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Auctioneer's chant motivates and captivates

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The mystique of an auctioneer is one of fast-talking and repetitive numbers bellowing through the air as the mood builds to a beautiful crescendo.

The auctioneer's chant, however, is much more than simply a time-honored institution in the industry, according to Mike Jones, CAI, BAS, GPPA, president of United Country Auction Services.

"The auctioneer's chant serves different purposes," Jones said. "You want to accelerate the process of the sale. It's a melodic, rhythmic process. It's a way to create an event that also creates excitement."

Barrett-Jackson automobile auctioneer and 2011 International Auctioneer Champion in the men's division, Joseph Mast, CAI, said the auction chant creates an exciting atmosphere that differentiates the process from other forms of selling commodities.

"The main purpose is to create an open place to make the process exciting and smooth," Mast said. "It gives them a vehicle to purchase something without negotiating a price one-on-one. It makes it an event."

The auctioneer's chant is a very methodical and much rehearsed skill. Jones said the chant includes multiple components, each serving an important function that informs and

entertains the audience. First, the auctioneer uses language and words to motivate a person to bid.

"At the end of the day, we use phrases to encourage the buyers to bid," Jones said. "We let them know that if they're planning on bidding, they need to act now. They've had their due diligence period – they need to bid now."

During the chant, the auctioneer states two numbers in each sequence, Mast said. The first number indicates what the current price of an item is, while the second number asks if anyone is willing to pay more. These numbers are critical, indicating where the auction will begin and where it will end. The distance between the two numbers usually remains a fixed increment throughout the auction.

For example, in a real estate auction, the auctioneer will state a starting bid of \$100,000. After someone bids that price, the auctioneer will increase the asking price by increments of \$10,000 until no one is willing to match the bid. The person willing to pay the highest price wins the property.

The other words in the chant are filler phrases, Mast said. Filler words help keep the momentum going for the auctioneer and bring an appealing rhythm to the chant.

Jones said when he and his instructors introduce the bid call in class, they stress clar-

ity. Auction schools are important to helping up-and-coming auctioneers become comfortable with the bid call and learn the many other facets of the auction industry.

"We teach them to keep it simple," said Jones, who is also the president of the Texas Auction Academy. "I tell them to keep it at: 'bid,' 'dollar' and 'now.'"

Camille Booker, CAI, CES, 2011 International Auctioneer Champion in the women's division, comes from a family of auctioneers. She said she developed her chant by listening to her father and two uncles growing up.

"My chant is based on the three of them," Booker said. "It's difficult in a male-dominated industry. I didn't want it to sound too high pitched, so I really had to practice to make it effective."

Booker said despite her recent recognition as the International Auctioneer Champion, her chant is constantly in a state of evolution.

"I'm always tweaking my rhythm and making sure my numbers roll a bit better," Booker said. "I'm also constantly increasing my product knowledge and how to better interact with the audience."

To learn more about the art of the bid call and becoming an auctioneer, visit auctionanswers.com.