

## Sponsorship: An Overview

### Step 1 – What is the offer to a Sponsor?

Before you can approach a potential sponsor with a proposal, you must understand what you have to offer. This will help you clarify what types of organisations to target.

Understanding what you have to offer can be broken down into four areas:

1. Your personal attributes and skills - What can you bring to the table that will be of value to the sponsor? This could include social media skills, ability to talk in public, a knack for writing press releases, specific sales and marketing skills or a unique and marketable 'look'
2. Your target audience – Do you have a good grasp of who your target audience is and how they overlap with the sponsor's target audience? Take the time to get to know your audience and what it is about them that will appeal to a sponsor.
3. Unique marketing initiatives – What can you offer that puts you ahead of alternative marketing channels a sponsor could use?
4. Outcomes and value for the sponsor – Given the above, how can you improve a sponsor's business by partnering with you? Increased sales, loyal fans and distributors, staff morale?

## **Step 2 – Research your potential sponsors**

Once you understand what it is you have to offer it's time to research your potential sponsors.

The process:

1. Create a wish list of sponsors
2. Research each of the sponsors
3. Record the details in the Sponsor Research Template
4. Perform a reality check using the Sponsor Compatibility Matrix...how compatible are you really?

At the end of the process you'll have a short list of sponsors to approach. Next, take action to contact the person who can say yes to your sponsorship proposal.

## **Step 3 – Contact the person who can say yes to your sponsorship proposal**

With a list of compatible sponsors it's time to contact the person who can say yes to your sponsorship proposal, i.e. the actual decision maker(s)

There are a number of techniques you can use, these include.

- Cold calling
- Cold calling is the least effective method to contact a sponsor but it also requires the least investment on your part.
- If you don't know the sponsor at all this is one of the few options at your disposal. The aim is to develop some rapport with the sponsor so you can shift from the cold call to a position where they will discuss their objectives. Here's a great way to cold call a potential sponsor.

### **Mailing plus follow-up**

During the research process, if you've highlighted a number of sponsors who are a really good fit with what you have to offer, snail or e-mail first may be more effective than cold calling alone.

Make sure you follow-up with a call a few days later. If you've piqued their interest, you'll have a much better chance of building a relationship with the person who can say yes to your sponsorship proposal.

### **Sponsorship websites**

Next on the list is sponsorship websites including Sponsorship Pitch. These websites facilitate the connection between sponsors and sponsorship seekers.

As a sponsorship seeker, you add your "property" to the system, which sponsors can then review and contact you to discuss the opportunity in more detail. You can also approach sponsors directly with a proposal suited to their documented marketing objectives.

### **Networking with your potential sponsors**

Good old-fashioned networking. It's a great way to build your business and is equally effective when seeking sponsorship.

Networking in this instance is all about making direct connections with your prospective sponsors. If you've done the research, it shouldn't be too difficult to find appropriate networking opportunities.

### **Word of mouth referrals**

The most effective, a sponsor's trusted advisor refers you directly as a sponsorship opportunity worth investigating.

Word of mouth referrals are by far the most effective but are also the most time-consuming. Choose activities you enjoy and build natural relationships with people; and as a side-effect, you may just get your foot in the door with a major sponsor.

## Step 4 - Develop a trusting relationship with the sponsor

Having connected with the sponsorship decision maker it's your job to develop a relationship where they can trust you and minimise any perceived risks.

This process will be longer or shorter based on how you connected with the sponsor initially; longer from a cold call and shorter by a word of mouth referral.

Tips for developing trust:

- Don't go the hard sell
- Listen to what they have to say
- Demonstrate you've done the research
- Make good use of your established brand to reinforce your professionalism
- Provide referrals and testimonials when asked (note: don't burn your bridges)
- Prepare marketing material that emphasises benefits and value to the sponsor
- Have a history that illustrates you'll be around for the long haul

## Step 5 – Establish the sponsor's marketing objectives

Once you've developed the necessary trust and rapport with a sponsor you investigate and explore their marketing objectives. This is the point where a majority of sponsorship proposals fail.

Why? Too often sponsorship seekers prepare a proposal without ever working directly with the sponsor to determine their objectives. How can you possibly know what they want or need without ever asking?

Fundamentally, all marketing objectives are focused on generating more sales and protecting or improving the sponsor's bottom line.

By delivering a sponsorship proposal too early you're indicating that the process is about you, what you want and what you assume the sponsor wants.

If you take the time to establish the sponsor's marketing objectives, you're indicating that it's about them, what they want and how they can use your unique marketing initiatives to reach their objectives.

Example marketing objectives:

- Increase revenue by 10% in South Eastern region through onsite sales
- Increase customer loyalty and repeat sales through social media marketing
- Increase brand awareness amongst 25 to 35 year old females

It's your responsibility to establish these marketing objectives with the sponsor. Once you know what these objectives are you can:

1. Agree on how to measure success
2. Define the value of the sponsorship
3. Provide unique marketing initiatives the sponsor will leverage to meet the objectives