

Creating Compelling Sponsorship Proposals

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Potential sponsors don't sit at their desks all day waiting for your proposal to arrive on their desk. For many, sponsorship is one part of a larger role which keeps them very busy. This means your proposal isn't just competing with other sponsorship proposals (of which there will be many) but also with many other distractions for a share of their attention. Having a well-crafted, compelling partnership document is a critical first step in getting the attention of a potential partner

A good proposal is a particularly useful step where little or no prior relationship exists with the potential partner. A compelling proposal can be an invaluable tool for enticing the other party to the table by making them excited to learn more about you.

Once it has completed that task, it is up to you to build a strong personal relationship with the prospective sponsor and turn that interest into a long term, mutually successful partnership.

The focus of your proposal will change depending on the value of the money you are seeking.

High-value partnership proposal

When seeking a high value partnership there will generally be a significant amount of tailoring required. The purpose of a high-value proposal is to get the prospective sponsor excited about the prospect of meeting with you to speak further. So you should outline the potential benefits of working with you without being overly prescriptive regarding the opportunities.

These specifics will be worked out in collaboration with the partner once they have determined they are interested and then documented in a formal agreement.

This kind of proposal typically includes: a covering letter, a cover page, a positioning statement, an overview of opportunities, a list of key contacts, testimonials, and some indication of pricing.

Low-value partnership proposal

When seeking a lower value sponsorship (roughly up to \$35,000 but will vary between organisations) you can shorten the sales cycle by being more prescriptive about what the partner receives (as long as it is tangible and nothing as naff as just putting their logo somewhere).

This kind of proposal includes everything outlined above, with more detail on the benefits to the partner (rather than just an overview of opportunities), as well as an application form containing terms and conditions.

Once the signed application form and payment is returned, this becomes the contract for the arrangement.

Other tips

In addition to the basic elements you should also ensure your proposal:

- Stands out – Make sure your format, cover image and text achieve their purpose ... to get someone to look inside.
- Looks professional – Make sure your use of fonts and headings are consistent. Check your spelling and grammar.
- Is followed up by telephone within 7-10 days of receipt.

Using this Fact Sheet

Use this fact sheet to develop your proposal by referencing the headings aligned to the type of proposal you are developing.

Testimonials

Never ever say anything good about yourself ... that you can get someone else to say for you.

Testimonials from the right people can be very powerful so try to include a range of testimonials from carefully selected people.

Testimonials from existing partners are particularly powerful.

Covering letter

Don't just send your proposal. Send a short but engaging cover letter tailored to the company and individual receiving it.

Take the opportunity to state, in a brief but compelling manner, why they should learn more about partnering with your organisation.

You need to engage them quickly by highlighting points that will get them interested in learning more.

Don't overload your potential sponsor with lots of information. Instead keep it succinct with a brief introduction and a focus on the potential outcomes for the sponsor – not what's in it for your organisation.

Follow normal conventions for a letter including putting your cover letter on letterhead, dating the letter, and clearly identifying the sender and proposed recipient. Do not use abbreviations or industry specific language.

The first paragraph should introduce yourself and your organization and include a succinct overview of your market segment (eg: the largest farming sector in Australia).

In your second paragraph you should outline the reason you are approaching the prospective sponsor.

Example:

Dear [SPONSORFIRSTNAME]

Thank you for taking the time to read this proposal; it is appreciated.

[YOURORGANISATION NAME] is the [ASENCEABOUTYOURORGANISATION]. We are currently undergoing a corporate development process which has seen us align with partners who are looking to penetrate the [MARKETSEGMENT] in [LOCATION].

It is with this in mind, we have identified [SPONSORCOMPANY] as an organisation which could benefit financially from exposure to this often hard to reach demographic.

Enclosed is a tailored corporate partnership proposal for your perusal. I will be in contact in the coming weeks to answer any questions you may have.

I would urge you to contact me on [PHONE] or [EMAIL] with an expression of your interest at your earliest convenience as this industry exclusive offer has only been extended to a small select group of organisations and we are experiencing a high level of interest.

Once again, many thanks for your time and we look forward to meeting with you soon

Kindest regards,

[NAME]

[POSITION]

[ORGANISATION]



Cover Page

You never get a second chance to make a first impression. And neither does your proposal.

So make your cover page a compelling invitation to learn more. Use an engaging image that invites the reader to open it.

Your proposal is your salesperson. It needs to be appropriately dressed. Make it:

- relevant,
- striking, and
- visually interesting.



A Positioning Statement

A positioning statement must strongly convey the message "We can help you be more successful through ...".

It should sell your organisation in a way that makes the sponsor excited and interested in working with you by describing, in a compelling way, why your organisation is the ideal partner and route to market.

As part of this you can highlight some of the key benefits you can provide them with such as:

- access to key decision makers,
- generating new leads,
- ability to influence specific groups

Don't focus on your organisation and its history. Instead create a story that they can become a part of – and generate positive outcomes for their organisation at the same time.

A List of Benefits

List your benefits in order of priority to your sponsor. Explain each benefit with at least one paragraph of justification highlighting exactly why this item will help your sponsor achieve more success.

For a high value partnership proposal, this is a summary of the potential opportunities. It's talking in terms of what could be done – not a commitment to undertake each element.

For a low value partnership proposal this should be a specific list of exactly the benefits that will be provided.

It is important that the benefits you offer will be exciting to the potential partner and deliver them a tangible return.

Some level of exclusivity will make your offer even more attractive.

Key Contacts

On your key contact page, place a photo of each senior member of staff and a brief bio of each along with contact details.

Also include a photo and brief bio of any key board member whose profile will be attractive to sponsors (but no contact information).

Ensure that all staff and board members profiled in the proposal are aware they have been included and are aware of the sponsorship project.

Sponsors need to feel comfortable that they are speaking with someone of equal standing to make an informed decision. So ensure their main point of contact is someone of commensurate seniority.

Return on Investment Reporting

In the proposal, outline a process and frequency of reporting on the success of the partnership.

This element is often overlooked despite being one of the main reasons sponsors don't renew.

You need to understand how your partner will define the success of the partnership.

You can then ensure the measurement and evaluation processes reflect your performance on things you can control (eg: the number of introductions, not sales).

Once you know how they are measuring success, you can track and report against those variables. This information will be invaluable and will become the focus of discussions when renewing or on-boarding sponsors.

In an exceptionally competitive sponsorship industry, it will set you apart from the competition in a very positive way.

Pricing

Set your pricing at a level that does not undersell your value. If you're a route to market for a product that will generate 5 million dollars for the sponsor, then you need to price accordingly.

Balanced pricing combined with outcomes will ensure your sponsor will return again and again and again.

Application Form & Terms and Conditions

The application form and terms and conditions will vary between organisations. It is important that your application form include:

- Contact details for primary contact person
- Additional contact persons
- Scope of exclusivity
- Join/Start date
- Term of the agreement
- Any special arrangements or inclusions.
- Authorisation (authority to sign and an agreement to the T&Cs).
- Signature

The terms and conditions should cover as much as possible but, ideally, be kept to an A4 page. SMS has samples of T&Cs and Contracts available for reference but legal advice on your specific situation is recommended.

About the Author

Julian More is Australasia's foremost nonprofit sponsorship practitioner specialising in charities, associations and other non-profits. Julian specialises in



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