



Find Your Match

- A guide to sponsorship for dance

Sponsorship is partnership. In dance it usually involves an organisation providing funds, resources or services in return for promotion and association with a project or event and its creators. It's a powerful marketing tool that connects a company with its customers (building or enhancing that relationship) in a unique way. A key point to remember is that for sponsors it's an investment and they are looking for a return on it.

It's important to approach sponsorship professionally, be well prepared and see it through to the end. A good arrangement, carefully negotiated and carried out, will benefit both you and your sponsor.

How to find a potential sponsor

You should understand your own brand (identity) or product as well as your attributes and values. Know who you are and where you are going. Matching one or more of your key attributes with your sponsor's can help develop a good relationship. The more shared attributes between you and your potential sponsor, the more likely they are to be interested in you.

An exercise

Imagine your project or organisation is a person with a personality. Establish the demographic information about it. How does it define itself? What motivates it? And what does it care about? What are your project/organisations attributes? What are its core values?

Create the following profile:

Name

Sex

Age

Job

Income

Dress code

Cultural identity

Social interests

Transport means

Hobbies

Sport

Researching Sponsors

Research your sponsor well. Look for companies with similar attributes and values to your own. Pay close attention to the language they use to describe themselves and what they want to achieve. Check the company website, obtain their annual/financial report and talk to people who have dealt with them before. Answer the following questions:

- What type of company is it, for example, is it local or international?
- How long has it been established?
- How many employees does the company have and what sort of people work there?
- Who are the key people, in particular, the Sponsorship/Marketing managers and CEO?
- What does the company sell?
- What are its target markets?
- Who buys its product?
- Are they looking to expand into other areas?
- Who else do they sponsor?
- What do they say about their sponsorships?
- Are they interested in supporting the arts?

A sponsor will want to achieve some of these things:

- Communication of a marketing message to a target market
- Enhancement of brand awareness
- Increased sales to target markets
- Database building
- Adding of value for current and potential customers
- Creation of a focal point for promotions
- Increased consumer understanding of the product/brand
- A shift in consumer or trade attitudes toward the brand
- Product display or demonstration
- Product sampling
- Corporate hospitality
- New product launching
- Re-launching existing products/brands
- Increased employee morale
- Networking with other sponsors and key people

How to approach a sponsor

Find out who is best to contact, such as the marketing or sponsorship manager. (Get inside with the receptionist or PA - they usually have a good knowledge of who's who and what's going on).

An Artistic Director was due to meet a company CEO to put forward a sponsorship proposal. She had prepared a wonderful PowerPoint presentation of which she was extremely proud. The day before her meeting she rang his PA who advised her that the CEO hated PowerPoint and would simply switch off. Luckily she had handouts and the meeting went extremely well.

Contact the key person by phone and discuss your ideas. Sponsors receive hundreds of proposals, and rather than waste time putting a proposal together, find out if they are interested first. Mention the potential budget. A personal approach is always best.

Sponsors will ask you to send in a proposal. Ask them what they require from you; for example, how would they like to receive your proposal - do they want it by email, hard copy, DVD? Avoid huge amounts of writing. Ask how many pages they prefer and know where to stop (10 pages max).

Some organisations will have their own sponsorship proposals for you to complete. These can often be obtained online.

Be careful not to appear too arrogant – a sponsor can live without you, or too humble – it doesn't inspire confidence. Always be honest, the industry is too small and you will get found out. If a sponsor says no, don't take it personally and never try another route in.

Remember sponsors are human and they are doing a job just like you. It is important that you and the sponsor understand each other. Don't be frightened of talking to them. Use a bit of humour, interest and engage them if you possibly can.

The proposal

Keep it succinct and well presented. Sponsors receive hundreds of proposals, yours needs to stand out. Use bullet points and visuals. Individualise the proposal. Don't cut and paste - a sponsor does not take kindly to receiving a sponsorship proposal addressed to another company!

Research the sponsor's budget planning cycle. Each company will have a different financial year. If you are looking for significant funds such as with Naming Rights, you should have the proposal in at least 3 months prior to the beginning of their financial year, sooner if you can. For a contract or smaller financial sponsorship proposal, one month prior is usually sufficient.

Writing the proposal

- Write a covering letter addressed to the key sponsorship decision maker. Ensure you address the proposal to the *right person*.
- Ensure all of your contact details are on the proposal
- Introduction page - say who you are, what your performance/piece is (write a brief description) and where you see yourself going
- Include details about where and when your performance will be happening. Note venue capacity and ticket prices
- Describe your marketing/publicity plan. Numbers and descriptions of flyers/postcards/posters and their distribution. Attach a time line if you have one
- Describe your target audience and where you are advertising
- Detail your prior experience - A well established company or is this your first work?
- What are you asking from the sponsor? Be specific, and realistic. Do not ask for more than the sponsor is capable of providing. Be clear about asking for an ongoing relationship or a one-off sponsorship

- Include the date you intend to make your follow-up phone call, usually a week later (and make sure you carry it out)
- Do a spell check before sending the proposal

Always outline the benefits you are able to offer your sponsor in return for their help - never promise things you cannot deliver.

Sponsor Benefits

- Placement of signage at the performance
- Sponsors logo appearing on all printed material
- Increased website hits (both theirs and yours)
- Product sampling or an opportunity for the sponsor to display their product at your performance/event
- Sponsor mentioned at every opportunity. Include media releases but don't promise media coverage as this is out of your control
- Corporate hospitality; is there an opportunity for the sponsor to take their clients or staff to a rehearsal or performance?
- Are there any celebrities associated with your performance? Could the sponsor to meet them?
- An opportunity for all sponsors to meet with each other prior to or at the performance/event
- Complimentary tickets to the performance - be very precise about how many you are offering
- Invitations to the opening night party - be clear about how many of these are available to them
- Invitations to the media launch - again be precise about numbers

If you are successful with your proposal

- Always deliver what you have promised
- Keep your Sponsor regularly informed. They are your partner and need to feel involved
- Inform them of any media publicity of your performance/event and send them copies of news clippings
- At the performance/event, ensure your Sponsors are looked after. Make them feel welcome and ensure they are introduced to the right people
- Call a debrief after the performance/event
- Send a letter to thank them

Terminology

Contra sponsorship: Products or services that are provided in lieu of cash in exchange for sponsorship right. Also known as *in-kind* or *value in kind*.

Donation: An offering of product or cash that is given by a company without any anticipated commercial return. Also known as *philanthropy*.

Grant: The provision of funds or material for a specific project generally not linked to a company's core business. The grant is given on the basis of the need for the project rather than the promotional and marketing opportunities it might provide.

Financial sponsorship: Monetary investment.

Exclusivity: Exclusive rights to sponsorship or on-site sales.

Leverage: Sponsor generated activities that take place around a sponsorship and deliver most of the value of a sponsorship investment. Also called *maximization* or *activation*.

Naming Rights Sponsor: Sponsors name added to the event such as 'Coca Cola Christmas in the Park'. Also known as *title sponsor*.

Principal sponsor: The pre-eminent sponsor of any event or property, receiving the highest level of benefit and promotion.

Acknowledgements

Sandi Goodwin

Festival and Special Event Management, 1999: Ian McDonnell, Johnny Allen, William O'Tool.

The Sponsor's Toolkit, 2001: Anne-Marie Grey & Kim Skildum-Reid

Scott Ashton

Sally Frewin

Jessica Clarke

www.sponsorship.org

