

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS

There are basic steps to follow in obtaining corporate sponsors for events at all levels. Management has prepared a general outline that may be used by unit and district officials who are interested in securing sponsors for sectional and regional tournaments. The same strategies are employed to obtain sponsors at the national level.

The key elements are:

Identify potential corporate sponsors.

Prepare a verbal and written presentation.

Negotiate an agreement.

Follow through with commitments in the agreement.

Coordinate with ACBL when targeting major companies which are multi-regional and/or national marketers.

IDENTIFY PROSPECTIVE CORPORATE SPONSORS

When you approach a potential sponsor you are on a selling mission. Think about how many people approach businesses for money -- you have to demonstrate that you're the one they should choose. Be creative in showing them what you have to offer and what makes bridge a good choice for their support.

Where do you find sponsors?

The local Chamber of Commerce. Keep in mind they may have some restrictions on how their money is used.

Check with the Chamber to see if they will share a list of member businesses. Chamber members are the businesses most likely to respond favorably to sponsorship proposals.

Local celebrities. Often, a local celebrity will be eager to participate in a sponsorship situation because of the prestige associated with an event.

Attend non-bridge conventions and sporting events in your vicinity to see what organizations are sponsors.

Who's Who lists in local weekly or monthly business newspapers and periodicals are good sources for potential sponsors.

"Network". Poll local club members to see who their contacts may be. It's really a matter of *who* you know, not *what* you know. If you have an "in" with a company, take advantage of that to at least

determine who their audience is and what type sponsorships they would most likely be interested in.

If you have a good contact with a national company, ACBL will handle all the details for you.

Research magazines whose readership is composed of people who fit duplicate bridge's current demographics (age 55+, college educated, \$50,000 + annual household income, 60% female, like to travel for pleasure, dine out, etc.)

For example, *AARP* magazine is targeted toward people age 55 and older. A high percentage of duplicate bridge players are seniors. If Buick is running advertisements in *AARP* then we know they are targeting seniors. The local Buick dealer could be contacted as a potential sponsor of the bridge tournament because research has confirmed that Buick is targeting the senior buyers' market and a large percentage of our membership matches the demographics of the audience Buick wants to reach.

ACBL works with national and multi-national companies for advertising and national tournament sponsorships. Therefore, it is very important that you coordinate your local efforts with ACBL regarding these major companies. A joint effort will increase your share of the money generated.

Pre-Visit

Advance planning is critical.

Many companies plan their budgets at least 12 months in advance. It is imperative to meet with company officials well in advance of the tournament dates.

Find out if the potential sponsors have knowledge of bridge and/or duplicate. Be prepared to briefly help them understand the size and scope of duplicate.

Do your homework.

Find out all you can about the company and its products. We cannot stress enough the importance of thorough research that allows you to be as knowledgeable as possible about the potential sponsor.

Who are the company's customers? Determine a link between duplicate bridge players and the company before you meet with company representatives.

What do you want?

Decide specifically what you're going to ask for before the meeting. If money, how much? Outline why that particular company should sponsor the bridge tournament. What's in it for them?

PREPARE A PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATION

When You Arrive

Be professional. Don't be late!

Dress appropriately in locally accepted business attire. Be prepared to make a good impression. You are a representative of the largest bridge association in the world. Your clothing and demeanor should reinforce your position.

Organization is essential.

Be prepared to answer all the prospective sponsor's questions. Provide a prospective sponsor kit and briefly discuss its contents.

Company officials receive numerous requests for sponsorships and promotional advertising. Prepare the presentation so that it will fit into the executive's busy schedule.

Determine if they have any knowledge of bridge and/or duplicate. If not, quickly help them understand the size and scope of duplicate bridge, "it's not just a local event, it's a major activity worldwide".

Now is the time to give the prospect the Prospective Sponsor Kit.

Prepare a set of materials to present to prospective sponsors in an attractive presentation folder. There are several essential items that should be included in the package -- you may insert others that are germane to your area:

One page fact sheet about your tournament.

The fact sheet should include the 3 W's:

When Where Why

Also mention the size of the tournament, who the attendees will be and where they will come from (XXX local and XXX out-of-towners are expected to participate).

Prominently list the benefits the sponsor will receive for his investment in the event.

Detail who will handle publicity. (Note: Very often, the company will prefer to oversee their own publicity because they have a paid staff responsible for publicity and promotion.)

ACBL fact sheet.

A brief history of bridge.

Copies of news clips that promote bridge.

Letters from previous sponsors.

Third party endorsements -- letters from previous sponsors -- confirming that the sponsorship arrangement was of benefit to them serve as testimonials for your event.

Flyers and daily bulletins from previous tournaments.

These give the sponsor a visible sample of the types of publications and literature that will promote his company's products and services.

NOTE: The ACBL fact sheet and brief history of bridge are available upon request from ACBL's Member Benefits department. Contact the Director of Communications for complimentary copies.

Attractive "ACBL. . .It's a great deal!" presentation folders are available from ACBL for a modest fee.

Demonstrate that the people who attend tournaments are the same people who buy their products.

Talk about the demographics of the tournament.

Attendance expected. How many will be area residents? From other areas. Where?

Male/female ratio.

Registration packets (souvenir bags).

Vendor activities.

Illustrate how the sponsor will benefit from the tournament. For example, if you are visiting a local property in a national hotel chain, you might say that the XYZ Tournament will bring in 1,000 people from out of town into your hotel. Remember, too, if you are calling on a major corporation ACBL can offer them a larger national package with local benefits and more money to the local event. Be sure to call ACBL on this type of company.

Get the prospective sponsor involved on an personal level.

Offer discounted lessons, a free play, a partner. If he shows an interest in bridge try to "fan the spark" -- but don't overwhelm.

NEGOTIATE AN AGREEMENT

What should you ask for?

Money for: flyers, give-away items, postage, rentals, signage, youth involvement.

Don't just ask for money -- it's not up to the company to figure out what they should do for the tournament or how they can promote themselves. Make it easy for them to see

how the money will be spent and what they will get from their involvement.

Give them options.

Let them know about the various levels of sponsorship, i.e. \$5,000, \$10,000 and \$25,000 or whatever the amounts are based on expected attendance and exposure.

Give them opportunities.

Provide the sponsor with an active opportunity to sell his goods or services on-site.

Print his logo on hand records, cards, souvenir bags, etc.

Use his products in the tournament's souvenir gift bag. Use coupons for his products-- they will reinforce his investment if they are redeemed.

Display his product in a booth.

Offer door prizes, then develop a mailing list from the entries. Give the mailing list to the company to provide an impact for that company beyond the impact of just the one local tournament.

In-kind services versus actual cash money sponsorships. Sometimes it is easier to obtain services or products from the company rather than it is to receive outright cash.

FOLLOW THROUGH

Promote the tournament to ensure the sponsor receives top value for its sponsorship

One way to ensure the sponsor feels they've "gotten their money's worth" is to make sure the tournament is well attended. How can you do that?

Publicize upcoming tournaments at surrounding local clubs.

Be creative in how you publicize and promote the tournament to out-of-towners.

For example, for a local tournament in El Paso, the flyer advertises "bring your partner for free on Southwest Airlines". (Southwest Airlines is always 2 for 1 on its flights.)

Advertise for free. There are lots of opportunities to promote your tournament at no cost. How?

In the newspaper.

Most newspapers have a community calendar where free announcements can be listed. These are small notifications saying what is going to happen and when. Suburban newspapers in particular are trying to fill space and are almost always glad to include

these notices.

Don't waste money buying newspaper ads. You'll be sending a message to thousands of people who have no interest in bridge. How much better it is to use your money to target the places you are more likely to reach bridge players specifically.

On television or radio.

Television and radio stations are required to make a certain number of public service announcements. Try placing brief public service announcements on TV and radio or send information to be included on the broadcast community calendar. ACBL, upon request, will provide unit and district officials with sample news releases and public service announcements.

After the Tournament

At the conclusion of the tournament, send a letter to the sponsor thanking them for their participation and reiterating what the money was used for and measure the success of what they got for their investment. Demonstrate even in some non-quantifiable ways like, "we had lots of people comment on. . .". If you show the sponsor what a good investment they made in your tournament, they will be much more likely to work with you again in the future.

Wouldn't it be nice if you were already in next year's budget before you even asked?