

SPONSORSHIP: A CASE STUDY

WHETHER IT IS TO BUILD BRAND AWARENESS, FACE TO FACE INTERACTIONS OR TO POSITION A PRODUCT SPONSORSHIP IS ESTIMATED TO ACCOUNT FOR 22% OF MARKETING BUDGETS AND IS CONSIDERED EQUALLY IMPORTANT TO TVC AND DIGITAL MARKETING.

Sponsorship is an opportunity to attract financial investment; it offers insight into products and services, enhances an association brand by linking with other strong brands. It can reduce costs by obtaining 'in kind' or contra services.

HOW DO YOU MAXIMISE SPONSORSHIP REVENUE?

1. Think commercially
Sponsorship is a financial or in-kind investment which provides a commercial return for the sponsor. Always think of sponsorship in marketing terms rather than a philanthropic donation. Just like advertising or other marketing or promotional opportunities it must deliver an acceptable return on investment to a company. Companies purchase benefits not what the event needs. Companies don't want to align with the association they want to align to reach their target audience/customers. Sponsorship is NOT about who has the most money or who sponsors the most or who 'should' sponsor an event. It's a commercial decision based primarily on 'best fit'- target markets and objectives.

2. Who to target?
Know your audience and how to target them.

What is the Event Profile?

What is your brand? Who will attend, what are their demographics and psychographics, is it a narrow or a broad audience?



Develop a wish list. Brainstorm companies interested in your attendees and use your networks.

Target list. Be aware of any industry specific requirements, what are the red herrings, go for quality not quantity.

Target Audience Profile. Research the major companies marketing and sales objectives. What does your sponsor do/sell? What are their products and their target markets? What is their future marketing strategy? Do they tend to spend big on particular opportunities? Are they planning to release new products? Do they tend to book early or late? Are they decisive or do they procrastinate? Is exhibition location crucial to securing a high investment? Is the size of their logo or location compared to their competitors important to them? Who are their competitors?

3. Develop a compelling offer
- be the best event

Understanding the marketing objectives allows you to create the most compelling product offerings.

Product. Think BIG, give the sponsor what they want, demonstrate Cost vs Value and provide the program outline.

Price. Make sure it is value-based, benchmark it and don't discount - reduce the entitlements instead.

Pitch. Well written targeted proposals hit the mark.

Appeal. It must be commercially appealing, meet their marketing and sales objectives and the program must be relevant.

4. Relationships really do matter
Your sponsors are your partners, stakeholders who want the event to succeed (not shareholders). Keep open communication, not just onsite, listen to feedback.

5. Always deliver what you promise
Create systematic delivery mechanisms to deliver entitlements or rights - pre, during and post event. Outstanding resources who are well trained - innovative and opportunity driven service sponsors and exhibitors to gain maximum ROI and leverage

spend. Operate by a code of ethics that demonstrates professionalism and leadership in the industry and promotes transparency and collaboration.

6. Keep it fresh
Seek new companies, create new sponsorship programs - go beyond gold, silver, bronze and introduce new interactive products - internet café, massages, fitness areas, lounge style seating, Nintendo Wii lounge, library for publishers, blow wave bar prior to the gala dinner, exhibition theatre with live demonstrations, short movies, magazine sections, art gallery.

CASE STUDY

The following is a recent example of a successful outcome. The PCO Sponsorship and Exhibitions team worked closely with the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) and Surveying and Spatial Science Institute (SSSI), the Steering Committee (SC) and the Operational Management Committee (OMC) to achieve:

- + 43% over the original sponsorship target
- + the largest ever exhibition in FIG history

This fantastic result was realised through:

- + Working in collaboration with the Organising Committee to achieve a shared vision and goal
- + The production of a creative and relevant Sponsorship Sales Prospectus tailored specifically for FIG 2010
- + A personalised approach where top level packages were customised to meet the sponsor's needs. The PCO then presented a case to each corporate sponsor detailing why they should contribute funding over and above their annual contribution to FIG and what benefits they would receive.

Background

The International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) is an international, non-government organisation whose purpose is to support international collaboration for the progress of surveying in all fields and applications. It is a federation of the national member

associations and covers the whole range of professional fields within the global surveying community. The commissions prepare and conduct the programme for FIG's international congresses, held every four years, and annual working weeks, held in the intervening years. The preceding FIG International Congress was held in Munich, Germany, in 2006 which gathered 1,300 delegates from about 100 countries.

The Challenge: Unfamiliar Exhibition + GFC = Worrying times!

With the the financial crisis playing on the minds of the Steering Committee (SC), the Operational Management Committee (OMC) and the PCO, there was concern as to the unknown effect it would have on delegate numbers, exhibition and sponsorship. What could they do to ensure a sound return on investment was achieved for the stakeholders?

In 2006, the FIG Congress had been integrated within the large scale INTERGEO Trade Fair, which attracts over 17,500 participants. The dilution of statistics for the exhibition component of the FIG Congress meant that the PCO and the OMC had no measure about which companies would be likely to purchase exhibition space at FIG 2010. From the Munich Congress in 2006, the only data found was that 12 booths in the INTERGEO Trade Fair had been focused on the FIG Congress, and that all 12 were complimentary! How could the PCO ensure that the correct amount of space was secured for FIG 2010, and that the sponsorship and exhibition budget be soundly forecasted?

Solution: partnerships, innovation, and unique selling points

The SC, OMC and PCO collaborated on an extensive sponsorship and exhibition plan, with the SC and OMC maximising their networks and keeping sales staff updated on new industry offerings. The SC and OMC's contribution complemented the detailed industry research conducted by the PCO, and this effective partnership ensured all markets were reached with a relevant message.

To ensure the sponsorship and exhibition marketing plan was effective, the PCO focused on two vital factors to ensure success in the face of the GFC: innovation and a unique selling point.

A concept was developed, exclusive to FIG 2010, called the Spatial Innovation Down Under Pavilion. This concept provided a unique product offering for Australian and New Zealand spatial organisations to be in close proximity, making the pavilion a destination in itself within the exhibition hall. Stands in the Pavilion were priced at a premium and Pavilion exhibitors benefitted from an exclusive networking lounge area and a well-defined space in the hall.

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The unique selling point of the Congress was its record-breaking technical program featuring over 700 speakers. The PCO ensured this was creatively highlighted in marketing activities to emphasise the benefit of exhibiting at the Congress, matching the delegate and speaker profile with the desired outcomes of the exhibitors. The result was an increase of 14% from original expectation, with 91 booths sold, a sheer success.

This article was provided by the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers. IAPCO represents today more than 100 professional organisers, meeting planners and managers of international and national congresses, conventions and special events from 37 countries. IAPCO members organise in excess of 5,600 meetings annually, totaling some 2.11 million delegates and representing an economic impact in the region of 3.43 billion euros. info@iapco.org / www.iapco.org

