ATTRACTION SPONSORS TO YOUR PROGRAM REQUIRES DEDICATION, POSITIVITY AND PLANNING.

In this eBook we outline the process of preparing, finding and approaching sponsors for your program.

Getting a sponsor doesn’t require a leap of faith—you are in control of the process and have all the tools to make a successful approach.
STRAtegy

01. KNOW YOUR GOALS

02. DEVELOP A BUDGET FOR YOUR PROGRAM

03. BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR DEMOGRAPHIC AND YOUR PLATFORM

04. WHAT DO YOU NEED SPONSORED?

05. HOW MANY SPONSORS DO YOU NEED?

06. WHAT WILL YOU OFFER IN RETURN?

07. DOCUMENT YOUR STRATEGY
Know your goals

Ensure you know precisely what your program is trying to achieve. How many submissions you are looking for, what you are trying to do with your brand and what your program trajectory looks like, the further ahead, the better!

Develop a budget for your program

Figuring how much sponsorship funding you are going to need is one of the most important tasks to conduct before seeking that sponsorship. Sponsors do not like open ended requests or requests lacking in detail, so ensure you have an amount set in stone. Do not approach sponsors with a request for “whatever you can spare”, remember, your request will likely be tabled high up in the organisations you approach.

Be clear about your demographic and your platform

Sponsors are not after random exposure, they are after specific exposure in markets that interest them and through platforms that fit their marketing model. Some of the demographic detail sponsors will be interested in includes: age, gender, location and interests. Sponsors will also be interested in how you will be going about drumming up interest in your program and where they fit in and how they get exposed. More on that later.

What do you need sponsored?

It’s not always about getting sponsored in monetary terms. You may have a need that a specific company can help you fulfil. For example, you may run an award program recognising high performing schools and you would like to get a high-tech classroom sponsored as the main prize. Sponsors find immense value in providing a product or service they directly sell themselves since they get to expose their product/service in tandem with their brand.
If you are not after a sponsored item and are after money instead, just be clear how you plan on spending that and how it helps your program fly.
How many sponsors do you need?

Do you want to try and get your program sponsored by one organisation in one go or do you plan on having several sponsors to fund specific items or areas?

You don't have to stick with getting one sponsor for all your needs, but you should consider the sponsorship mix: different organisations just don't mix well. E.g. Approaching a toy company when you have an alcohol brand sponsoring your program already is probably going to waste your time.

Whatever the case may be, knowing how many sponsors you need and what they will be sponsoring is an important step to getting your strategy in place.

What will you offer in return?

Organisations want to know what they get out of sponsoring your program. Will you be offering them increased exposure in that new market they have been eyeing? An increased social presence on Twitter or Facebook? Increased brand recall when associated to a specific product type?

Often, this is where most sponsorship seekers fail to do adequate research. If you can figure out that “Engineering Supplies” (fictitious company) is interested in opening a new branch in your hometown and their company could benefit from increased exposure through your program because you offer XYZ, you have a much better chance of securing sponsorship through them than if you approached them blind and neither of you knew that you could help each other.

Document your strategy

Make your strategy official by documenting it. Not only will your program come across as more professional, it will lay out exactly why a sponsor would want to take on your program and give them an opportunity to come back to you with an alternate proposal that is based on your program context.
KNOW YOUR SPONSOR

01. RESEARCH TO UNDERSTAND WHO WILL BE INTERESTED

02. DEVELOP YOUR PIPELINE AND RESEARCH AGAIN

KNOWING YOUR SPONSOR:

Involves research to develop a pipeline of companies, organisations and individuals who may potentially be interested in sponsoring your program.

Use this step as an opportunity to build a large list with a view to using this as the basis for shortlisting later.
Research to understand who will be interested

Every organisation and company is different. Some have budgets for sponsorship opportunities, others don’t, some prefer to grow their brands organically, while others prefer to take the bull by the horns and find as many ways as they can to grow awareness of their brand and products. Knowing who will be interested in sponsoring your program and who won’t will help you to save time and focus your attention on the organisations that are open to sponsorship opportunities. As soon as you know they are open to sponsorships, pop them onto a list. Try to get as many potential sponsors on your list as you can. Keep in mind that not everyone will want to sponsor your program, so find as many as you can before moving onto the next step.

Develop your pipeline and research again

Once you have your list, it’s time to get to know these organisations better. As alluded to earlier, knowing your potential sponsor is an imperative. Follow them socially, visit their website and if you can, chat to someone that works there. Get a feel for what they are trying to achieve and who their customer is. Line this up with your own target market, demographic and platform. Do they fit each other? If so, short list them and mark them for approach.
01. FIND THE RIGHT PERSON

02. PERSONAL INTRODUCTIONS

03. DISCOVERY SESSIONS AS A CHANCE TO LEARN

GETTING IN TOUCH:

During this phase, your primary objective is to find the right person in an organisation to reach out to, pick their brain and learn about how you could potentially be an attractive sponsorship option.
Find the right person

Your success in an approach for sponsorship hinges on talking to the right person in a given organisation. Usually, sponsorship is handled by the organisations marketing team, but it can vary, large business have been known to have dedicated sponsorship teams, while small businesses may not even have a marketing department. Once again, research is important.

Personal introductions

Hot tip! Once you have found the right person in an organisation to talk to, simply sending an email with a price list is NOT going to reap you a successful return. Sponsorship is an extension of an organisations brand and it’s an important decision for them to make. Forwarding an email with a shopping list of sponsor opportunities is going to relegate your mail to the spam pile.

Instead, pick up the phone, introduce yourself and ask them if they are interested in learning more about what you offer. Yes, you are selling sponsorship opportunities, but dont “sell” on the phone, its an instant put off. Remember, they get sponsorship requests all the time, so focus on building a relationship, be friendly, stay professional and use the opportunity to gauge interest as opposed to coming across as overly pushy. It’s a fine line.

Discovery sessions as a chance to learn

If you manage to drum up interest within an organisation, a huge plus is being flexible with your sponsorship requests. One of the best ways to come across as invested, and investable, is to be open to discussion. Set up a discovery session with your contact and find out what they are looking for. Use this session as an opportunity to meet, build rapport and really dig into the finer details of what they are trying to achieve. This is not the time to be talking money, this is the time to be figuring out what you can ask for.
01. START WITH A STORY
02. DESCRIBE WHAT YOU DO
03. PITCH THE BENEFITS
04. DESCRIBE DEMOGRAPHICS
05. SPONSORSHIP HISTORY
06. PROGRAM STRATEGY
07. MARKETING STRATEGY
08. PROMISE DELIVERABLES
09. ASK FOR THE MONEY
10. SEEK ADVICE
If you have done the first steps well, creating a great proposal is fairly straightforward. Keep in mind that this document is probably going to represent the first interaction with the organisation outside of your meet and greet with your contact. Here, the CEO, finance execs and other management members may get a look at what you are putting on the table. Here are a few tips for a great proposal:

Start with a story

People need context and showing them you understand theirs while making them aware of yours is a great way to start a proposal.

Describe what you do

What is your program all about? Who is part of your organisation? Who are your customers/clients?

Pitch the benefits of sponsorship

Why should they part with their money to help your program? What do they get in return?
Don't focus on what you are offering, instead focus on what that means to them.

Describe your demographics

Show the potential sponsor that you understand your market. If you don't understand yours, how will you understand theirs?

Give your sponsorship history

If you have had sponsors before, let the new potential sponsor know how it went. Just be honest. If you had some failings in the past or any issues, show them how you are planning to avoid that this time around. If this is your first sponsorship round, say so. People will do their own investigations, so honesty is the best policy.
Program strategy

All that hard work you put in right at the beginning goes here. Lay out how your program runs, dates/times and granular events that make up the big picture.

Marketing strategy

How do you plan on getting “feet through the door”? What marketing channels will you be using to drum up support? If you have your actual marketing assets already lined up, include them here and be sure to include their business (logos, mentions, etc).

Promise deliverables

Lay out exactly what they are getting in return for their sponsorship money and don’t over complicate matters with a menu of small items they can pick and choose to sponsor. Bundle your offering an set a price to it.

Ask for the money

Now is not the time to be shy. If you have a great offering and have explained why the sponsorship is a no brainer, ask for the money and don’t beat around the bush. This goes hand in hand with the deliverables you offer. Keep it simple and ask for a figure.

Have someone who has done it look it over

Find someone who has produced sponsorship proposals to take a look through yours and ask for honest critique. This is critical for those who have never put a sponsorship proposal together before.
01. Give them an opportunity to put a face to a name

02. Meet with a decision maker

Delivering your proposal:
You've managed to pique interest and it's time to deliver your proposal. Meet with decision makers formally and deliver your proposal yourself.
Give them an opportunity to put a face to a name

Meet at their offices or do a video call, but give them a chance to meet you. Remember, it’s a relationship you are building. It also gives you an opportunity to explain the proposal and demonstrate the strengths of your program.

Meet with a decision maker at a time that suits them

If your contact is not the decision maker, wait until the decision maker is available. You don’t want to run through the proposal without the decision maker being present as they may have questions and you want to be around to answer them. Do not rely on someone else relaying your proposal.

When you are done presenting your proposal, gauge their interest, check to see if they would like to take some time to look it over and book a time for you to follow up.
CLOSING THE DEAL

01. BE AS EMPATHETIC AS POSSIBLE
02. CONNECT WITH THE ORGANISATION ON A PERSONAL LEVEL
03. FOLLOW UP
04. YOU GET A RESULT
Be as empathetic as possible

Once you have delivered your proposal, be patient and try to understand, your sponsorship request may not be as important to them as it is to you. Give your contact, decision maker and any other interested parties the space to discuss your proposal, put out their own fires and get back to you.

Connect with the organisation on a personal level

As best as you can, when trying to close the deal, remember it is about relationships. They may pass you over this year due to timing constraints, prior commitments or some other reason. So leaving a good impression is more important than getting their money today. It makes next years discussion all the more easier.

Follow up

If you gave the organisation time and space to make a decision and you have remained professional and personable, don’t be afraid to follow up. If you don’t get an immediate answer straight away, ask when a good time will be to get in touch again and repeat until you hear a yay or nay.

You get a result

Whatever happens, strive to get an answer either way. If it is no, be understanding, ask if you can contact them again next year and see what you could have done a little bit better to secure the deal. Who knows, there may be a gem of information in there that can still save the deal if you just add one more benefit or include an additional period of exposure. Be sure to ask!

If you get a yes, great! Be prepared with next steps and what happens now.
Be impeccable with your word

Throughout the process of seeking sponsorship, keep to your word. If you arrange a quick 5 minute introduction, keep it to 5 minutes, don't be late for appointments and ensure you deliver on your promises. Build a solid foundation of trust and stick to what you say.

Stay professional

Whatever happens, don't drop your guard. Stay professional at all times. If you get negative feedback, get doors slammed in your face or people treat you badly, that's on them and doesn't reflect the efforts you have gone through. If you manage to win the deal, don't relax, you still have next year to consider.

Remain positive

Throughout your sponsorship seeking activities, you are going to have doubts, tough times and rocky roads. Stay positive. No one wants to sponsor a pessimist and staying positive will keep you grounded in what you are doing.

We hope you enjoyed reading

Getting sponsors on board is easy if you follow the steps in this article. Plan well in the beginning, get to know your potential sponsor and tailor your proposal to them.

If you found this ebook useful or have ebook requests for the future, let us know on: Twitter | Facebook | LinkedIn

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