

Fundraising fact sheets:

Introduction to arts sponsorship series

Five Steps to Arts Sponsorship

As explained in the factsheet titled ‘Why do businesses sponsor the arts’, companies sponsor the arts because they believe that by doing so they will be able to achieve a variety of corporate objectives, all of which are ultimately focused on helping a company improve its bottom line. This is not philanthropy on their part. Sponsorship can work and proof of this is that last year companies spent over £127m on their cultural partnerships in the UK.

Knowing why a company might support the arts – what they want from the partnership – is vital to understanding how to approach them. The first factsheet explores what companies want from their cultural partnerships; this one explores key steps arts organisations should take to develop successful corporate partnerships.

Securing corporate sponsorship is a complex task which takes considerable time and effort. You need to consider the different stages involved carefully before you attempt to develop a relationship with a business. This sheet identifies the main steps and asks key questions you will need to answer at each stage of the process. Don’t underestimate the amount of time required – sponsorship is a long term solution, and hardly ever a quick fix.

1) Assess your organisation

The first stage is to take a careful look at your own organisation so you can identify what you need, what resources you are able to commit and what you are ‘selling’.

What do you require?

What do you hope to achieve with the money raised through sponsorship? Is there another way to achieve the same ends (it might be easier to get someone to give you in-kind support rather than cash)? Bear in mind that a company is not interested in how you spend the money – their only interest is in receiving the benefits that you are able to offer – so always focus on getting sponsorship for your most ‘sponsorable’ activity, whether that specific activity needs the cash investment or not.

Do you have the resources?

- Time is a key factor. Detailed research into a company's marketing ambitions and type of customer (both yours and theirs) is essential. Understanding their CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) is helpful. Finally, recognise that developing relationships with companies can take up to two years before they are ready to consider a proposal.
- Is your staff able to undertake the work; it is important to establish whether that is their whole job or just part of it.
- Involvement of the Board and Trustees is advisable

2) Develop a sponsorship package and proposal

What can you offer to sponsors?

Arts organisations need to show how a sponsor can benefit through a direct association with an arts organisation. These can be tangible, such as publicity, use of facilities and tickets or intangible derived through association with the concepts and ideas that your organisation explores. You need to develop a proposal which describes your aims, objectives, activities and public image in clear, concise and positive way to attract sponsors. But remember – your proposal needs to be clear about how your project or organisation benefits the sponsor – it's not about you, it's about them! Be sure that you have thoroughly researched the company's business aims and objectives and its Corporate Social Responsibility programmes and policy (See our fact sheet on Corporate Social Responsibility).

A good proposal should be simple and direct. It needs to set out:

- Who you are
- Your supporters
- The project
- Your audience
- Publicity and Marketing opportunities
- Sponsorship benefits such as hospitality opportunities
- The cost

You can find some example proposal sheets in the Fundraising Toolkit on the Arts & Business website.

3) Research businesses to approach

How do you know who to approach?

Once you've identified your own needs and requirements, you can start researching possible sponsors. You need to build a database which includes as much information as possible about each prospect.

Start by reviewing what your main 'offering' is and where there might be a match for an appropriate company. Review your own existing business contacts to see if there are organisations which may be able to offer support or provide introductions to others which may have the resources to support your work.

Other possible sources of information and support include:

- Local reference library
- The Internet
- Sector support agencies, including Arts & Business
- Local business bodies, such as Chamber of Commerce
- Business support agencies, like Business Link
- Newspapers and business periodicals; both local and national

Comprehensive research is the foundation stone of successful fundraising. It enables you to finesse your proposal so it coalesces with the aims and objectives of your sponsorship target.

4) Make a successful approach

The simplest way to understand how best to approach a business is to put yourself in their position. This not only allows you to finesse your approach, but also means you can anticipate objections or concerns before they arise. You must remember that when it comes to sponsorship it is usually obvious what's in it for your organisation. What is less obvious is what's in it for the sponsor.

You need to think carefully about:

- Timing your approach
- Who to approach
- When to write and when to call

- How to approach different meetings
- Handling objections
- What to do if they say “no”

And most importantly:

- Whether you can realistically help them meet their business objectives

It should go without saying that you need to know as much as possible about a business before you make any approach for sponsorship. Always check out a company’s website and publicity material. You should also review their annual report and accounts. Use the internet to research for any news stories.

Don’t fall into the trap of producing a glossy brochure when approaching a company! The key thing is to engender sufficient trust in the target business so that they believe you can deliver your side of the partnership. For some businesses a glossy brochure might help a little in this, but most businesses will be more impressed by a professional approach to how you manage the partnership rather than what you sent to a printer.

5) Build a lasting partnership

The best way to a successful sponsorship relationship is to make a written agreement setting out expectations, roles and responsibilities with each sponsor. Remember to share as much information as possible with your sponsor, for example, audiences achieved, press coverage and reviews. A long term relationship often flows from a shared vision and good communications.

Further Information on our website:

Arts & Business’ annual Private Investment in Culture, in our Research section, is a valuable resource packed with facts and figures and case studies about what businesses have supported.

Take a look at our case studies section online to read about inspirational partnerships.

See our Measuring Return on Investment fact sheet within the Fundraising Toolkit – it will help you see how companies measure the benefits of sponsorship.

Elsewhere on the web:

The Directory of Social Change's database is a useful starting point:
www.companygiving.org.uk

www.sponsorship.com is IEG's website which provides excellent information on the whole sponsorship market.

Attend one of our sponsorship training days

Why not visit our Events section on the website to find out when our next Introduction to Sponsorship course is taking place; we also have a special master class series titled Cradle to the Grave Giving running throughout 2009.

ENDS

Further information and other factsheets in this series can be found in the Fundraising Toolkit at: www.artsandbusiness.org.uk. This on-line service is being developed in partnership with Creative Choices^o, the careers and professional development website for the creative and cultural industries.

