

SWAIM STRATEGIES

SPONSORSHIP BEST PRACTICES

When cultivating and securing sponsors for events, there are a few things to keep in mind. Use these guidelines as best practices for your sponsorship relationships.

General

First of all, remember that corporate giving officers are often overwhelmed all day long. The relationships you have with them are critical. The ones you cultivate most will keep your organization rising to the top of their list. And if you have a board member that is an employee of one of your corporate sponsors, it can strengthen your overall relationship.

You also want to remember that a sponsorship is a fee for benefits. When the benefits are in line with the goals of your nonprofit and the goals of the corporation, there is a great match.

Always keep in mind the giving guidelines your corporate sponsors have identified. Do the research and make sure your organization falls within these guidelines.

Sponsors are looking for effectiveness in the nonprofits they fund. Talk about your organization's success in meeting your mission and why their support matters.

Revolving staff members at a nonprofit organization can be a challenge for corporate sponsors. A change in development officers or the executive director of an organization can be difficult. Often the money follows the staff. Since relationships are one of the most important aspects in major gift giving, the sponsorship dollars will sometimes follow the person instead of the organization. Therefore, build sponsor relationships with multiple people on your staff and think about relationship transition planning during staff changes.

The staff members your sponsor sends to attend your event are commonly told by the sponsor that they are not expected to give money because the company already paid for their attendance. This is good to keep in mind because it will reduce your fundraising during the event. Ask your corporate partner to send people to your event who might be moved by your organization's message.

Channels of Communication

Always follow your sponsors' preferred channels of communication. Most likely this will be via email. Most sponsors do not want a phone call or a voicemail message. Their voicemail inboxes are full and their phone rings off the hook. They would rather correspond with an email. The same is true when sending proposal letters asking for sponsorships. Most sponsors prefer the proposal to be a digital letter sent via email. Use email when setting up one-on-one meetings with your sponsors.

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Sponsorship Proposals

Keep it simple! If the production of your proposal is too much, this sends a message to your sponsors that you are not using sponsor money wisely. You don't need to put all the bells and whistles into a proposal. A simple, clearly stated proposal is best.

Give your sponsors time when you solicit them. Smaller sponsors should be given 90-120 days prior to an event. Larger sponsors need to plan for their annual budgets, so they should be solicited one year out.

Umbrella Sponsorships

Utilize your time well and solicit umbrella sponsorships. This type of sponsorship includes every event your organization has going on during the year or several years. It gives potential sponsors the opportunity to choose what events will best fit within their guidelines and it saves time for your organization. You'll send out one letter that covers a specified time frame. But be sure and cultivate all of your sponsors throughout the year with strategic communication and face time. People give to people. Cultivating the relationship is key.

After the Event

Every sponsor at the \$5,000 level and above needs a fulfillment packet showing that the sponsor received all the benefits promised. This shows you kept your end of the relationship. The packet should list all the benefits they have gotten for their sponsorship and include copies of how they were fulfilled. Sponsors don't expect a fulfillment letter for sponsorships under \$5,000.

Be sure and thank EVERY sponsor after the event in a timely manner. In addition, ask their opinions about the event with a survey or during your next meeting.