

Sportsmatch Sponsorship Guidance Information



Introduction

This guide seeks to help you identify appropriate sponsors and also provides some information for organisations considering sponsoring a project.

Finding sponsors

Sponsorship can be hard to find, so it's important to go about it in an organised and professional way. Here are some ideas that may help your organisation improve their success:

a) Appoint a sponsorship co-ordinator

It is important - no matter what the size of your sporting organisation - to have a co-ordinator who is responsible for seeking sponsorship and who deals with all communications about sponsorship.

b) Decide what you are seeking sponsorship for

You can do this through a sponsorship audit. This has two elements:

The Sport Audit - identifying what your sports organisation has to offer a potential sponsor. This should include the number of events you hold, the number of participants and spectators, and any secondary audience you have through newspaper, television and radio reports of your events. It should detail the opportunities you can offer to display the sponsor's logo, not just at an event but on promotional items, posters, programmes, letterheads or vehicles.

The Sponsor Audit - identifying potential sponsors and what they want to achieve through their marketing activities. Research in local or trade papers is an effective way of obtaining names of companies. There are also a number of trade publications for sponsorship and a growing number of websites that match sponsors and companies. For example, the Hollis Sponsorship and Donations Yearbook lists 1,000 sponsoring companies, their interest areas, budgets and contacts.

c) Draw up a shortlist of companies

Having identified a range of potential sponsors, carry out research to find out how well your organisation meets the marketing objectives of the various companies on the list. Consider the different attributes of the smaller and larger

companies and learn as much as you can about them: use annual reports, company newsletters, press cuttings or personal contacts to find out about their interests, management and employees.

d) Write the sponsorship seeking letter

Make sure you send this to the most appropriate person within the company. A large organisation may have a dedicated sponsorship manager, whereas in a medium sized company, you might need to contact the marketing director. In a small company, the CEO might be the right person to contact.

At this stage, the purpose of the letter is to attract the interest of the company, with a view to setting up a meeting with them, rather than to sell the sponsorship there and then.

e) Follow up each sponsorship seeking letter with a telephone call

Three or four days after you have sent your letter, follow it up with a phone call to the company. Remind the potential sponsor of the letter, who it was from and what it was about, and aim to secure a meeting.

f) Write a sponsorship proposal

Depending on the scale and scope of the project, you might need a sponsorship proposal to use as a supporting document for a presentation or meeting. It should include the majority of information gathered in the sport and sponsor audits, along with details of the Sportsmatch scheme. It is worth using pictures (e.g. of your sport or organisation) to help the potential sponsor visualise the benefits of getting involved.

Remember to include information about the history of your organisation as this is important in establishing credibility. Good financial controls and reports are also important. If you have been sponsored before, prepare case histories which show the activity and the results, as this will encourage confidence in your ability to deliver.

g) Hold a meeting with a potential sponsor

If a potential sponsor agrees to a meeting, it is essential to handle this in a professional way. The meeting should be carefully planned and you should go into it fully prepared, so that you can make the following clear:

- What your organisation can offer the potential sponsor

- What benefits they will receive from sponsoring your organisation
- How much sponsorship you require from them
- How long you would like them to sponsor you

Work together

Once a sponsor has invested in your project, it is essential that it runs smoothly and delivers high quality experiences to participants and spectators. It is also essential to keep the sponsor involved in the project, both to maintain their interest and to demonstrate the value of their investment. Here are a few tips:

Work closely with your sponsor at all times. In particular, work hard on the personal elements, such as ensuring that the sponsor has enough tickets for themselves and guests and a chance to meet participants

Have a clear reporting procedure to the sponsor with regular updates on events and activities

Look for ways to increase the newsworthiness of the event by creating interesting photocalls or background features. Try to attract a celebrity to the launch or the event to increase press interest. The press and local radio in particular, will often run joint promotions or act as media partners for events

Finally, remember that the branding of an event and support materials is a key sponsor requirement. Sponsor logos must have a prime position at any event and in all supporting material. If you have received a Sportsmatch award, remember, too, that Sportsmatch is often an equal partner in the sponsorship and requires its own branding.

For the commercial success of a sponsorship, the company's product needs to be as close to the event as possible. Product displays, sampling opportunities, even a sales kiosk at a launch or event, are important ways for the sponsor to reach its target market. Sponsors and organisers should work together to devise longer-lasting links such as discount vouchers for future purchases for those who attend events.

Information for sponsors

Providing sponsorship can enhance a company's profile through association with an event, club or team. This can be a powerful association, as it is perceived as an endorsement by an independent third party. Consumers are aware of the costs of sponsorship, but the message is more subtle than paid-for advertisements.

Typical activities include:

- Display of the brand name on kit, banners around a venue, and advertisements in programmes and on other merchandise
- Use of the club, event, team or individual in advertisements and other promotions undertaken by the brand
- Personal endorsement of the sponsor's products by teams or individuals - by use of the sponsor's products, kit or equipment. Sportsmatch will only consider matching in-kind amounts up to 50% of the total sponsorship amount (for example, a £100k project with £50k being requested from Sport England, at least £25k of the remaining funding would need to be cash sponsorship).
- Joint websites or close links between separate websites

Why sponsor sport?

For many commercial companies there is intense competition among companies and brands, and there often seems little difference in terms of quality, content or price. Sponsors use sport to make their brand stand out from the crowd, creating a unique impression in consumers' minds.

Here are some of the most common reasons companies provide sponsorship

- Brand / corporate awareness: sponsorship can make a brand or organisation name more familiar to consumers so it stands out in a crowded marketplace
- Brand / corporate image: sponsorship can help establish a personality and style for a product to distinguish it from others in the market and allow, for example, premium pricing
- Customer relations: sports sponsorship can provide useful opportunities for companies to offer hospitality to clients. It can also show the sponsor as someone who's good to do business with, and raise the sponsor's profile among current and potential customers

- Employee relations: sports sponsorship can encourage company pride and loyalty, which helps attract and retain staff
- Community relations: sponsorship can show that a company cares about its community and is prepared to invest in the future and welfare of local people.

What do companies want from sports sponsorship?

As a general rule, sponsors want:

- Media coverage. Sporting events create opportunities for exciting newspaper photographs and television images showing sponsor logos on shirts or banners. Such exposure creates brand familiarity for consumers, making the sponsor's logo stand out from competitors' logos
- Memorable, enjoyable experiences. The sponsor will want memorable, enjoyable activities that provide occasions to build the brand and develop sales
- Quality leisure time with clients. The sponsor will want opportunities to offer hospitality and communicate with customers in a relaxed setting
- Value for money. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, sponsors and their employees want to feel comfortable with a sport and feel that they are getting good value for money.

Should your company sponsor sport?

Your company can definitely benefit from sports sponsorship if:

- Your customers or potential customers are sports participants, spectators or viewers
- Your company or product would benefit from an association with sport
- You want to reach a wide audience with a relatively straightforward message
- You are prepared to integrate sponsorship with other marketing communications such as advertising, point-of-sale, direct mail or corporate hospitality
- You want to demonstrate a commitment to your local community.