

Guidelines on sponsorship sales and management

The purpose of this document is to provide some guidelines regarding the event sponsorship sales and management process, covering 5 key steps and complementing the guidelines with:

- Recommendations based on previous sponsorship sales and management experiences;
- Sponsorship proposal template; and
- Sponsorship proposal example.

Please note that the sponsorship proposal example is provided as a concrete example of sponsorship package: it is fictional, yet it's modelled against a real sponsorship package developed by the FIDE Marketing team, and it includes all content mentioned in Step 4 of these guidelines. For the avoidance of any doubt: all references, information and data included in the sponsorship proposal example are fictional and for illustrative purpose only.

Here's the 5 steps covered in this document:

- Step 1: Define your sponsorship assets
- Step 2: Create a target list
- Step 3: Contact the decision makers of potential sponsors on your target list
- Step 4: Draft your sponsorship proposal
- Step 5: Management and activation

Step 1: Define your sponsorship assets

□ What direct benefits can a sponsor realistically obtain by partnering with you and your event?

Any sponsorship proposal should try answer the following questions:

- 1) What's in it for them? (where 'them' is the potential sponsors).
- 2) Why should they invest some of their marketing budget on your events and/or activities?

Some examples below:

- More visibility for their brand, products and services in your country/region/area to increase business results.
- Exposure of their brand, products and services to your audience (local chess players, wider chess community, chess clubs, arbiters, trainers, etc.) and to your other existing sponsors/commercial partners.
- Association of their brand with specific social/educational activities promoted or organized by your Federation, possibly aligned with and relevant for the potential sponsors' CSR policies.
- Opportunity to connect with local communities.
- Opportunity to engage employees and/or executives of the company.

To clearly define your sponsorship offer:

- Identify each event, program and activity as "properties" to sell
- Take each property and break it down further into individual items (logo placement, speaking opportunities, free tickets, guest hospitality in VIP lounge, social media exposure, etc.)
- Create a new chart listing each asset and the value you've assigned to it as a starting point. For valuing your assets, it might be useful to collect information about sponsorships of local events of similar size and an analysis on the market value of similar media exposure options.
- Brainstorm with key staff and wider network to identify non-traditional opportunities for sponsors (e.g. simultaneous chess exhibition with the winner of the relevant tournament, sponsor's guests participating in VIPs + GMs tournament to be held as a side event of the sponsored tournament, and more).
- Contact sponsors, past and present, and ask them what they would like to see as part of their package or what they wish they had more of.

All in all, your sponsorship proposal should demonstrate how it would generate value to your potential sponsors. If you look at your event through their eyes, you can quickly figure out which elements are the most appealing for their needs and goals.

Step 2: Create a target list

☐ There are three main criteria you may use when considering a potential sponsor:

- 1) **Industry:** is the company and their products/services a good fit with your organization? Your goal is to find a sponsor with a significant audience cross-over, strong alignment with your values and principles, and appeal for the attendees of your event.
- 2) **Location:** depending on your events or activities this might not be that important. But location is a factor worth considering if you expect a partner to send executives to the event or directly contribute in running the event.
- 3) **Past sponsorship history:** the best sponsors already know the value of this type of partnership because they've done it before and have had positive results.

Investigating which events and/or initiatives they've sponsored in the past will also be another clue into the compatibility of your event and those potential sponsors, it would give you some insights on how those sponsorships were activated, and how in your event you may possibly provide them with some different and innovative ways to activate their sponsorship.

Combining that information with the key arguments regarding your event/activity will allow you to identify some of the key selling points for each target sponsor.

☐ Determine sponsor compatibility

There are some questions you should answer to use when considering a potential sponsorship compatibility:

- About how many events, and which events, have they sponsored in the past?
- Do their key brand elements and values closely match ours?
- Which sponsors provide the most relevant opportunity for us to achieve our event objectives?

☐ Sponsorship prospecting and pipeline building

- Make a sales chart in Excel (or use your database) with the following headings:
Prospects, Contact Made, Meetings Booked, Proposal Submitted, Follow-up Meeting, Outcome
- Check out other local sports organizations to see who is sponsoring them.
- Identify an initial list of prospects as a starting point and enter them as a "Prospect".
- Brainstorm with key staff and with your wider network about what companies you should be talking to and who can introduce you to those prospects.
- Begin to move them through the pipeline.
- Focus on moving prospects from one step to the next, not on closing the sponsorship sale in the first meeting.

Step 3: Contact the decision makers of potential sponsors on your target list

❑ When you contact a potential sponsor, make sure you keep the following tips in mind:

- **Try to contact someone you've met in person:** If that's not an option, try cold contacting a marketing manager, director, or VP in charge of sponsorships.
LinkedIn.com is a great platform for your search of contacts. You can identify the most promising contact persons /decision makers in the company by role, by business area, by geography, etc. You may also contact those people directly from LinkedIn, in case you have no other contact details.
- Warm up every cold call: introduction from a common friend, referral from another sponsor or send a SHORT introductory e-mail **where to briefly mention 3 key compatibility metrics to highlight** - the strongest, most compelling reasons why your event/activity would be a good fit, according to your research. Phrase them in an actionable way that shows how you intend to generate value.

Keep it short: one of the most common mistakes made during sponsorship sales is sending 10-page e-mails with a 30-slide proposal attached in hopes that the recipient will open, read and respond by purchasing a pre-packaged sponsorship opportunity. Unfortunately, that approach doesn't work and it is strongly not recommended.

- **In following up, always remember that the communications is all about them, not you:** connect your value proposition regarding the potential sponsorship to the information gathered during the first interaction, and possibly with a recent initiative or piece of company news they've put out: this would show them that you listened to their pain points and conducted some proper research on their activities, as well as would illustrate your ability to identify possible synergies.
- **Follow simple communications etiquette:** When approaching the company decision makers, avoid salesy language, keep everything short, sweet, and to the point. And, when in doubt, a friendly, casual approach is usually better than a super serious one.
 - Ask for an advice visit about your event/activity, never a sales call.
 - Keep in mind the goal of the first meeting: to gather information, and get a second meeting.
 - Never go in with a proposal at your first meeting.
 - Ask lots of questions, and spend more time listening than talking.
 - Never submit a sponsorship proposal without asking for permission to do so.
 - Think of your meetings as discussions between partners and not about convincing your prospect to buy an off the shelf proposal.

First Meeting Sample Questions

The suggestion is not to bring anything to your first meeting with a potential sponsor. Not a one pager, not a leave behind and definitely not a pre-packaged proposal. Instead, the main suggestion is to focus on the below questions, asking them in the same order or, even better, commit them to memory and work them into the conversation casually. Try these questions for your next meeting to help you build a custom sponsorship proposal:

- Could you please describe your target audience?
- How do you normally engage in sponsorship?
- Which elements of your previous sponsorship experiences worked better, and which ones didn't work?
- What can you tell me about your business goals for the coming year?
- What would you consider to be the most important elements of a sponsorship package?
- Would you mind having a look at a draft proposal and offering some feedback

Step 4: Draft your sponsorship proposal (see template)

- Create one sponsorship inventory per property (event, initiative, program, etc.)
- Identify your audience, event attendees and any relevant demographic information
- Define your event promotion plan
- List all of your assets from the inventory and the associated value/price of each
- Think about a 'menu' approach, not focus on "Gold, Silver, Bronze" levels and let your sponsors choose what works best for them
- Mark your proposal DRAFT and connect with existing sponsors (if any) and prospects, ask them for their advice on what you are missing
- Create a custom package based on each sponsor's interest
- Tell your sponsors in person and in the package itself that you want to build something tailored to their needs and everything in the package is negotiable

☐ List of content:

- **Introduction about chess today** (please see the template), as it would help contextualize why sponsoring chess is a very valuable option for a brand.

The text provided in the sponsorship proposal template should ideally be integrated with some relevant data from the local chess community.

- **About your organization**
- **Event description**
- **Insight into your event experience** including past analytics, event survey data, and what event goals you have already achieved.
- **Your primary online and offline audience data** (a simple Google Analytics check can help you gather the number of people visiting your website, number of views of your website, etc.) and offline, including demographic information about your audience (e.g. players, arbiters, trainers, chess club members, size and age split of each group, etc.), as well as surveys from past events and initiatives which are especially helpful when crafting your proposal.

Any quantitative and qualitative information you may have about your audience and about people participating in your events or activities, both online and offline, would be of great help to shape your sponsorship proposal. Potential sponsors may request such information to understand how big and relevant your audience is for them.

- **Event promotion plan - marketing strategy:** How do you plan to maximize your event Return on Investment? A solid plan shows your potential for success and helps them feel confident in their decision.

Marketing in this context refers to how you're planning to give visibility and communicate around your event/activity, which channels you would use to give exposure to the potential sponsors (e.g. Will your event have a dedicated website and social media posts? Which social media? How many posts per day or during the event? Would those posts include photo or video content? How many followers do you have across those social media? What's the social media reach and engagement across your platform for previous and/or events? Are you planning to issue some press releases? How many journalists/media will receive your press releases? Can sponsors' brands be somehow

integrated in those press releases? Will your event be streamed online? On which platform(s)? How many viewers do you have on those streaming platforms?, etc.).

- **Sponsorship rights inventory and additional activation opportunities** that will be used to provide the sponsor's brand exposure at the event.

Some examples below:

Offline:

- Branding in the playing hall, in other areas of the playing venue, press area, commentators' area, common area for visitors, Opening Ceremony, etc. Placing backdrops/logo walls carrying the sponsors' logos across the playing venue is one of the most traditional sponsorship activation opportunities at events.
- Branding on event materials (badges, lanyards, event program, tickets, posters, etc.).
- Advertising video from the sponsors displayed on screens placed around the playing hall.
- Hospitality (including possibly a VIP lounge to host the sponsors' guest, with dedicated catering options). The VIP lounge could be named after a sponsor.
- On-site activations: here the options could be various, depending on the available resources (e.g. Sponsors' guests could participate in a simul and/or in a VIPs – GM tournaments, masterclasses could be given by renowned GM to the sponsors' guests, etc.).
- Participation in the Opening Ceremony and Closing Ceremony, with the opportunity of giving a welcome speech.
- Possibility to award prizes to the winners.
- Possibility to introduce a dedicated prize (e.g. most brilliant game of the tournament) named after the sponsor.
- Participation in the First Move Ceremony of one of the games.
- Joint press conference to announce the partnership.
- Participation in official press conferences with the players.
- Sponsor's booth placed in the playing venue, to allow the promotion of the sponsor's products and services to the players and the public visiting the event (e.g. distributing leaflets or samples, etc.).
- Product placed in the playing hall/venue,
- VIP and standard tickets for the playing hall.

Online:

- Logo and company description on the event website.
- Social media posts (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, Discord, Tik Tok, etc.) with reference to the sponsors.
- Contest on social media, awarding prizes offered by the sponsors.
- Sponsors' logo and/or mention about sponsors on event reports and press releases distributed to local/international media.
- Sponsors' logo and/or mention about sponsors on newsletters distributed to your network.
- Sponsors' logo and video advertisements included in the event online streaming.

The above list is not exhaustive, additional/alternative activation opportunities can be identified and included in the inventory.

- **A clear explanation of sponsorship benefits** - back up each statement with your plan for making sure these results are achieved based on any relevant data you have at your disposal.
- **A list of specific contributions** that you're looking to obtain from sponsor relationships:

- Financial contribution of various levels, depending on the sponsorship visibility/exposure associated to the list of items included.
- Value-in-kind: in this case, you may approach a potential sponsor active in a business area that could be relevant for your own event (e.g. playing hall rental, accommodation, travel, logistics, insurance, catering, etc.), and, instead of a financial contribution, you may request to receive the relevant service you need from them for your event, in return for an agreed level of sponsorship visibility/exposure.
- Mix of financial contribution and value-in-kind, depending on the overall value of the sponsorship package and of their in-kind contribution.

This section may be completed only once the sponsorship discussion is at an advanced stage and the actual sponsorship package is being shaped together with the sponsor.

- **Any additional perks or extras** not mentioned elsewhere in the proposal, including things like reimbursed accommodations for sponsors or social events like gala dinners.
- **Images of previous events**, especially displaying sponsorship activations and brand exposure examples.
- **A table or diagram** that summarizes the proposal in a single page.
- **Contact details & call to action**

Step 5: Management and activation

Once the sponsorship sales process is positively finalized and a contract is agreed, the sponsorship management and activation stage shall take place.

Here's some recommended steps to keep track of this fundamental component of the relationship with sponsors:

- Build a checklist based on the sponsorship package and activations agreed with each sponsor.
- Assign dates and project leads for every item to deliver before and during the relevant event.
- Check in with your sponsors regularly to make sure they take advantage of every item in the sponsorship package.

Always keep in mind that they're your clients and should be treated as professionally as possible. One of the goals of that approach is to retain them as sponsors for the future editions of your event, if the relationship is positive for both parties, and possibly increase their sponsorship investment over time.

Once your event has taken place, the recommendation, and common practice, is to show your sponsors that you delivered on your commitments.

Arrange a meeting with your sponsors. Invite them to bring anyone else on their team who is involved in guiding their sponsorship spending to seek their feedback as well.

Before you meet, create and deliver your sponsorship fulfillment report, which documents all the activations and things you did deliver, along with all of the things you missed and why.

Go one step further and include pictures, event attendance data, screen shots of their logos, recordings of speaking engagements, product placement, media report (traditional and social media), online streaming viewership data, and everything that would be relevant to be included.

What purpose does this serve? It does all of the following:

- Proves to your sponsors that you delivered.
- Gives your sponsors something to share with their superiors to justify the investment.
- Tells your sponsors that you are a professional and know how important their investment is.
- Reminds them of all the things they received in their sponsorship package.
- Sets you up to request for feedback asking the sponsors how they thought it went, what they thought of the sponsorship fulfillment report and what you could do to improve, and even to more questions about their goals to give you sponsorship package ideas for next year.
- If the sponsorship is not renewed yet, this might be the occasion to discuss that option.

After that meeting, schedule regular check-ins in your calendar to stay front of mind with your sponsors.