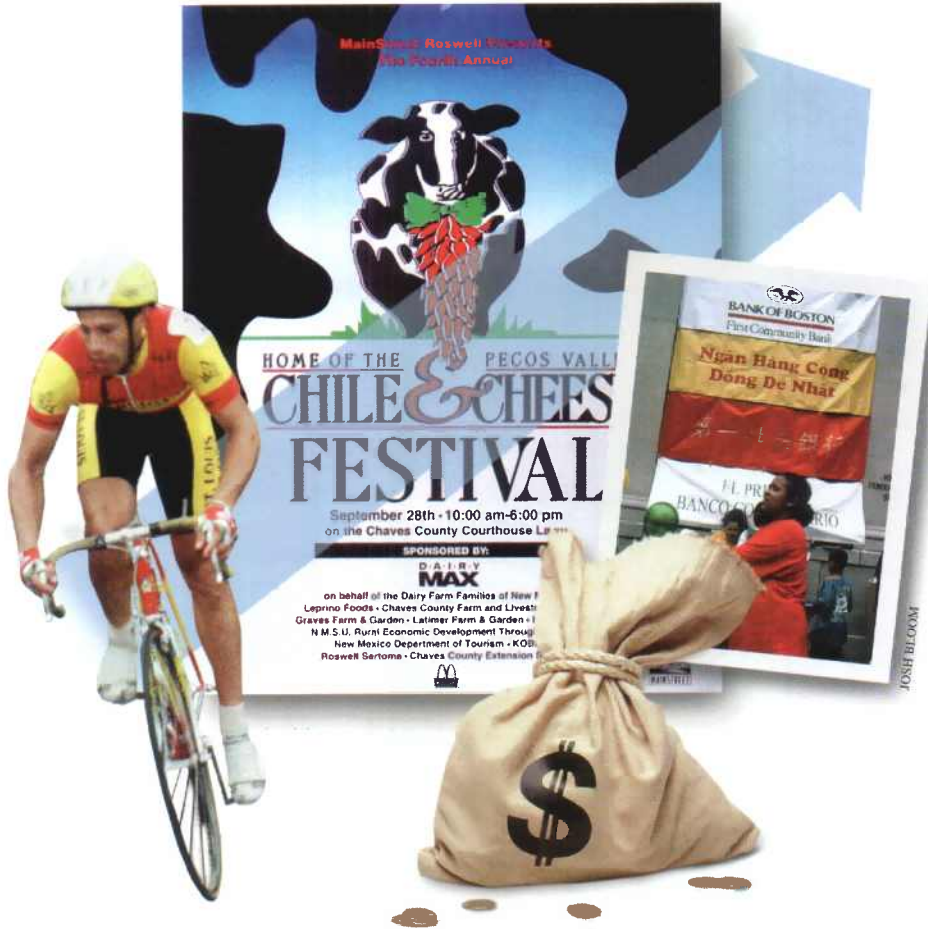




# Main Street News

THE MONTHLY PERIODICAL of THE NATIONAL MAIN STREET CENTER



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Juggling all the Main Street revitalization "balls" is a seemingly impossible task for many an Executive Director. Understanding the primary tasks and skills required for these "superstaffers" can help both directors and volunteers hammer out a productive relationship.....4

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## How to Sell More Sponsorships

Sylvia Allen

**Sponsorships are not "money for nothing." You are offering publicity and access to a specific audience so your partnership with a sponsor should reflect parallel goals.**

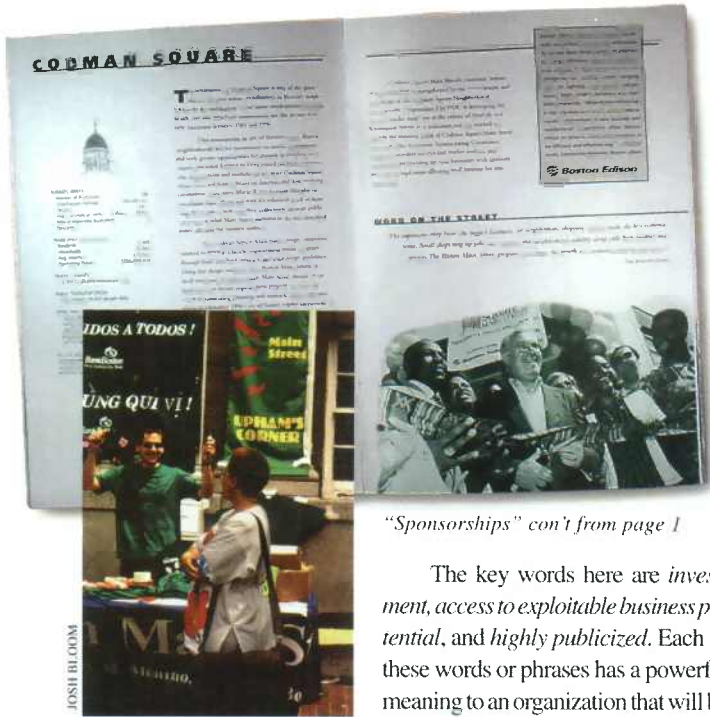
Sponsorship is no longer a linear relationship as it was in the 1960s and '70s, when a corporation gladly gave money in exchange for tickets to a performance or banner exposure. And no longer are charitable "donations" made in large sums. Today's sponsor is highly sophisticated and recognizes that sponsorship of sports, community events, arts, and entertainment is just another media component of his/her marketing mix. As a result, sponsorships must have a variety of compo-

nents, including media, cross-marketing opportunities, partnership recommendations, and event extensions to get the greatest return on investment.

First, a definition of sponsorship—and this is thanks to John Barr, formerly the sponsorship guru for Eastman Kodak in Rochester, N.Y.: "An investment in cash and/or in kind, in return for access to exploitable business potential associated with a highly publicized event or entity."

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"Sponsorships" con't from page 1

Established in 1995 as the first citywide Main Street program in the United States, Boston Main Streets has pioneered a unique sponsorship concept to provide participating neighborhoods with additional funding and resources. Each of the Main Street districts is paired up with a Corporate Buddy. Not only do these "buddies" provide money for their Main Street partners; they are also expected to serve on the local Main Street board and to provide access to company resources to help the commercial district on the road to self-sufficiency. Among the corporations partnering with the 15 Boston Main Streets communities are BankBoston, Star Market, Boston Edison, and Gillette Company.

The key words here are *investment*, *access to exploitable business potential*, and *highly publicized*. Each of these words or phrases has a powerful meaning to an organization that will be involved in sponsorship.

First, let's look at *investment*. This implies a payback, value received or ROI (Return on Investment). When selling sponsorships, it is important to demonstrate that the value of the sponsorship will be greater than the value of time and money invested.

Second is *access to exploitable business potential*. What opportunities does your event offer a business or corporation? How can the business take advantage of the relationship and exploit (a positive word!) it? Possibilities include enhancing the business's existing advertising campaign; offering hospitality to the trade, its employees, or its customers; or one of a variety of other benefits that can lead to increased business.

Third, and last, is *highly publicized*. You must be able to offer great exposure to your sponsors through your media partners and extensive public relations and promotional activities.

Before we discuss the steps to sponsorship success, it is important to know where sponsors are investing their money and how much they are spending. According to IEG, in 1998, nearly seven billion dollars will be spent on sponsorship fees alone. Of that money, approximately 65 percent will go to sports; 10 percent each on entertainment/tours, fairs/festivals, and

causes, with the balance of 5 percent going to the arts. Considering the diversity of sponsorship offerings in many Main Street communities, you can begin to see that the opportunities for selling sponsorships are plentiful.

### Getting Started

How do you get started selling sponsorships? The following is a quick overview of the process, after which we'll take an in-depth look at 12 steps to sponsorship success:

- Take an inventory of your property—what do you have to sell?
- Solicit and secure media sponsors through barter by making them sponsors of the event.
- Incorporate media components into the sponsorships offerings.
- Develop a one-page "sell" fact sheet.
- Determine the various levels of participation that you will make available, based on the inventory. These are often assembled into "packages" that are sent to potential sponsors.
- Solicit sponsorships by
  - Researching your sponsors through annual reports, on-line data searches, etc.;

- Calling and pre-qualifying at the highest level;
- Sending a one-page fax sheet;
- Following up with a call to set up an appointment;
- Meeting with prospective sponsors to determine levels of commitment;
- Working with sponsors to integrate your sponsorship opportunity into their current marketing efforts;
- Getting a commitment and signing a contract;
- Getting an initial down payment;
- Working with sponsors on participation;
- Attending the event and managing the sponsorship;
- Sending a post-event report; and
- Following up to obtain renewal for next year.

Sounds simple doesn't it! After you've done it for a while, it will become simple—and fun. If you follow some simple rules before, during, and after your sponsorship sales, you will enjoy much better results. The following section provides a more in-depth look at how to sell sponsorships.

### Top 20 Sponsors for Any Event

Sometimes it's hard to know where to start when soliciting sponsorships. To help you get started, here's a list of the top 20 potential sponsors you can approach for almost any event:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Local electronics retailer   | 11. Network marketing companies (Amway, Nu Skin, Mary Kay, etc.) |
| 2. Local beer bottler   | 12. Craftspeople   |
| 3. Local soft drink bottler   | 13. Antique dealers  |
| 4. Local banks (The Community Reinvestment Act requires banks to "give back" to the community.) | 14. Fresh produce dealers (mini-farmer's markets)                |
| 5. Local restaurant association   | 15. Local radio  |
| 6. Local retailers' association   | 16. Local cable  |
| 7. Car dealers  | 17. Local newspapers   |
| 8. Automobile dealers   | 18. Food vendors   |
| 9. Long-distance carriers   | 19. T-shirt vendors  |
| 10. Mobile telephone companies  | 20. Flea market vendors  |

H A P P Y S E L L I N G !



## Twelve Steps to Success

Before making an effort to sell sponsorships, take the time to thoroughly examine what you have to offer and to understand the potential sponsors for your activities. Use of that background, combined with a polished presentation and detail-oriented follow up, will make all the difference in the success of your sponsorship campaign. Here are a dozen steps to help ensure success in each of the three phases of sponsorship sales:

### Before You Sell

**1. Know your property and what you can sell.** Before you approach your first prospective sponsors, ask yourself some basic questions. Who is your audience? What benefits can you offer a sponsor? What are your objectives? Do you have your media partnerships in place? Be sure you know all the benefits available as an incentive for the sponsor to participate. Can you offer banners? Posters? Flyers? Bill inserts? On-site booth space for sampling or product sale? Have you included media in your offerings? Are there opportunities for trade, customer, or employee hospitality?

Where is your event being held? What are the restrictions on that location/facility? One overzealous sponsorship novice offered a new sponsor its choice of banner locations at an event. The facility where the event was being held, however, did not permit banners in some of the locations the sponsor chose. The result: an unhappy sponsor, an embarrassed salesperson, and a lost opportunity for the following year.

**2. Target sponsors with similar goals and audiences.** Your prospects will generally be more receptive if you can show that your sponsorship opportunity offers exposure to the people they

are trying to reach or for a cause that they support. It would be inappropriate, for instance, to target a tobacco company if your organization is involved in working with health concerns. That same opportunity may be perfect, however, for an athletic shoe manufacturer, health food store, or another company that promotes personal well-being. Take the time to learn about your sponsor's business and you will be more likely to get an appointment to demonstrate how the company's investment will have a positive business payback.

**3. Offer more than the value of the sponsorship.** After you evaluate what you have to sell, examine all the opportunities of exposure for the sponsor and assign a realistic value to each.

For instance, if you are advertising a facility or an event, offer your sponsor a logo or a mention in your ad. Then, determine what it would have cost the sponsor to get its message to the people reached by those ads. From those values, put together a sponsorship offering that reflects 150 to 200 percent of the value of the sponsorship.

Remember that sponsorships are not "money for nothing." All successful sponsorships are win-win situations. Your partnership with a sponsor should reflect parallel goals and audiences as well as a strong potential for reaching both.

**4. Pre-qualify your sponsors.** Don't rely on outdated lists or "hunches" to determine the contact in each target company. Make sure you don't waste your time speaking with someone who is not the decision maker. Not all companies have specific sponsorship departments; in many businesses, sponsorships

## The Frankfort Fighting Hot Dogs

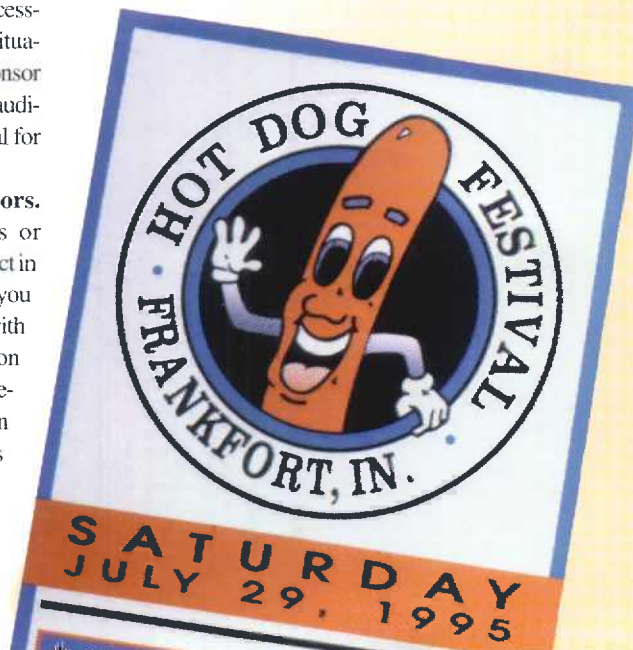
The opportunities for selling sponsorships are only as limited as your imagination. Take Frankfort, Ind., for example, a town with a great sense of pride and an even greater sense of humor. The local high

school, with tongue firmly planted in cheek, dubbed its sports teams the Frankfort Fighting Hot Dogs. Taking advantage of the community spirit gener-

ated by the Fighting Hot Dogs, Main Street organizers put together a downtown festival that played on the "hot dog" theme. The one-day festival included an obstacle course for dogs, a Wiener Classic basketball tournament, a four-mile Bun Run, a Dog Days of Summer merchants' sale, a Puppy Park full of kids' activities, entertainment from the bands Dog Talk and Frank and the Furters.... and loads of national sponsors! Frankfort's ingenuity and willingness to poke fun at itself brought Pepsi, Frito-Lay, and the Oscar Meyer Wienermobile and its Talent Search Contest to town as sponsors for the event. The result: statewide media coverage, 15,000 visitors, and the start of an annual festival that celebrates a community's pride and resourcefulness.



DICK WITTHROW



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## Where to Place Sponsorship Dollars

When developing your sponsorship proposals, keep the sponsor in mind. Understanding the company and the questions it will ask will pave the way for a more effective, and more successful, sponsorship presentation. Here are nine questions that companies will be asking to determine where to place sponsorship dollars. Asking these questions about each prospective sponsor will help you decide which companies to approach:

1. Will the sponsorship drive sales?
2. Will it enhance or reinforce brand image?
3. Will it increase awareness of the company's product, brand, or service?
4. Will it provide retail and trade tie-ins?
5. Will it drive volume and long-term profitability?
6. Will it increase share of the market?
7. Will it provide a vehicle for entertaining clients?

8. Can it differentiate the product or brand from a competitor's?
9. Will it give the company a competitive edge, i.e., exposure in a market the competition isn't reaching?

Once these questions have been answered, screen and grade the choices to select the companies you will approach by asking the following:

1. Is the objective corporate or brand specific?
2. Is it a one-time event or a long-term commitment?
3. Do the locations and dates fit company needs?
4. How many attendees can be expected (total exposure of brand/product)?
5. Will there be co-sponsors?
6. Will the company be lost in a crowd of other sponsors?
7. What is the cost relative to the expected return?

work, found the sponsor, and presented everything you have to offer, ask for the sale! Some salespeople use an assumptive approach, such as "I'll reserve the cocktail hour sponsorship for you." Others use a value-added approach to create a sense of urgency, such as "If you reserve your sponsorship now, we can include you in the upcoming advertising campaign." There are many ways to close a sale; and, as you develop your personal selling style, you'll discover the approach that works best for you and learn how to evaluate the right close for each customer.

**9. Put it in writing.** Once the sale has been closed, formalize it with a letter of agreement and contract. The contract should specifically document all of the activities that will take place, the sponsor's responsibilities,

your organization's responsibilities, and any agreements that were discussed as part of the sponsorship. The more accurate and precise the contract, the less chance for "misunderstanding" before, during, and after the event. Both parties should receive signed copies of the document. Keep in mind that changes to the agreement should be added as addenda and signed by both parties.

**10. Be flexible.** Sponsors come in many forms, and not all are title sponsors. Consider the benefits of partial sponsorships or barter arrangements. Don't take an "all or nothing" approach. For instance, a local restaurant may not be interested in paying for a title sponsorship, but may offer to provide catering services for a preview party or luncheon. Also, a sponsor may want to buy some promotional opportunities, but not all of them.

Work with the sponsor as much as you can, but be sure you are still achieving the goals you established in the beginning. Often, when someone has consistently said no to involvement with your events, you can sell them on a very small involvement—banner display or an on-site booth, for instance—to get them started. If the event is a success, you will be able to involve them at a higher level the following year.

### Bringing Them Back

**11. Follow-up is the key.** You have done all of your homework and sold

the sponsorship. That's just half the work. Now, you must make sure that everything you promised the sponsor takes place. On-site management of sponsorships is critical to happy sponsors. Make

sure banners are hung in the right location, that logos appear in ads, and that all of the other pieces are in place. Do everything you can to help the sponsor reach its goal and, in turn the sponsorship will help your reach your goals. Dropping the ball now could mean losing the sponsor forever.

**12. Report your results.** At the end of the project, or at periodic intervals during long-term sponsorships, submit a wrap-up or update report. Spell out the goals you set, how those goals were achieved or are being achieved, and activities that took place. Include survey information, news clippings, etc. Issue the report within 30 days after the event or at predetermined quarterly or monthly dates during long-term sponsorships. Follow up with sponsor to make sure that the report was clear and to get feedback. When sponsors feel uninformed, they may begin to question their investment. Make sure they

**Most sponsorship sales are made after the fifth "no" ...so just keep asking and sooner or later you will succeed.**



**Sponsorships come in many forms. Some companies may not be interested in paying to sponsor an event but may donate equipment or services instead.**



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"Sponsorships" con't from page 13

know how important their sponsorship is!

The keys to success in sponsorship sales are to research your prospects well and thoroughly understand what you have to offer. Be thorough, informed, and flexible and you have the potential to make virtually anything happen. Keep in mind that many sponsorships can take a long time to develop and that most good salespeople are successful because they are tenacious; they don't give up. Most sales are made after the fifth "no," so don't be discouraged if a company doesn't say "yes" right away. Just keep asking and sooner or later you will succeed. ❀



**Sylvia Allen is president of Allen Consulting, Inc., located in Holmdel, N.J. She has taught sponsorships at New York University for the last decade, has helped many Main Street programs develop successful sponsorship programs, has offered her sponsorship strategies at the last five National Town Meeting on Main Street™ conferences (to rave reviews) and publishes *The Sponsorship Newsletter*. Ms. Allen can be reached at 732/946-2711 or via e-mail at [sylvia@allenconsulting.com](mailto:sylvia@allenconsulting.com).**

## JOB ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Main Street Manager

The Borough of West Reading, Pa., located in the heart of outlet country is seeking an individual to direct a newly established Main Street program. Responsibilities include business recruitment, marketing and promotion, nonprofit/volunteer management, and project coordination. Self-motivated applicants must be able to work independently and cooperatively with business people and volunteers. Excellent verbal and communication skills and grant writing experience a must. Applicants should have related experience and demonstrated leadership abilities in a like position. Send resume, letter of interest, professional requirements, and salary requirements by November 15, 1998 to: West Reading Main Street Foundation, c/o West Reading Borough Hall, 500 Chestnut Street, West Reading, PA 19611.

## For More Information

### Periodicals

*Advertising Age*, Crain Communications, Inc., 740 North Rush Street, Chicago, IL. (312) 649-5200.

*Outwalk's Brand Week*, A/S/M Communications, Inc., 49 East 21st Street, 12th Floor, New York, NY. (212)529-5500.

*Amusement Business*, BPI Communications, Inc., Box 24970, 49 Music Square West, Nashville, NT 37203, (800) 999-3322.

*CableVision*, International Thomson Communications, Inc., 825 Seventh Avenue, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10019. (212) 887-8400.

*Electronic Media*, Crain Communications, Inc., 740 North Rush Street, Chicago, IL 60611. (312) 649-5200.

*Entertainment Marketing Letter*, 160 Mercer St., 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10012. (212) 941-0099.

*Promo*, 11 River Bend Drive South, P.O. Box 4225, Stamford, CT 06907-0225. (203) 358-9900.

*Sponsorship Report*, IEG, 213 West Institute Place, Suite 303, Chicago, IL 60610. (312) 944-1727.

*The Sponsorship Newsletter*, The Sponsorship Newsletter, Inc., 89 Middletown Road, Holmdel, NJ. 07733. (732) 946-2711.

*The Sponsorship Report*, 555 Richmond Street West, Suite 504, Toronto, Canada M5V 3B1. (416) 360-3894.

*The Sports Marketing Newsletter*, 1771 Post Road East, Suite 180, Westport, CT 06880. (203) 255-1787.

### Books

Allen, Sylvia. *How to Be Successful at Sponsorship Sales*. Available through Allen Consulting, (732) 946-2711.

Association of National Advertisers. *Event Marketing: A Management Guide*.

Ernst & Young. *The Complete Guide to Special Event Management*. John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

Schreiber, Alfred. *Lifestyle and Event Marketing*. McGraw-Hill.

### Executive Director

The Historic Salisbury (N.C.) Foundation, a 26-year-old historic preservation organization, is seeking an executive director. Candidates must have three years' minimum experience in preservation advocacy and leadership, revolving funds management, fund raising (both direct solicitations and grants), and property management (the foundation owns two historic museums, a community events center, and rental properties). The director supervises four full-time staff members and works with an active board and volunteers. Those interested should submit a resume, three references, and salary requirements by October 31, 1998 to: Patricia Rickard, Search Committee, Historic Salisbury Foundation, Box 4221, Salisbury, NC 28144.

### Economic Development Specialist

Lower Merion, Pa., (pop. 60,000) an affluent, first-ring suburb of Philadelphia, is seeking an experienced professional to plan and implement business enhancement programs for six distinct commercial districts, based on

local resources, needs, goals, and market opportunities. Position requires degree in urban planning, economic development, or a related field, and experience in the development of older commercial districts. Advanced degree/certification preferred. Must also have strong communication, interpersonal, presentation, planning, and computer skills. Salary DOE, plus excellent benefits. Position open until filled. EOE/M/F/H/V. Send resume to: Township Manager, 75 E. Lancaster Avenue, Ardmore, PA 19003

*Job announcements should not exceed 150 words and should be mailed or faxed to the editor of Main Street News by the 5th of the month for the next month's issue (i.e., November 5th for December issue). Mail to Editor, Main Street News, National Main Street Center, 1785 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20036 or fax to (202) 588-6050.*

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Fax: 202/588-6050  
E-mail: [mainst@nthp.org](mailto:mainst@nthp.org)  
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President  
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### Amanda West

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Information Resources, NMSC

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is the only national, private organization chartered by Congress to encourage public participation in the preservation of sites, buildings, and objects significant in American history. The National Main Street Center®, a program of the National Trust, provides technical assistance in downtown and neighborhood commercial district revitalization to communities throughout the nation.