

JUMP-STARTING YOUR SPONSORSHIP CAMPAIGN

By Chris Moler, USIndoor Sponsorship Director

Many mid-sized to small-sized sports and recreation facilities, whether an indoor facility or outdoor complex, want to engage in sponsorship sales and management. Some have never tried. Others are tired of selling banners and dasher board ads, putting logos on their website and providing a few other benefits and are now finding that this sort of sponsorship campaign is just not enough.

Particularly over the last three years, sponsorships have become more integrated and complicated. Banners, logos, impressions ("spots and dots") are just a small portion of the deliverable process. Sports and recreation centers have a multitude of saleable benefits but often lack the resources or the know how to maximize their full potential. Most

sponsorship campaigns, regardless of size and dollar amount, have the same basic structure. Listed below are a dozen keys to this process:

1. Work with a consultant or sponsorship professional to help review the entire process. Beware of advertising agencies that profess to be sponsorship professionals. In this diminishing world of traditional advertising, many ad agencies see sponsorship sales as a new revenue stream and are jumping on the bandwagon, but most are using traditional advertising campaigns and disguising them as a sponsorship campaign. Do your homework and research the experience of the consulting agency and its track record of sponsor sales, and especially repeat sales to that same sponsor.
2. Uncover all the potential saleable benefits and rights. Learn what opportunities you have that a sponsor wants access to. Overcome sacred cow issues and address territorial boundaries with other divisions in your organization. Get total buy in from board members, top leadership and key stakeholders early on. Don't sell what you cannot deliver or might be stripped away by some higher authority.



3. Package your sponsorship benefits into manageable packages. Be careful not to give away top benefits at mid-to smaller levels. The packaging process can be very creative. I usually refer to this as "off the shelf inventory" that I know I can deliver with each particular sponsorship.
4. Build a sponsorship campaign that meets the needs of the sponsor and not just you the property owner. Knowing what you are selling:
 - a. Helps the sponsor sell more product,
 - b. Helps the sponsor enhance its brand image,
 - c. Helps the sponsor meet local business objectives,
 - d. Helps the sponsor meet employee/recruiting/human resource needs,
 - e. Helps the sponsor introduce new products or services to your clientele,
 - f. Helps the sponsor solve a local problem that it has expressed.
5. Allow for creative thinking and benefits. Sponsors want to own a piece of the property in a proprietary and exclusive manner. Build in options like naming rights of select fields or areas of the venue, title rights to a major tournament or event, select category exclusive options, and value-in-kind propositions where they can trade a service or product that

can be budget relieving in exchange for some or even the entire cash request.

6. Create attractive, concise sales collaterals. My brother-in-law, who was a direct-mail guru, once said that in marketing, you have three to five seconds to capture their attention. The trick is to get them to open it, read it and respond to it. With all the mass advertising that we are competing with, those words of advice are never truer. Your piece has to stand out, be short and concise, capture the imagination and get the prospect beyond the sales proposition and to the brainstorming position, where they see your sponsorship as a plausible solution to several of their business needs. There is a definitive process and art to selling sponsorships.
7. Be aware that your proposal is just one of thousands that are being reviewed, and the primary purpose
8. Engage in a creative, energetic and persistent sales campaign. This may require hiring a full-time, dedicated and experienced advertising or marketing sales person, who has sponsorship and special event experience.
9. Follow through with a thorough contractual process that protects you, the property owner and the sponsor.
10. Follow through on a well thought out activation plan to deliver all the benefits you promised and sold. Execute on all deliverables. Ensure the sponsor also executes on all that it promised. Be ready and able to manage both sides of the sponsorship campaign.
11. Document deliverables! Account for media, impressions and other

of the review process is to weed out. You must make your proposal stand out in order to make the cut.

methods of the sponsors return on investment and track. Be able to report periodically on the progress of the sponsorship. Calculate and report a final return on investment in a formal summary to the sponsor.

12. Create a renewal process to include contract renewals and up-sells, first rights of refusal and exclusive options.

Sponsorships are not easy. The process is similar to many full-blown marketing and capital fund-raising campaigns but require considerably more ingenuity. However, the payout for successful campaigns can be well worth the effort.

Chris Moler is Sponsorship Director of USIndoor and president of STAAR Solutions, based in Oklahoma City, OK. For a custom solution to your sponsorship needs or to learn more about the sponsorship process, USIndoor members are encouraged to contact Chris directly via www.staarsolutions.com or 405-517-5106.



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