



Sponsorship

A guide to gaining sponsorship

INTRODUCTION

Sponsorship has become one of the hardest aspects to achieve for any organisation and yet in order to function and operate it is one of the more critical tasks it can face.

Improving skills in acquisitions as well as the approach can be the difference between a yes and a no.

Over the years, like you and me, sponsorship has evolved. In today's environment, monetary sponsorships are becoming harder to obtain. More and more sponsorships are becoming "Contra-sponsorships" ('in-kind') where the sponsor provides services, personnel or products, rather than money, in exchange for the benefits provided by the Association.

So if you were hoping to lure in a lucrative monetary deal, you may need to rethink your plan and go back to the drawing board.

There are two different approaches to sponsorship:

1. A very formal approach which has pre-packaged sponsorship focusing on providing different levels of benefits to one or more potential sponsors (e.g. bronze, silver, gold) that a potential sponsor may agree to or
2. A custom designed approach to sponsorship offering a more relaxed stance providing the sponsor benefits tailored to suit them.

This resource will base its concepts around custom designed packages. However It is not a "how to" on writing the actual proposal. Instead this resource is designed to give some insight to the skills required to building and gaining sponsorship partnerships for your organisation.



TradeStaff, official sponsors of the ISF 2013 Men's Softball World Championships

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PLANNING

While planning your sponsorship proposal may seem like an onerous task, it does have its benefits.

Ask yourself, why is your association or club seeking sponsorship and what are you offering a potential sponsor.

Whilst the approach to sponsorship has changed over the years, and the “coffee meeting” or that face to face meeting can be your make and break moment, like anything, an uncoordinated approach could end up giving a potential sponsor a negative first impression.

By going through the following stages, we aim to give you the skills required to building and gaining a partnership for your club / association.

Stage 1: Building the plan (your brand, research and fit, your value)

Stage 2: Write/ rehearse a proposal

Stage 3: The coffee meeting – the very important face to face contact needed

Stage 4: Close the deal

Stage 5: Manage the relationship



2011 sponsor partnership between G.J. Gardner (Richmond, Tasman), Nelson Softball & Nelson Hockey

STAGE 1: BUILDING YOUR PLAN

To build a plan we need to look and think about your brand, the “fits” in and around your club / association, (research & become aware of your opportunities) and identify your value and what value of sponsorship you require.



Remember you need to be able to plan first, before you come up with a target approach.

A. Your brand

In the first instance you need to build or identify your brand. If you don't understand your brand, how will anyone else?

Make sure you are clear on what you are about and what is important to your club/association. Know your organisation, what are your values, how valuable are you, what is your difference, why do people like you.

Building your brand

Keep this simple; it's about what you are and what you are about.

What are your values?	
How valuable are you?	
What are your skills?	
What skills are transferable?	
What is your point of difference?	
How can you use your sport?	

B. Research and fit

Now that you have identified your brand, it might pay to look around the people in your club/association and the businesses nearby in the first instance to see if you can see a potential sponsor or a link to a potential sponsor.

If you can identify a potential sponsor develop some background information about them and see if they “fit” in with your association and its brand.

This means before you talk to the company or a contact, learn about their business so you can have an intelligent conversation about them, with them.

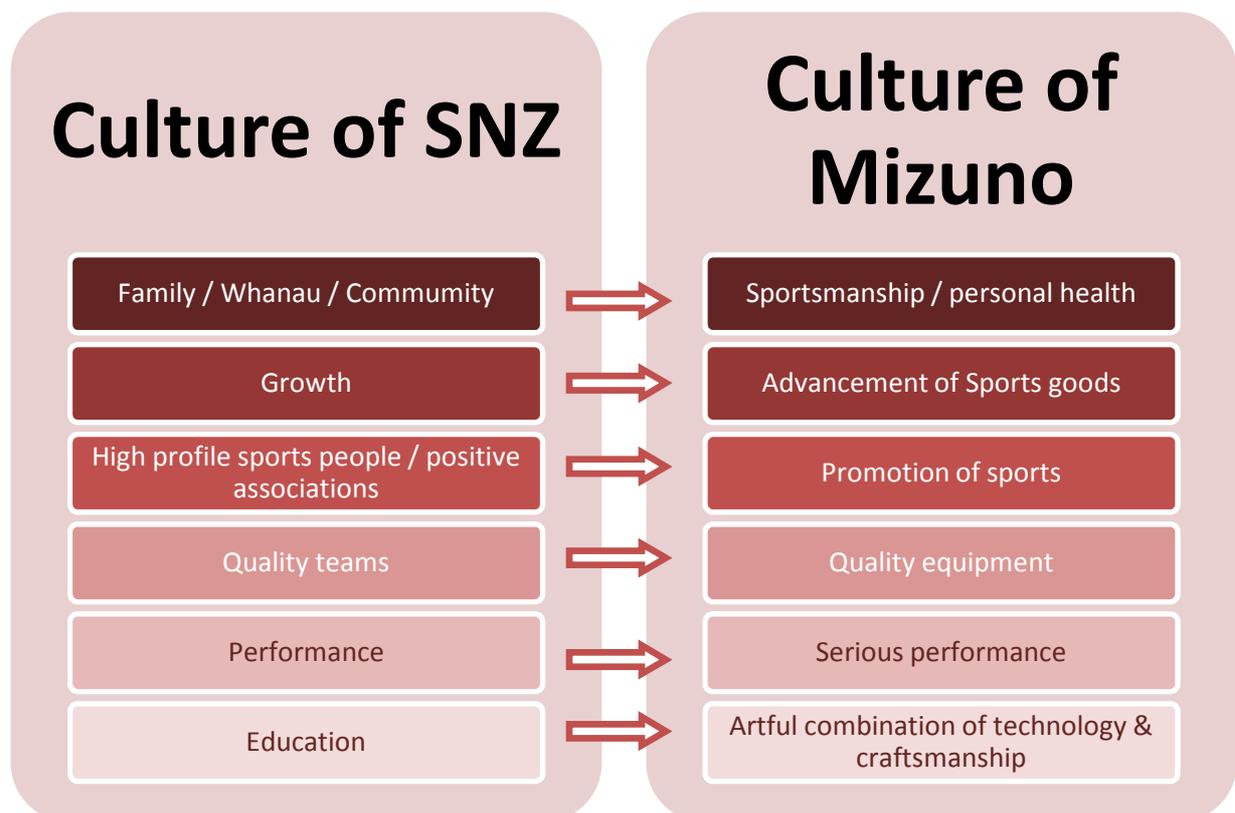
Also consider:

What does the potential sponsor do and how can this benefit your club?	
Does their product align with your club or organisation?	
What are their values and does their brand values match your club or associations values?	
Is there any conflict between your potential sponsor and a sponsor you may already have or with your demographic / target audience (i.e: getting a pub to sponsor a junior team may not be that appropriate or socially ethical.)	

If you think of a company that might be worth approaching then think and ask if someone has a contact as a lead into that company.

- Someone will know someone, Consider six degrees of separation, think about who you know, who their connections know etc, Almost always there is a connection.

Example: Finding a “fit” between Softball NZ & Mizuno



C. Consider your value & the value of your proposition

This is one of the hardest things to do. This is something you will need to learn, practice and have a little fun with.

Remember, when figuring out what you want in a partnership, don't set your level too low, but don't be absurdly high.

Determining the value of your sponsorship proposal doesn't always follow a set formula. If you are unsure of how much to ask for, try this. Determine the value of what you can offer a potential sponsor and negotiate a sponsorship that you think offsets your contribution.

Use the below table on the following page to help you.

What is your value and what can you offer the potential sponsor?

Provide an overview of your organisation's skills? What can your organisation bring of value? What can your organisation do that others can't?	
Of these skills what can you put into the mix for a corporate or partner	
How do the above skills link in with the potential sponsor (Link this back into you're the research and "fits" you have identified	
What are your values, what do you believe in?	

Remember

- Try to build a picture of who you are, or you as a product even if it's in your mind. Start building a brand picture of your organisation
- Keep in mind your values and what your club / association believes in.

What benefits can you offer a sponsor: Think outside the square?

Think outside the square when it comes to benefits you can offer a sponsor.

With each partnership opportunity you chase, work with them on the benefits, but present ideas on what you can offer. In other words, when you have your “coffee meeting” in the near future always work it through and find the benefits that suit the potential sponsor and you together.

So what can you offer? Don't offer to put their brand on your bags or shirts; times have moved on, you should be offering that type of thing anyway.

Stay away from feeling the need to highlight the traditional partnership benefits-it should be a given, “we will of course offer you normal benefits, what we can really offer is ...”

Think about what is unique that you can offer to their business. Keep in mind your:

- Your organisations Brand and Values
- This is where you can transfer your organisations capability
- Be realistic about what a successful partnership will look like; try to do as much research as you can
- Use our sport as leverage.

Potential Sponsor Benefits

A club card or free team entry for 1 season

What networks and links can you use to help boost your potential sponsor

Use of club facilities for free

Putting on free kids coaching sessions or a T Ball comp for the family of the targeted sponsor

Corporate Team building (building by organising a softball game)

Provide motivational speakers for targeted sponsor functions (think succesful coaches, players, business leaders)

Mentor programmes for staff

Coaching sessions

STAGE 2: WRITE / REHEARSE THE PROPOSAL

This is the time to get ready for that first meeting.

Don't over complicate the proposal; keep it to around four pages to keep it simple and easy to read with lots of visual.

This section is to help you when you meet them for the first time; sometimes you don't even need to hand them a document, but what you do need is the knowledge of your proposal inside and out so you can discuss it with them at your "Coffee meeting" at the very the minimum.

Overview of items to consider when writing your proposal

The basics:

- Keep it simple
- Four pages inc photos on every page
- Include background on your organisation, your values, your success, your demographic and community spread
- Explain how their organisation fits in with yours
- Note your offer, and your goals
- What are the high level benefits to them? Explain that "we will of course offer you normal benefits, what we can really offer is ..."
- Be clear on value
- Don't over commit yourself
- Get the value proposition right for them.

Giving it that extra bit more:

- Mix up the deal with emotion
- Keep it very high level
- Consider showing them the budget.



Mai FM supporting the WBoP Softball Assn on their Give Softball a Go days

STAGE 3: THE COFFEE MEETING

This is where most deals are done, that casual first meeting and normally over a coffee or even chatting at a function.



The coffee meeting could be a meeting you have already prearranged or at a function dinner or happen at an unscheduled time – be prepared and take this opportunity and use it well. Don't push too hard but also seize the moment.

Make sure you have yourself sorted in what you are about and the types of things you can add value too. Think about the proposal you have put together. As noted in the previous section you may not need to hand over an actual document at this stage, but what you do need is the knowledge of your proposal inside and out so you can discuss it verbally at the minimum.

This is the time you will get the deal done; the rest after this is process.

- Take your chance / seize the moment
- This meeting usually happens early on in the process
- Good time to gain info
- You can accelerate things almost 60%
- Don't box yourself
- Be pragmatic (be open)
- Don't go too quick
- Have your value, campaign and proposition in the back of your mind
- Develop a one liner you can use to sum it all up
- Don't feel you have to get the partnership that day
- Remember you don't have it until the money is in the bank
- No is actually ok, hang in there, there will be a lot of "No's".

STAGE 4: CLOSE THE DEAL

Just because they haven't come back to you does not mean they are not interested.

Be friendly, patient and work it like you are trying to teach a player a new way of hitting the ball.

- Be patient
- Stay on it
- Create a timeline for your self
- Remember the return for the company, sometime a contra may be more realistic than cash
- Remember your brand
- There is normally a silver lining in every cloud
- Don't forget the contract-get advice
- DON'T BURN THE BRIDGE



STAGE 5: GOT THE PARTNERSHIP, NOW MANAGE THE RELATIONSHIP

Now you have got a partnership, it is important to look after them.

Sit down and plan this out too and just set a timeline on getting things done for them and making the partnership work.

It's like a marriage, its needs to be worked on and if it is, you potentially could have the opportunity to have a long and happy relationship together.

- Plan how you will manage the relationship
- Break it down, quarterly etc
- Provide email updates
- Pre written updates
- Take them out for coffee and lunch
- Pick up the phone and touch base with them
- Pick your times of availability and be available
- Develop rapport, & develop the relationship
- Try to learn and understand their business
- Google them and have an intelligent conversation about their business
- Ask them questions about them, their business, there family etc
- When times are tough—share it with them.
- Stay true to the commitments / benefits you have offered them.



USI U19 team with one of their 2012 sponsors; NBS



USI U19 team with one of their 2012 sponsors; The Car Company

IN SUMMARY

Relax and enjoy it, you are not going to get a partnership every time and sometimes you won't get any but the more you follow the process the easier it will get and that valuable partnership will usually arrive when you least expect it.

Remember:

- Be prepared
- Build your brand
- Think about Your Values, Your skills, Your Pitch
- Think about your value and your value proposition
- Stay away from traditions if you can when offering benefits
- Networks are so important
- Have fun with it and seek advice.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

For further Softball New Zealand support with:

1. Initial concept support
2. Guidance with written proposal
3. Review of proposal

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