

Guide to Sponsorship Proposals

Getting sponsors for your event (whether it be digital or in person) can be a great way to offset some of the costs that come along with hosting an event. In fact, for many events, sponsorships are what make the difference between making a profit and taking a loss. According to a study by Convene Magazine, almost 1/4 of event revenue on average comes from sponsors and donors. That's a lot of revenue you don't want to miss out on!

But how do you get sponsors for your event? Where do you find them? What do you offer them? Whether you're new to hosting events or you've got a few under your belt, we're breaking it all down for you in this Insider's Guide to Sponsorship Proposals.

What is an Event Sponsorship Proposal?

A sponsorship proposal is a formal offer to do business together. An event sponsorship proposal offers other businesses the opportunity to support your event while also reaching their target market (your attendees). Your proposal should contain enough info to help potential sponsors understand what is being offered and how it benefits their business. But don't go overboard – too much information can be overwhelming for the reader!

Event sponsorship opportunities can come in many different forms. Here are just a few to get your wheels turning:

- Keynote sponsor
- Food and beverage sponsor
- Exhibition space (in person or online)
- Speaking opportunities
- Brand promotion during/between sessions
- Giveaways
- SMS promotion
- Surveys
- Banner ads
- Swag
- App advertising
- Day/track sponsorship
- Social media promotion
- Activity sponsor

...and so many more!

Benefits of Obtaining Sponsorships

Securing event sponsors not only helps you plan a financially viable event, but it can also help keep prices down for attendees as well. Some event planners are even offering free registration for all attendees (especially for virtual events), which means a greater reach for both you and your sponsors and a larger attendance for your event.

But your event sponsors can do even more for you than just provide financial support. Having well-known sponsors can lend credibility to your event and signal to your target audience that this is something they should attend. Obtaining sponsorships is also a great way to serve your audience by introducing them to new products and services that will help them achieve their goals.

What You Have to Offer

Businesses don't fork over sponsorship dollars just to feel good – they want to see some sort of benefit for themselves too. Oftentimes companies are looking for things like brand awareness and increased sales, in addition to obviously reaching their target audience in your attendees.

So, what do you have to offer? Think about every benefit your event can offer a sponsor, and then think about everything your overall list can offer as well. Because remember, event promotion doesn't stop with just attendees; those ads and emails go out to a large amount of people that may not attend but still may find the sponsor's product offerings appealing.

One thing that works well is to think about this part early in the planning process and build those benefits into your event framework. Another method to coming up with benefits is to revisit them after you have completed sponsor research (more below) because then you'll have a better idea of what exactly sponsors are looking to achieve.

Not sure where to begin? Here's a sneaky trick: Check out the sponsorship materials for other similar, successful events and use their benefits list as inspiration for your own.

How to Find Sponsors

Before you can start looking for sponsors, it's important to fully understand the ins and outs of your event. What type of event is it? What is the vision for your event? What makes your event different? What type of attendees does your event hope to attract? Hopefully you already figured out all the answers to these questions during your event planning, but if not, now is definitely the time to narrow it all down. Potential event sponsors will most certainly ask questions along those same lines, and you want to be prepared to answer them in a confident and concise way.

Once you've got your event details all squared away, it's time to start identifying potential sponsors. We like to start with the companies we already love and do business with and expand from there. After all, if we love those companies, they are probably a good fit for our customers as well. Next you'll want to brainstorm other businesses, business categories, products, services, etc. that are perfect for your target audience and make a list of those potential sponsors. Finally, take a look at similar events that have taken place over the past couple of years and see who sponsored each of them. If some of them are missing from your list, be sure to add them!

Before we can move on to the next step, there's one more part of this process we need to complete. That's right, it's research time! Use the Potential Sponsor Research Worksheet to list out all the relevant information you find about each sponsor. This will help you narrow the list and also better understand how to structure each individual sponsorship proposal.

How to Structure Your Proposal

Every event has the opportunity to bring in sponsors but attracting the right sponsors can get a little tricky. It doesn't have to be though! Instead of just jumping in and trying to get any and every sponsor you can, start with the research mentioned above. Put together a research worksheet for each potential sponsor *before* you begin reaching out with proposals and the process will go much smoother. You'll better understand how to customize each proposal for each business's needs, and you'll quickly be able to identify businesses that may not be the best fit for the event at hand.

How you ultimately structure your proposal is up to you, but typically you want to introduce the event, audience, benefits, packages, etc. in a concise format that makes it easy for the decision-maker to sign off on it. The goal is to make the sponsorship opportunity too compelling to ignore, which is why it's so important that you plan out your proposal structure before you begin writing.

Here's an example of a proposal structure:

1. Introduction
2. Table of Contents
3. Event Objective
4. Meet the Team
5. Sponsorship Levels
6. Sponsor Benefits
7. Images
8. Social Proof
9. Deadline
10. Terms & Conditions
11. Contract
12. Next Steps

When putting together the Sponsorship Levels portion of your proposal, it's best to create at multiple tiers of sponsorship. Each one should have different benefits and price points. For example:

Bronze Package: \$2,000 – Company logo on all event marketing materials, feature on sponsorship page of event website, social media promotion, swag bag inclusion, and free tickets for 5 employees. (20 available)

Silver Package: \$4,500 – Everything in Bronze package + 15 minutes to speak during the formal dinner, a solo email to all attendees with your custom offer, and 5 additional free tickets for employees. (10 available)

Gold Package: \$10,000 – Everything in Bronze and Silver + a guaranteed speaker spot (excluding keynote) and branded lounge for VIP attendees. (1 available)

Don't forget – you don't have to stick with the packages as you originally created them! Some potential sponsors may ask for different or extra benefits. Know what you have to offer and the value involved and be open to negotiation if needed.

Common Sponsorship Solicitation Mistakes

1. Not giving enough information – Don't assume that potential sponsors doesn't want to know specifics. Odds are that they aren't going to do the legwork themselves to find out more info, so give them all the compelling information they need in order to make a **YES!** decision.
2. Not thinking through the benefits – Exposure isn't a strong enough benefit to seal a sponsorship deal. Take some time to really think through all the benefits you have to offer your sponsors.
3. Not following up – Always, always, always keep notes of your communications with potential sponsors and **follow up**. So many event hosts and organizers miss out on additional sponsorship dollars because they drop the ball on the follow up.
4. Not reaching out to the right people – Don't spit out your whole spiel in a Facebook message to a business. Most likely the people managing their social channels have little to no say regarding things like sponsorships. You can however reach out on social media and ask who you need to speak with regarding sponsorship for an upcoming event. Always make sure you are talking to the decision maker or someone who directly has their ear.
5. Not planning far enough in advance – Big companies typically don't make moves very quickly. And often times their budget for things like sponsoring events is allocated months in advance. Which means you need to start looking for

sponsors well before your event is even announced. This will give you the best opportunity to sign as many sponsors as possible.

Best Practices for Selling Sponsorships

1. Capture their attention – Snag their attention right away by being concise and to the point. They don't need every single detail, just the highlights that matter to them as a potential sponsor. You don't want them to get bored and start skimming!
2. Highlight benefits – Explain how the benefits your event offers can help them move their marketing needle.
3. Be relevant – Customize proposals to meet the objectives of the business you are reaching out to. (Remember that Research worksheet? It comes in handy here!)
4. Remember, it's about them, not you – You may be talking about your event but really the whole conversation is about the sponsor and why your event is perfect for a sponsorship.
5. Be proactive – Don't wait for them to reach out to you; let them know you'll follow up and then *do it*. Follow up conversations give you another chance to answer questions and sell the benefits of your sponsorship offer.
6. Hire a pro – If you don't consider yourself a salesperson, do yourself a favor and hire a sponsorship person. They'll handle all the outreach, conversations, negotiations, etc. with potential sponsors, in exchange for a portion of the sponsorship fee. One big plus of using a sponsorship person is that they usually have a great network and can help you tap into even more sponsors you didn't know about.