



SPORTS FIELD
MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

www.sportsfieldmanagement.org

Sponsorship

Introduction

Chapters all have some sort of revenue stream from sponsors, which are typically commercial companies that support the Chapter financially. In return, these companies seek interaction and access to Chapter members. Sponsorships can be purely transactional, or some Chapters work with their commercial companies for in-kind donations. For example, sponsorship money may not go directly to a Chapter, but a company directly pays for lunch at a Chapter event. Some Chapters sell sponsorships annually at the beginning of the year; others sell per event.

Noted below are some sponsorship ideas that have been successful for Chapters.

Ideas for Consideration

Tiered Program

- :: Some Chapters offer various levels of sponsorship.
- :: Monetary values are aligned with each level; thus, benefits and recognition vary as well.
- :: These sponsorships are recognized at events, meetings, website placement – throughout all Chapter activities and in communication vehicles.
- :: It is important to sell this type of sponsorship at the beginning of each year, so that the sponsorship runs annually with maximum time to provide benefits.

Consider using sponsorship levels to:

- :: Determine Chapter conference booth or placement locations at your annual exhibition.
- :: Provide complimentary golf registrations at Chapter golf tournaments and publicize those sponsors through on-course signage. Some golf tournaments paint the sponsors logo on a prominent area of the course.
- :: Include the company logo on event promotional materials such as cups, bags, portfolios, etc.
- :: Communicate through e-mail blasts, ads on the website, logo placement on a brochure, etc. to fulfill recognition.
- :: Allow the company the use of your logo in its promotional channels with strict guidelines. (See Miscellaneous Tips).

Also consider packaging a certain number of memberships with their recognition program. That enriches the package. The memberships can be for other commercial members from the company, or they can be provided for the company to give away to practitioners. To avoid a conflict of interest where the practitioner may be unable to accept the membership due to linkage to the company, the memberships can be given out by the Chapter to the potential members of its choosing.

The challenge is to design a tiered program of recognition that is appropriate for the dollars spent.

Event Driven Program

Many of the same ideas as the tiered program can apply. Some Chapters set meeting dates and plan for the year, some do not. To be successful and to sell sponsorships by specific events, the dates must be set early so that members and sponsors can plan accordingly.

- :: Obviously, recognition at the event is key, but extending that recognition throughout the year is usually attractive to sponsors and worth more to them if they are included in publications (beyond event flier), newsletters, on social media, website, signage, etc.
- Some Chapters allow sponsors to speak at the event that they are sponsoring. This has pros and cons.
- Many Chapters have sponsor tables or allow a mini trade show during field days.
- Larger event facilities, such as convention centers, larger meeting venues, etc., may offer more opportunities for sponsor recognition. There could be available:
 - Electronic signage available to personalize with sponsor logos throughout the facility.
 - A variety of areas for banners, window clings or floor clings.
 - Podium signage or microphone flags.
 - Places to shine a logo featuring a company logo.
- :: Educational tracks within an event may offer sponsorship opportunities. For example, if your Chapter is presenting an irrigation workshop, consider having an irrigation company sponsor that irrigation education session.
- :: Holding a Chapter golf tournament can bring in some excellent sponsor dollars while providing a fun and engaging event for Chapter members.

Miscellaneous Tips

Some Chapters have "point systems" for sponsors based on their annual amount of spend. The more points, the more generous the benefits. For example, SFMA has a priority point system that prioritizes by points the timing of when a company can select their booth location on the trade show floor for the next year.

- :: Some chapters offer a "First Right of Refusal" to prior sponsors so they can continue to support the same events or at the same levels attained. However, this system does make it harder for the Chapter to offer these more visible programs to other companies, who may feel they do not get an equal chance to participate.
- Some sponsorship programs do a "non-compete" sponsorship. If a sponsorship is sold to a company that offers a specific product or service in the marketplace, that category is not available to other companies in that product line. This can be for a tiered program or an individual event sponsorship. However, some organizations do allow competing sponsors.
- Consider offering an innovative products/awards for newer or smaller companies to give them recognition. Some Chapters designate a certain section of the trade show for these innovators.
- Many sponsoring companies find value in placing the Chapter logo on their website, brochures, products, etc. Consider specifying approved language to do so that does not allow it to appear that the Chapter is endorsing any company.

