and many more things need to be taken into account. Many “event planners” are great at galas, banquets and the like, but fall short when it comes to a poker tournament. You need to make the poker tournament the number one priority and ask yourself with every decision you are faced with; “What would be best for the tournament?” Having a poker expert can be very helpful to make sure that these goals are achieved and that your players and sponsors have a great time.
Basic Texas Hold’em Poker: Texas Hold’em Poker is a community card game. One player acts as dealer. This position is called the button and it rotates clockwise after every hand. The two players to the left of the dealer are called the small blind and the big blind, respectively. These two positions require forced bets of a pre-determined amount and are the only players to put money in the pot before the cards are dealt. Every player then receives two cards face down. These are called “hole cards.”

Once all hole cards have been dealt, the first betting round begins with the player sitting immediately to the left of the big blind. This player can fold, call (match the amount of the big blind) or raise. Betting then continues clockwise, with each player having the option to fold, call the amount of the highest bet before them, bet or raise. When the first betting round is completed, three community cards are flipped face up on the table. This is called the flop. The second round of betting begins with the first remaining player seated to the left of the button. The betting resumes, clockwise, with each player having the option to check (if no bet in front of them), bet (or raise if a bet before them), call or fold. When the second round of betting is finished, a fourth community card is flipped face up on the table. This is called the turn. The third round of betting commences with the first remaining player sitting to the left of the button. When the third round of betting is over, a fifth community card is flipped face up on the table. This is called the river. The fourth round of betting starts with the first remaining player seated to the left of the button. The betting continues to move clockwise.

Tournament Structure: The structure of the tournament is foreign to all but tournament poker players. The structure consists of rounds and blinds. Rounds need no explanation other than they are a set period of time (round 1, round 2 etc.). Blinds are forced bets placed by two players prior to each hand. They are designed to keep the action moving and build the “pot”. In a poker tournament, the blinds increase each round to force players to play. If they do not, they will eventually lose all their chips without playing a single hand. The increasing blind structure is also the mechanism to make sure that the tournament will end. The blind structure combined with the round structure results in the overall tournament structure. It is paramount that you have a charity poker expert formulate your blind structure. Failure to do so can result in many perils including; too long a tournament, too short a tournament, player complaints, additional dealer/staffing costs if paying by the hour, limited re-buy opportunity, disappointing add-on revenue, time requirement regulations (in some states) and in general the perception of a poorly run event.

Aces & Angels structures have been developed through consultation with Tournament Director’s Association founder, current World Poker Tour and former World Series of Poker Tournament Director and the premier Tournament Director in the world, Matt Savage (http://www.pokertda.com/about-the-poker-tda/meet-the-board/matt-savage/), Former World Series of Poker Tournament Director, Robert Daily (http://www.linkedin.com/in/robertdaily), and current World Series of Poker Dealer Trainer and Tournament Director, Mike Bujanowski (http://www.linkedin.com/pub/michael-bujanowski/65/b2/538) along with Tournament Directors Association certified Tournament Director and CEO of Aces & Angels, Michael Eakman.

The proprietary Aces & Angels structures are specifically designed for charity poker tournaments to give players the best experience while limiting the length of the tournament no more than six hours. Aces & Angels has a proprietary sophisticated computer program that it has developed
that tracks the number of players, number of re-buys and add-ons as well as the time frame and gives our Tournament Directors real time information that they use to adjust the tournament on the fly to ensure that the event meets the objectives as to a quality player experience and a reasonable length of the tournament.

Tournament Management: Once again, this is critical for several reasons including; ensuring that you raise the maximum revenue from your donors/players through re-buy and add-on donations (see glossary at end), constantly monitoring legal compliance, and guaranteeing a quality poker tournament experience. This cannot be overlooked, yet almost always, unaware nonprofits who select casino night companies are unwitting collaborators in sabotaging their own event just because they do not know what questions to ask, what standards should be adhered to and what ongoing compliance issues must be monitored. This is another reason you should hire the most experienced firm that you can. Your reputation is on the line. This is not a time to cut corners.

This is only a small fraction of the production details that need to be taken care of. Casino night companies and most poker companies, for the most part, set up tables, bring dealers and deal cards. The rest is up to you.

SOLUTION: IT’S TRUE, YOU DO GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR. YOUR REPUTATION IS AT STAKE. MAKE SURE THAT THE COMPANY YOU CONTRACT WITH IS NOT MISREPRESENTING THE QUALITY OR QUANTITY OF THEIR EQUIPMENT, OR THEIR PROFESSIONAL CAPABILITIES WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR EVENT. THIS IS NOT A BAR MITZVAH OR CORPORATE EVENT.

IF YOU WANT TO GROW YOUR POKER FUNDRAISER, YOU MUST TREAT IT AS A PROFESSIONAL POKER TOURNAMENT WHERE PLAYERS AND SPONSORS ARE EXCITED ABOUT COMING BACK NEXT YEAR. THAT’S HOW YOU GROW YOUR EVENT INTO AN OUTSTANDING FUNDRAISER.
5. FORGETTING ABOUT THE DETAILS OR NOT KNOWING WHAT THE DETAILS EVEN ARE UNTIL IT’S TOO LATE

When the idea of hosting a charity poker tournament is discussed, often a quick call is made to a local casino-night vendor to inquire about some basic costs. This allows your event committee some facts so a formula can be projected on costs versus expected revenue. Often times when lecturers or speakers are selected to become the focal point of a fundraising event.... Everyone concentrates on the right lecturer or speaker for the event and only discovers the true and total cost of that lecturer or speaker after the committee has spent time planning the event around that guest. Similarly, the concept of a poker tournament is met with the same approach and this often sets you on the road to potential disaster.

INSIDER TIP: Information is out there. Poker and Fundraising Experts do exist. Make sure that you take advantage of our complimentary consultation with Michael Eakman. Details are at the end of this report.

During that first phone call to the local casino-night vendor, he knows the first contact is crucial for selling the deal. He will say yes to just about everything, including tossing in extra things you don’t need, but manipulate you into being stuck with him. For example, he will offer the Blackjack tables, Craps tables and Roulette table for free. He understands that if he can sway you toward the “Las Vegas-Night” or the “Monte Carlo Night” type event, he has a much better chance of trapping you for his services. Once your committee is enticed by the free bling, your poker tournament is headed for mediocrity at best.

If you are serious about making serious fundraising revenue, be serious in doing your homework, and reach out to actual poker tournament vendors. Investigate their websites and read every screen, every tab and every picture to see what is really there.

Did you notice that all the pictures looked like they were taken at the same event? Did you see how their hiring policy for new dealers did not require any experience and they would offer basic skills training? Any pictures of players cramped around small poker tables on their website? Perhaps you noticed there was little mention, explanation or guidance on hosting poker tournaments on their website, but craps, roulette and blackjack photos abound. Finally, did they offer to help market and sell your event to the public?

The details of hosting a poker event are important in that you shouldn’t have to read the latest Attorney General’s findings on the legality of charity poker in your state, nor the way the game may be tailored to meet local and state gaming regulations. Understanding the complexities and idiosyncrasy of buy-ins, re-buys, add-ons, blinds, play time milestones and poker rules should not keep you up at night. Just as worrying about how to maximize capturing donations at your event with the latest technology, player protocols and engaging environmental conditions should not take away from your daily work. This is all your vendor’s responsibility. He’s the expert.

Finally, read the fine print on your contract. Did you sell yourself on your vendor with his platitudes and promises, or did he sell you with proof that he knows what he is doing, will help you maximize your success and is interested in being there for you as much after the event, as before the game even started.

SOLUTION: DON’T GET MISLED BY YOUR VENDOR. KEEP IN MIND, IT’S ABOUT FOUR THINGS.

1. NET DOLLARS – INVESTING IN A HIGH QUALITY, TURNKEY PRODUCTION CAN NET SIGNIFICANTLY MORE NET DOLLARS THAN A LOW BUDGET EXPERIENCE. WOULDN’T YOU RATHER EARN A PROFIT OF OVER $100,000?

2. YOUR REPUTATION – YOU CANNOT RISK HAVING YOUR REPUTATION DAMAGED BY MAKING A BAD DECISION ON WHOM TO HIRE.

3. THE ABILITY TO GET YOUR PLAYERS AND SPONSORS TO COME BACK NEXT YEAR – IF YOU WANT TO GET THEM BACK YOU HAVE TO HAVE A HIGH CALIBER PRODUCTION. ANYTHING LESS WILL LEAD TO DECLINING ATTENDANCE, FUNDRAISING DIFFICULTIES AND ULTIMATELY A RE-EVALUATION OF WHETHER POKER IS RIGHT FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION. IT’S NOT THAT POKER IS WRONG – IT WAS JUST THE RESULT OF BAD DECISIONS.

4. THE ABILITY TO GROW YOUR EVENT YEAR AFTER YEAR. – THIS IS WHERE THE RUBBER HITS THE ROAD. IT’S WHERE YOU TAKE A $100K NET EVENT AND TURN IT INTO $200K FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION IN YEAR TWO. BY YEAR FIVE, IT’S THE BIGGEST POKER TOURNAMENT IN THE REGION AND YOU NET OVER $500K. IT’S ALL ABOUT STANDARDS, EXPERIENCE AND PROVEN FUNDRAISING STRATEGIES.

DON’T MISS ”THE INSIDE STRAIGHT” ON THE NEXT PAGE - LEARN WHAT THOSE TERMS MEAN INCLUDES MORE INSIDER TIPS

ALSO MAKE SURE TO CHECK PAGE 23 FOR A SPECIAL BONUS FOR YOU
When searching through “Poker” vendors or “Party Supply” companies, you may be barraged with terms and words that sound impressive. Here are the real definitions and an explanation of what the talk is all about. Take a moment and familiarize yourself with these common terms and concepts that casino night and poker companies use. It will help you make an educated decision as to which firm is best for your organization.

Custom Made Casino Tables: With some particle board, felt and padding, anyone can make a “custom” card table. The casino industry has extensive research in the ergonomic design and comfort of tables and nationally-recognized and licensed gaming equipment manufacturers build to these specifications. Casino table manufacturers include companies like; 916 Poker Depot (www.916PokerDepot.com), Nationwide Gaming Supply (http://nationwidegaming.us), Rye Park Poker (http://www.ryeparkpoker.com/) and a handful of others. Take a close look at any of these sites and you will quickly see that the claim of “Casino Quality” is often quite a stretch of the truth. Real casino tables are heavy weighing at least 150 lbs. each. Our trucks have 21 tables aboard. The total weight of the tables for an Aces & Angels production is 3500 lbs. almost two tons! Heck we carry over 900 lbs of chips!

One just has to know what to look for to realize that the companies claiming to have casino quality tables are more than likely not telling the truth. The truth is, most of these casino night companies do many parties, corporate events, bar mitzvahs, weddings and the like. Their tables are made to transport easily (oftentimes in the case of poker they fold in half – no casino table tops fold in half). From the size to the quality of the felt, the quality of the rail, the inclusion or exclusion of a dealer area etc. They are not casino quality. Just compare the areas mentioned above and you will quickly agree. They all look great in the photos, until you know what to look for. It does make you wonder why they would purposely mislead their potential customers.

916 Poker Depot is the exclusive supplier of poker tables for Aces & Angels. Aces & Angels refurbishes each and every poker table once a year at the 916 manufacturing facility in Folsom, CA. It takes nearly two weeks to ensure that each table goes back out the door in pristine condition. Feel free to contact Mr. Eric Cieri, 916 Poker Depot Founder and CEO at (800) 795-7089 and ask him about Aces & Angels and the quality of the 916 product.
“Friendliest” Casino Dealers: Except for those milling around a craps or roulette table, players are there to play, not schmooze with the dealer, and the dealer should be experienced enough to know when to talk, when to listen and when to deal. He has a game to manage and his players are interested in winning, not what the weather is or what was on TV last night. This is also parlayed by many websites featuring attractive model dealers who never seem to make it to your event. Dealers should all be professionally trained at one of the approved casino dealer schools that specializes in poker. In addition, the best companies only hire dealers with major tournament experience. That would be the World Series of Poker, the World Poker Tour, WSOP Circuit Events, or other large multiple event tournament series such as those at the Commerce and Bicycle Casinos in Los Angeles or any of the major casinos in Las Vegas or Atlantic City (not the occasional dealer that may have a little time at the majors).

KEM Cards: For 70 years, KEM cards ruled the plastic playing card industry. The company experienced great success through the 1950s and 60s. Then, in 2004, after many years of success, KEM cards went out of business and sold their plants and copyrighted artwork to the US Playing Card Company. This historic corporate purchase left the industry with a shortage of plastic playing cards. Finally, after almost two years of silence, the presses once again began churning and the US Playing Card Company began re-releasing KEM’s vintage Arrow and Paisley designs.

Although many casino night and poker companies claim that KEM is the official playing card of the World Series of Poker, that is simply not the case. The US Playing Card Company is the official card supplier to the WSOP. The cards used, since 2009 are Bicycle Branded WSOP acetate cards (I assume using the KEM technology they acquired). They are not KEM branded. The US Playing Card Company is an Official Sponsor & Supplier to Aces & Angels. No other casino night and poker company can make that claim.

Funny Money / Vouchers: These are used when the few donors you invited mill around the mini-sized craps, roulette and blackjack tables (remember, we suggest that you do not have any games besides poker). For legitimate gaming regulations, funny money, like in Monopoly, is a way to track play without exchanging actual money. Unfortunately, like in monopoly, it feels the same and your donors abandon these events quickly. Note the website pictures of empty blackjack, craps and roulette tables. You cannot raise much real money if it’s all funny money. You need expert legal advice from an experienced poker specialist or even with funny money, you risk breaking the law.

11.5 Gram Casino Style Poker Chips: This is an outright lie and another one of the “Dirty Little Secrets”. You see 11.5 gram chips touted as if it is something good or what the casinos use. Unfortunately, this is where those without extensive poker experience get tripped up. In reality, these chips are cheap, imported Chinese plastic poker chips with a metal “slug” inside to give them weight. It’s funny how often you see the words “real casino chip weight of 11.5 grams” in the ads for both casino night companies and poker specialty companies. A real casino chip is what you would find on a live table game found in a real casino. Chip manufacturers are licensed by Gaming Control Boards in each state or province that has gaming. See Ceramic/Clay Chips: below for more information on chips.
Aces & Angels poker chips are custom made ceramic chips made by Nevada Jacks in California. They are an Official Sponsor of Aces & Angels. Visit their website for information: http://www.customizedpokerchips.com/

None of the licensed companies have an 11.5 gram chip. All of them either have a 9 gram, 9.5 gram or 10 gram chip. 11.5 gram chips no longer exist in casinos. For that matter you won’t find a 13 gram or 16 gram chip either. If you want a chip that has the true weight of a real casino chip than you need to stay away from these heavier chips.

After all, most of them are just plastic molded around a metal washer to give it some weight anyway. A slug filled chip is just not a quality chip. It’s just another way that casino night companies try to pass off inferior imported equipment as “the Real Vegas Experience” or “Casino Quality”. If they are lying about something as insignificant as the chips, what could they possibly be telling the truth about?


**Blind Schedules/Structure:** The structure of the tournament is foreign to all but tournament poker players. The structure consists of rounds and blinds. Rounds need no explanation other than they are a set period of time (round 1, round 2 etc.). Blinds are forced bets placed by two players prior to each hand. They are designed to keep the action moving and build the “pot”. In a poker tournament, the blinds increase each round to force players to play. If they do not, they will eventually lose all their chips without playing a single hand. The increasing blind structure is also the mechanism to make sure that the tournament will end. The blind structure combined with the round structure results in the overall tournament structure.

**Tournament Clock:** The software that manages the tournament. Professional poker tournament management software that gives both the tournament staff and players important information on the tournament. Information includes; round number, blind levels, time left in the round/level, when is the next break and often additional information. The important thing here is that the vendor have professional tournament clock software and that they know how to use it combined with the absolute requirement that all players be able to see the information on the “clock” which is really a projected computer screen or a large screen video monitor devoted exclusively to displaying the tournament information.

**Player Seating Schedule:** This should be handled by random draw of table seating cards at check in. Not in advance. This helps prevent collusion amongst players who know each other and random seating which leads to a fair tournament for all.

**Buy-Ins:** An important element for legal consideration. Nonprofits need expert consultation on whether or not they can have a buy-on for a charity poker tournament. In most states that do not allow gambling, you cannot have a buy-in and a prize. Obviously you cannot raise an impressive amount of revenue without this important piece of the fundraising pie. Aces & Angels are experts at legal issues when it comes to poker events. We have legal strategies that
are approved in all 50 states including several approved strategies for capturing this lucrative revenue without risking running afoul with the law.

**Re-Buys/Add-ons:** This is where it is at. Non poker players have no idea that these elements are what make successful charity poker events shine. We have produced charity poker events where the re-buy and add-ons earn as much as $1.2 million in an hour and a half! At Aces & Angels we average 2.3 Re-buys/Add-ons per players. Typically re-buys and add-ons are half the price of the event entry. So it’s like doubling your revenue, instantly! Re-buy and Add-on revenue is 100% expense free and goes directly to the net profit column of the event financials. But...not so fast. It is important that the company you select is highly experienced with executing a well planned Re-buy/Add-on strategy.

Wireless credit card processing with receipt printing, proper staffing and a smooth, efficient system all combined with just the right blind structure and a Tournament Director/Emcee who is highly experienced in the art of creating a flurry of re-buy donors. Maximizing add-on revenue is a result of the ability to present a good value and a great reason to donate again and receive additional chips. If this formula is even slightly off, the nonprofit can expect disappointing results.

Another critical aspect of the Re-buy/Add-on puzzle is compliance. Again, it is important that you execute a legally acceptable strategy when collecting re-buy and add-on donations. Our team ensures compliance and protects your reputation and nonprofit status.

**Floor Planner/Room Planning:** This service should be performed by your Event Director after discussing the physical features of your venue and the plan for your event so as to maximize excitement, prevent overcrowding at tables, and allow players to monitor the Tournament Clock... all within your venue. The number one priority of the floor plan is based around the poker tournament. It must enhance the poker experience and contribute to the overall successful execution of the fundraising gameplan. Food & Beverage, Auction space, etc. all take a back seat to this important design element.

**Satisfied Clients / Testimonials:** Vendors should provide a list of full-named clients and references with whom you should be able to contact, not just logos of companies which may or may not have been “satisfied”. Do the testimonials relate to your concerns or do they more often than not, discuss how “friendly” a particular dealer was? Apparently the dealer did more talking than dealing and it may have cost you.

**Photo Gallery:** This should be a presentation with captions of multiple past events the VENDOR hosted, and not borrowed photos of the WPT, WSOP or events from other vendors’ websites. Are all the photos strikingly similar or from the same event? Many franchised vendors share the same photos on their websites from city to city and state to state.

**WSOP:** The grand-daddy of all poker tournaments, the World Series of Poker takes place each year at the Rio Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas. The event consists of 62 events culminating in the Main Event where over 7,000 entrants will pony up the $10,000 entry fee. According to CardPlayer Magazine (another Aces & Angels Sponsor), the total WSOP Prize Pool was a staggering $222,035,192. The
prize pool for the Main Event’s 6,598 players was $62,021,200 and the winner, American Greg Merson walked away with $8,527,982.

Aces & Angels has a unique relationship with the World Series of Poker and Caesar’s Entertainment, the gaming giant that owns the WSOP. Aces & Angels produces the World Series of Poker in Los Angeles, the richest charity poker event in the world.

WPT: The World Poker Tour (WPT) is one of the most recognized names in poker. Launched in 2002, the WPT’s events are featured on FSN in the United States and broadcast globally to over 150 countries. WPT’s unique television show is based on a series of high stakes poker tournaments.

Aces & Angels has a unique relationship with the WPT, with several projects under consideration including a four event Celebrity Poker series for the World Poker Tour Foundation. WPT commentator Vince Van Patten hosted the high profile Aces & Angels event in Beverly Hills along with Kim Kardashian.

Casino Poker Tables: Measuring over 8 feet long and more than 4 feet across, a truly quality poker table can accommodate 10 players and has a well and center seat for the dealer. Tables have thick upholstered cushioning around the edge of the table and plenty of leg space without large pedestals. Casino tables rarely have drink holders as poker players focus on playing, not drinking. When looking at websites, do they show a fully seated poker table, or are they snapshots of a few pretty faces and a dealer? Try and determine the number of people and their comfort when sitting at their poker tables. Like any endeavor, if you are not comfortable or have to squeeze in to play, you will probably not play for long – therefore spend less.

Full Party Planning Services: Your definition of “full party planning services” and that of your vendor is the key to understanding the difference in success or failure. Full party planning services would assume they include; custom designed marketing materials, website design and ticket sales tracking, marketing consulting and local customer searches, event planning, management and production, and so forth. Or, are they just talking about…. tables, dealers, beverage servers, streamers & posters, chips and how to play the game?

Quantity of Dealers Needed: If you are expecting 200 poker players, with a full-sized poker table, you would need twenty tables. However, you would need approximately 25 dealers on hand. You wouldn’t want your tournament to be on hold while someone scurries to the restroom! As the night draws down, so do the number of dealers. Is your vendor pricing the dealers by the hour for each hour of the event, whether dealers are manning a table or not?

All Aces & Angels events include full dealer coverage for the length of your tournament. You will never get an overtime charge period and we can host up to 200 in a single event.

We can accommodate up to 600 players in a single day by adding additional “round ones” – just ask for details.

Quality Dealers: Within moments you can tell the difference between an experienced and trained professional poker dealer or a party blackjack dealer that doubles as a poker dealer when the
casino night company is called upon to provide a poker tournament. The dealers set the pace, quality and excitement at each table. A good dealer will keep the players happy which in turn, keeps them exciting and donating to your cause.

All Aces & Angels Dealers are professionally trained with major tournament experience. They are not blackjack dealers one night and poker dealers the next.

**Dealer Employment Opportunities:** Websites often expose the dirty secret of how they obtain dealers to work your event. Rarely do they refine their offers to only Dealer School trained and experienced professionals. Most often they seek “friendly” people with basic card handling experience. This is a recipe for disaster.

**Poker’s Legality in Your Area:** Recently the federal courts have ruled that poker is a game of skills, not chance. However, to assure you that your state, county and local laws are abided by, the poker tournament setup must pass several tests for nonprofits. Trouble comes into events when a “Casino Night”, “Monte Carlo Night” or “Las Vegas Night” operation tries to reach beyond their scope for the big bucks of hosting a poker tournament. Ask your vendor about this.

**Quantity of Poker Tables:** Again, this references the number of players that comfortably fit around the poker table, impacting your cost for dealers. If the table adequately fits eight or can squeeze in a ninth player, then you will need more tables, more space, more dealers – and pay more. An additional note of concern is if you OVERSELL your event and players bring friends and co-workers. Sounds like a winning situation!

Do you have the tables (and dealers for that matter) on hand? Is there a backup plan to allow more players to attend? Again, this is where your preplanning with your Event Director is critical and factors in the quality table. Many vendors boast offering as many as 2 to 200 poker tables. Really? Most high-quality casinos featuring half a dozen poker tournaments a day don’t even have more than 12 tables. Look out for the lies and exaggerations.

**Ceramic/Clay Chips:** Another cover for cheap imported Chinese chips. The company that made ceramic chips for the Palms in Las Vegas, Chipco is now out of business. The other manufacturers that make real clay chips only make them for casinos. These are both buzzwords and simply a way to mask that the chips really are plastic. Most are not ceramic and they are definitely not clay. Still not sure why casino night and poker companies deceive their customers with these terms.

A true clay chip, like those used in all major Las Vegas casinos (except the Palms which still uses Chipco) will actually snap in half if you try hard enough. Ask any vendor claiming clay chips to send you one or better yet, have them bring you one and then tell them that clay chips snap in half and ask them to do that. Truth is, the chips are plastic and will not snap into two pieces. See **11.5 Gram Casino Style Poker Chips** above for more information on chips.

Aces & Angels poker chips are custom made real ceramic chips made by Nevada Jacks in California. They are an Official Sponsor of Aces & Angels. Visit their website for information: [http://www.customizedpokerchips.com/](http://www.customizedpokerchips.com/)
Texas Hold’em Poker: If you are to host a real poker tournament, it will be a Texas Hold’em Poker tournament. Games like Omaha, Seven Card, Five Card, Horse, Razz and Badugi may be interesting at a campsite, but for real, paying poker players – Texas Hold’em is the game that tournaments thrive on. Don’t settle for anything else, or you have dealt yourself a fundraising looser.

Dealer Buttons: In poker, the puck or dealer button is a marker used to indicate who would act last. The term button is used to identify a variety of plastic discs to show the status of players.

PA System Rentals: A good tournament requires a good working Public Address (PA) system to run the event. The tournament room is noisy and has hundreds of players actively involved - so barking out orders and time milestones will not suffice. Any good poker tournament vendor supplies a state-of-the-art PA system with large screen monitors for tournament play and software. Do not pay separately for something that should be part of the package!

Tear Down/Set Up Services: The activity surrounding the delivery and setup of the poker tables and related equipment, and after the event, then repacking the equipment and leaving the venue - should always be part of the vendors effort, without any additional charges.

What is the Budget for the Event: This is the first question a car salesman asks, beware! What difference does it make? Once you relinquish this information, you will never be able to pay the appropriate price for the services rendered. Your budget is made up of many moving parts – sponsorships, ticket sales, additional revenue streams. When someone asks this question, run.

--- SPECIAL BONUS ---

I hope that you have found this report informative and that you are able to apply the principals that are contained within it, regardless of whether you select our firm or not to assist your organization in making the best decisions when it comes to a charity poker tournament. Charity poker tournaments are excellent long term fundraising vehicles and should be a part of all nonprofit organization’s fundraising efforts.

I offer each and every reader of this report, a complimentary one hour consultation. This is whether you are considering using our firm or not. Simply contact our office and mention that you would like your complimentary consultation.

Michael Eakman  
President & CEO  
Aces & Angels, LLC  

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www.Aces-Angels.com
Ace & Angels, LLC., is a highly experienced, celebrity & poker fundraising firm based in Las Vegas, Nevada. Aces & Angels events have been featured on numerous television shows including the Aces & Angels episodes of *Gene Simmons Family Jewels* and *Shipping Wars*, both on the A&E Network and seen around the world in 86 countries. Aces & Angels produced events receive tremendous media coverage including features on *Entertainment Tonight*, *Access Hollywood* and *Extra* as well as exposure on the ABC, CBS, NBC and FOX national networks, ESPN, FOX Sports and many more. **Aces & Angels has over 30 years of experience in celebrity fundraising, celebrity golf and poker event production and marketing.**

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