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Sponsorship

Businesses want to ensure maximum return is obtained for every dollar spent.

All businesses closely examine their costs and return on investments, particularly marketing and sponsorship budgets.

If approaching businesses for sponsorship, address 'what's in it for them' so sponsors get value for their investment.

Recognise the days of business (and government funding agencies) giving financial assistance simply as a goodwill gesture are gone, and competition for sponsorship is strong.

When approaching potential sponsors:

- allow sufficient lead time prior to the event for applications to be given adequate consideration,
- always present professionally with easy to read, clear, succinct information about the event, its aims, objectives, target audience and proposed marketing channels,
- articulate how sponsorship will work for their business and what you are asking of them,
- present a sponsorship application that gives the sponsor value for money,
- present exact details of what benefits will be provided to the sponsor if they agree to your proposal.

If you receive sponsorship, stay in frequent contact with the sponsor to build goodwill and deliver all the agreed sponsorship rights.

Sponsorship plan

Approach sponsorship in a planned and methodical way.

Strategic, organised and carefully considered applications have a greater chance of success than those that are haphazard and ad-hoc.

As a starting point, prepare a draft sponsorship plan before submitting any requests. For context, prepare the event marketing plan prior to developing the sponsorship plan.

In formulating a sponsorship plan, address the following:

- how will sponsorship assist the sponsor with their own marketing and business goals,
- what sponsorship benefits can you offer and confidently deliver:
 - naming rights,
 - tickets and accreditation,
 - signage,
 - hospitality,
 - invitations to official events,
 - speaking opportunities,
 - medal or prize presenting opportunities,
 - on-site product activation opportunities,
 - 'money can't buy' opportunities.

• which organisations could provide sponsorship:

- local,
- regional,
- state,
- national.

• what type of sponsorship is needed:

- cash,
- value-in-kind,
- other assistance.

• is there a conflict of interest between the event's objective(s) and the sponsor and its products?

• will there be a conflict of interest or ambush marketing potential if more than one major sponsor is involved?

• for annual events, could sponsorship be secured over multiple years?

With these points in mind, the following methods could be adopted when seeking sponsorship.

Approach sponsorship in a planned and methodical way.



Sponsorship submission guidelines

1. Submit sponsorship applications well in advance of the event

Give sponsors ample time to consider applications. Set a timeframe for the preparation and submission of applications and allocate these responsibilities.

Check the format the potential sponsor would like to receive the application (i.e. electronically, hard copy or personal presentation).

2. Ensure the sponsor's products/ services and ethos are compatible with the event

Identify appropriate sponsors but make sure they are suitable. For example, don't approach a brewery or gambling company to sponsor a junior sport event.

3. Be realistic with your request

A sponsor's product may be much easier to obtain than cash. Depending on the products, this could help to offset costs (e.g. printing, website hosting, vehicles, laptops).

4. Gain an understanding of sponsor expectations

Select potential sponsors and find out what they expect in the submission and the benefits they require.

5. Target applications to the relevant decision-maker

In doing sponsor research, identify the right person to whom the application should be directed. Simply sending the document to the sponsor in general could mean the application takes some time to reach the appropriate decision-maker or (worse) is ignored.

6. Approaching competitive sponsors

If an approach is to be made to competitive companies (e.g. airlines, food and beverage, telcos), submit the sponsorship request to one company only and make this clear in the application.

If this application is unsuccessful, only then send an application to a competitor.

7. Ensure the application creates a professional impression

The submission should be professional in every way - well written and typed with good page layout, and professionally presented to the potential sponsor.

Never rely on computer spell-checkers for spelling accuracy. Ensure different people read the application to check for errors prior to submission.

8. Prepare a sponsorship submission

Submission content will vary according to the type of event but should include:

- event aims and objectives,
- organising committee expertise and experience and (if a regular event) information on past events, media clips, testimonials etc.,
- event dates, location and venue(s),
- organising committee contact name, address, telephone number, email, website and social media accounts,
- sponsorship requested (i.e. cash and/or VIK) and over what period,
- how the sponsorship will be used,
- how sponsorship will benefit the sponsor's business,
- event-related sponsor benefits to be provided.

Ensure any proposed major or naming rights sponsor is offered the greatest benefit. Make every effort to give equivalent monetary value for the benefits given. Most large sponsors will look for an indication of the sponsorship's worth.

Clearly state sponsor entitlements. For events with a sponsor hierarchy, avoid situations where one sponsor could 'take over' an event with signage saturation and other forms of advertising, resulting in a negative backlash from other sponsors, the community and local businesses.

9. Written confirmation of sponsorship commitment

Always get written confirmation of sponsorship commitments.

For large events, create a sponsorship agreement that lists the sponsorship benefits to be delivered and the sponsorship amount in either cash or in-kind.

For smaller sponsorships, an agreement via email that is confirmed by both parties may suffice.

10. Encourage loyalty/allegiance to the sponsor(s)

Encourage organising committee and/or club members' loyalty to sponsors in their day-to-day purchases. Stress the importance of allegiance to sponsors in building a strong event/sponsor relationship.

11. Maintain effective communication with sponsors

Once sponsorship has been secured, ensure good communication throughout the event cycle. Keep sponsors informed of any media and other opportunities to activate and promote their products/brands.

12. Take advantage of every opportunity to 'plug' sponsors

Make every effort to give maximum publicity to sponsors in pre-event social media posts, media releases and interviews. If television interviews are involved, wear sponsor T-shirts or caps (if supplied).

13. Deliver agreed benefits

Standing by commitments to sponsors and giving recognition wherever and whenever possible are the keys to building a foundation for future sponsorship.

Ensure every benefit agreed to in the sponsorship application is delivered. If possible, under-promise and over-deliver.

There is a cost in 'servicing' sponsors so ensure it is budgeted.

14. Manage organising committee changes

If organising committee changes occur leading up to the event (i.e. election of a new committee or members), ensure new members are fully briefed on sponsorship agreements.

A new committee should contact sponsors as soon as possible.

15. Post-event sponsor reports

Prepare a comprehensive, professionally presented post-event report for your sponsors.

Apart from courtesy, it is important to strengthen ties with sponsors to gain support for future events.

Sponsor reports should include a letter of appreciation and:

- review of the event and the level of success achieved,
- how the sponsorship contributed to the event's success,
- benefits delivered for the sponsor,
- event photographs, particularly showing sponsor recognition and product activation,
- copies of media and social items,
- copies of printed collateral and other material (e.g. programs, posters, advertisements).

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