five ways to supercharge your sponsorship sales

## Make Your Event Sponsorships Stand Out

The battle for sponsorship dollars is intense. Organizations considering sponsorship opportunities are increasingly selective as they seek to maximize their investments.

They want to create quality engagements with their brand, and they expect event organizers to demonstrate sponsorship value through data.

This challenging environment for associations and meeting planners means they must find more creative ways to attract quality sponsors. Fortunately, there are a few best practices that event organizers can adopt to attract and retain high-quality sponsors.

1. start with strategy
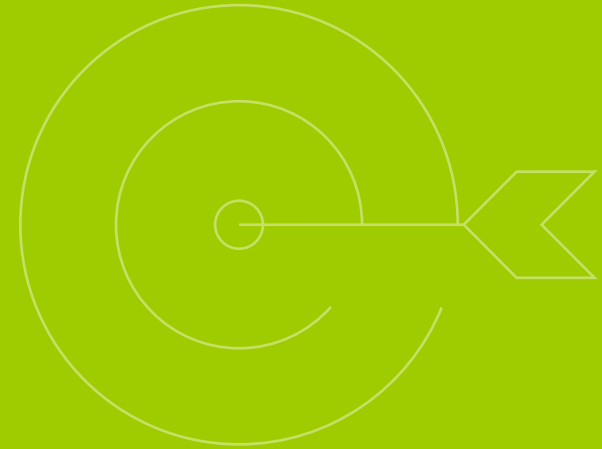
Engage in internal discussions to determine what you're trying to accomplish. The strategy sessions should begin with an overview of the event attendees and what they hope to achieve during the event.

Some of the questions to address include:

- What are your primary objectives as the show organizer?

- What value are you delivering to your event attendees, and how can sponsorships deliver on those goals?

- What are the sponsorship program goals?

- What type of engagement do your sponsors expect? Do they want passive or participatory experiences?

- What are your sponsors' budgets (are you targeting lower-end or higher-end exhibitors)?

Also, ask potential sponsors key questions about their objectives, including why they want to be associated with the event. For instance, is the goal to maintain exposure and awareness with their existing audience, or are they looking to reach new audiences?

2. collect and present data

Robust analytics can help decision makers identify sponsors that match their target demographic and demonstrate return on investment to potential sponsors. So how can you collect and analyze impactful data? Start by conducting short surveys during events. Surveys tend to be more effective in smaller, more digestible formats, because people are often pressed for time during events.

Key survey questions focus on overall attendee perceptions of the conference, including their opinions on session content. Social media is another tool for data collection. Use it to gather information about personal and professional interests, challenges, and opportunities. Also, measure the number of followers, retweets, event mentions, etc. Google Analytics can help you track event website visits, including video views and downloads, to determine which topics resonate. Consider event and attendee data, such as which exhibitors attendees visit frequently, and profile information like gender, interests, and income.

Attendee data will help you sell sponsorships and ensure you're targeting the appropriate sponsorship candidates. For example, you might need to approach a whole different set of sponsors depending on what the attendee demographic data reveals.

Also, consider leveraging sponsorship metrics from past events, such as:

- Brand-awareness data, including social media posts, media coverage, event impressions, and exposure through various channels, such as websites and in-event promos.

- Demand-generation and sales metrics, such as on-site transactions or the number of newsletter sign-ups.

- Relationships and loyalty data, such as the number of post-event meetings scheduled or the amount of repeat customer business.

- Sponsorship retention rates, including year-over-year figures.

3. get sponsors more involved
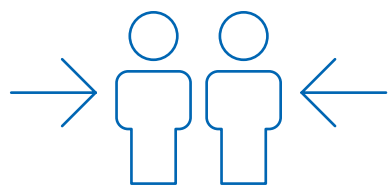
Many sponsors are seeking a more active role in events. Traditional sponsorship opportunities have been focused on brand awareness. Increasingly, sponsors want to integrate their messaging into the event content. Some of the most successful shows offer sponsors alternative environments to increase networking opportunities and improve the quality of their leads, instead of focusing on quantity at the booth. Relevant offerings include sponsorship of sessions, executive forums, theaters, guru stations, and exclusive invitation-only networking meetings.

Getting input from sponsors can also ensure that you're setting your program up for success. Bringing in potential sponsors for a strategy session where you learn about their business priorities and the results they are looking for can help you to brainstorm new engagement opportunities.

4. increase sponsor visibility

Sponsors expect to see their name prominently displayed at an event. In the past, this meant a large, conspicuously placed banner with the sponsor name. Technological advancements, though, have changed the game for sponsorship promotions.

Some of the innovative ways associations and meeting planners are providing more promotional value to sponsors include:

- Large-scale logo integration into event signage, such as tickets, badges, giveaways, and registration materials.

- Inclusion in mobile apps or games developed for the event.

- Social media integration, which may include branded photo opportunities designed to generate social media posts that include event content.

- Beacon-enabled alerts sent to attendees' mobile devices that tell them they're in a certain sponsor "zone." The alerts can include additional promotional messaging, such as offer codes for a discount on a product.

- Digital signage including social media elements, such as Instagram feeds. Larger digital signs, sometimes as big as 13 x 20 feet, can make an impression on attendees, who see their Instagram posts or tweets on the large display.

5. offer customized packages

A one-size-fits-all approach to sponsorships can alienate potential partners with unique needs. Sponsors often want assurance that they're receiving exposure that differentiates them from competitors participating in the event.

For example, if the sponsor is entering into new industries or markets, consider offering sponsorship opportunities that allow the sponsor to introduce its brand to the audience through workshops, product demos, or speaking opportunities. Or, offer dynamic pricing based on foot traffic by charging more for sponsorship opportunities in high-traffic areas, such as charging stations or seating areas.

Additional customization options include:

- Base packages with a menu of add-ons that sponsors may select for an additional charge.

- Pre- and post-event marketing and promotion.

- Naming rights that allow sponsors to "own" a category, such as a technology or an area of the event.

The future of successful sponsorship sales

Organizers who attract and retain high-value sponsors have the potential to add so much to their events — including increasing engagement for attendees, which can not only help provide increased return on investment for sponsors, but also have real and meaningful impact on the overall success of the event itself.

Challenging complacency in your sponsorship program and taking the extra steps to understand and offer things that make your sponsorship stand out will help you establish great relationships that mean success now and set the stage for a successful future.

create sponsor value

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