

Advancing

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Philanthropy

Ideas & Strategies from the Association of Fundraising Professionals

Good Deal!

Sponsorships can be a win-win situation if you know what to expect—and offer in return

Carlos Tortolero, president of the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum in Chicago

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Where's My Line Item?

By Mikel Smith Koon, MBA, president, Mosaik Strategies LLC



Many companies operate on a January through December fiscal year, and for those companies July and August are the beginning of budget-planning season. By October, when budgets are finalized, organizations that did not have their sponsorship requests considered during the budget-planning process may have to wait until 2007 to be considered for program support.

If you want support for your organization to be included in your prospects' 2006 budget, the following will help you in your planning.

Identify your champion. A champion is a representative of your corporate prospect who understands and supports your organization's mission. The champion wants to see your organization be successful and can connect you to the decision makers.

Learn prospects' budget cycles. Although a January to December fiscal year is common, know when each of your prospects' budget cycle starts so you can be sure to talk with your champion during the planning stages. Are your prospects' budget cycles tied to government cycles, retail seasons or school terms? If you are not aware of the budgeting cycles for all of your prospects, you could be left out of the budget. It is a high price to pay for skipping a short conversation.

Know what you want. When you talk with your champion, know how you would like the company to support your organization. Not only must you have thought through the program, sponsorship or relationship, but also know what it will cost them, how much time it will take and how many people will be involved. If you and your champion have a

good relationship, encourage suggestions to make the program plan more attractive to the company. This input, along with the champion's knowledge of the company's processes and needs, can help you get a line item in the budget.

Know your prospect's WIIFM. When you suggest a corporate sponsorship, know the company's prospective "what's in it for me?" (WIIFM). A great deal of your prior planning will include developing messages for your prospect's WIIFM. Remember what a relationship with your organization offers, as well as the visibility you will provide for the prospect in your market or network. A relationship with your organization may help your prospect better understand your cause or mission. If the prospect sells a product to this market, a better understanding could help them increase sales. Access to your market via program support is a way everyone is served. Your organization can expand or enhance their programs, your sponsor becomes more visible to a target market and the market gets strong programs from your organization. Everyone benefits.

Develop benefits messaging. Before you connect with your prospect, have the benefits of the relationship thought out and itemized in a document that will help the company clearly see that the benefits meet an active need.

Follow up. Know the prospect's timeline. When is the budget going to be reviewed? When will it be submitted as a final document? What other sponsorship programs are being considering? Keep track of the schedule and follow up with your champion. By being aware of the process each step of the way, you might be able to answer questions that could keep you in the budget, or you will know sooner why your program will not be included and what you can do differently the following year to better prepare.

Arlington, Va.-based consulting firm Mosaik Strategies LLC (www.mosaikstrategies.com) advises nonprofit organizations looking for support from corporations.

the south side of Chicago and opened two stores," he says. "They were family focused, and we thought they would be a good match for this event."

It took a lengthy series of meetings with Target staff in both Chicago and Minneapolis before the deal was done.

"Target headquarters partners with our stores on local events such as this," explains Lena Michaud, spokesperson for Target. "Our giving starts with our stores because our team members [employees] are there, and they're part of the community. Part of our goal in giving back to the Chicago community is to support free arts and family events, and reaching out to our guests [customers] and team members lets them know that Target is helping to make these events possible."

Adamsick, who has worked with a

number of nonprofits over the years, advises smaller nonprofits to uphold their own integrity when negotiating and working with large, national sponsors. "In the end, our values are what we have, and we have to follow them."

Indeed, sponsorships, like any other partnership and collaborative effort, involve negotiations and compromise. "Target has a very strong brand identity, and so do we," Adamsick says. "We had been doing the festival [before Target became a sponsor] and it took some negotiating to agree on advertising designs. In 2004, Target hired a firm to design the graphics, but the second year we convinced them to let us do the design. We have in-house designers who know the museum's image and can present it. Everyone was happy."

Marketing and advertising are

among any company's top priorities, and increasing community involvement is becoming a growing part of those activities. Thus, marketing dollars will go to charities that do the best job of articulating how a sponsorship can provide direct, measurable outcomes for the business.

"The nonprofits that have really set the bar have figured out how to tap into the philanthropy and the marketing," Rogers emphasizes. By incorporating a marketing spin in your development process, and putting yourself in the shoes of a business owner, you can move into the sponsorship arena and boost your fundraising to an entirely new level. ●

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