

Tennis venue guide to sponsorship

Over £1 billion per year is invested in sport through sponsorship, particularly at the highest level of televised sport. However, there are different levels of sponsorship available, many at a local or regional level.

Sponsorship is a business deal between two parties, where both parties benefit from the arrangement. If a tennis venue approaches a company for sponsorship without offering something in return, it is unlikely to be successful.

Companies sponsor sport for a number of reasons, including the following:-

- Publicity
- Corporate image
- Public relations/community involvement
- Direct marketing
- Endorsement
- Target marketing
- Community development

Finding a sponsor

Finding a sponsor can be very hard work and time-consuming. By planning carefully, you should be able to reduce the amount of work and achieve greater success. However, there are no short cuts, and you are likely to receive a few rejections before you are able to negotiate a successful sponsorship agreement.

It makes sense to start with your members and their partners, who may have workplace contacts and who may be useful in identifying companies or individuals who may be prepared to discuss sponsorship.

Find out about the best people to contact and look at how companies advertise. Discover as much as you can about potential sponsors by using the Internet and local libraries to source annual reports, newsletters, press cuttings and, if possible, personal contacts.

Be quite clear on what you have to offer. Be prepared to adjust this to suit the sponsor – this is something they will often welcome.

Top tips for getting a sponsor

- Appoint a sponsor coordinator.
- Decide what you are seeking sponsorship for.
- Draw up a shortlist of companies.
- Write the sponsorship-seeking letter.
- Follow up each sponsorship-seeking letter with a telephone call.
- Write a sponsorship proposal.
- Indicate the next action.

Likely outcomes:-

- You receive no reply and the marketing manager is unavailable when you phone. It is worth trying again, but do not persist beyond two or three calls.
- You are invited to meet with a company representative to discuss your proposal further. Plan for the meeting by asking them beforehand what information they require. Invite them to an event so they can become more familiar with your organisation.

- You may progress well down the path of negotiating a sponsorship agreement, but fall at the last hurdle. In this case, thank the company for their interest, suggest you keep in touch with one another and ask for some feedback on your proposal and the reasons for their withdrawal.
- You are successful – this results from careful planning and targeting, establishing realistic proposals and good negotiation. Arrange a meeting as soon as possible with your potential sponsor. The meeting should be planned and you should go to it fully prepared so that you make clear:-
 - what your club can offer the potential sponsor
 - what benefits they will get from sponsoring your club
 - how much sponsorship you require from them
 - the term of the sponsorship.

Working together

Once a sponsor has invested in your project, it is essential that it runs smoothly and delivers high-quality experiences to participants and spectators. Keep the sponsor involved and interested in the project, as this will maintain their attention and demonstrate to them the value of their investment.

- Work closely with your sponsor at all times.
- Have a clear procedure for reporting news to the sponsor.
- Look for ways to increase the newsworthiness of the event by creating interesting photocalls or background features.
- Give sponsor logos prime position at any event and in all supporting material.

The sponsorship agreement

Lengthy, detailed contracts may not always be necessary, but sponsorship is business and it is in your interest to protect yourself and your club as much as possible in case something goes wrong. At the very least, there should be an exchange of letters between the appropriate people from each organisation, stating what each will do and how each will benefit.

The best approach is a simple agreement signed by both parties – use the LTA sample contract as a basis to get you started but you will need to amend the template to suit each deal.

Keeping the sponsor

Once you have found a sponsor, you want to keep them. Delivering the goods is essential; keeping to your agreement and delivering the benefits you promised in your sponsorship proposal will lead to a successful partnership. However, there are some special touches you can add that may make the difference between just a good business relationship and a growing interest in your organisation:

- Keep the sponsor informed of your progress.
- Evaluate your project.
- Send press cuttings on a regular basis.
- Be sure to invite representatives of the sponsor to appropriate events.
- Record any television or radio coverage of your event and ensure the sponsor receives a copy promptly.
- Be sure to offer any further opportunities to your existing sponsor first.
- Discuss renewal of your agreement well in advance. If you have other sponsorship agreements, make sure the sponsors complement, rather than compete with, one another.
- Give a full, frank and accurate final report that assesses achievements against the original objectives of both parties