



# Boost Your Share of Corporate Sponsorships

Here are proven ways to make corporate sponsorships work for you.

By Maureen Joyce & Darlene Y. Motley



Corporate sponsorship (in which a company gives a group funding in return for publicity or other benefits) is a growing trend. And nonprofits have a unique ability to position their causes, projects, and events as marketing vehicles for corporations.

Yet nonprofits receive only about 10% of all sponsorship expenditures.<sup>1</sup> How can you position your organization to receive a greater portion of these dollars?

First, it's vital to understand that all companies have two types of objectives when making sponsorship decisions: goodwill-oriented and marketing-oriented objectives. Traditionally, corporations sponsor for-profit events to address their marketing aims and nonprofit causes to fulfill their goodwill goals. And they place more importance on objectives associated with marketing, which is why they expend more dollars in pursuit of these aims.<sup>2</sup> (See a summary of these objectives in Table 1).

Nonprofits tend to reinforce this attitude by stressing goodwill goals when they make their case to businesses. But if you emphasize marketing objectives as well, you can help those in the corporate world move from their usual way of thinking about sponsoring nonprofits.

An example of such an approach is the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh. It has been hugely successful in obtaining corporate sponsorships because it has gone beyond offer-

**Table 1: Objectives of Corporate Sponsors**

Marketing Objectives	Goodwill Objectives
Enhance Brand Image	Increase Goodwill Image
Promote Corporate Name	Expand Corporate Philanthropy
Reach a Target Audience	Deepen Employee Involvement
Advance Corporate Image	Develop Social Responsibility
Develop Brand Name	Broaden Community Involvement
Improve Overall Image	Enhance Employee Satisfaction

ing its sponsors goodwill-focused objectives such as philanthropy, community involvement, and social commitment. It shows businesses how they can improve their marketing goals by being connected to a wonderfully imaginative nonprofit organization, which has broken away from a staid culture and for-little-kids-only image to expand its audience.

This kind of thinking requires nonprofits to alter their own philosophies and approaches to what they can offer sponsors. You need to view sponsorships as opportunities that reach far beyond one event to the development of long-term relation-

ships with continuous opportunities and connectivity.

Here are ways to create an enhanced role for your organization:

- **Learn all you can** about potential sponsors. Understand their goals and strategies. Then connect your organization to these efforts.
- **Find a champion** within the sponsoring company who can explain corporate objectives, be an inside voice for your organization, and help you develop your plans. (How to locate such a champion? Start by asking board members for their contacts.)
- **Emphasize your ability** to address both marketing and goodwill

**Table 2: Keys to Linking Up with a Corporate Sponsor**

1. Show the company how it will gain a return on investment by sponsoring your organization.
2. Become part of the company's marketing budget rather than its corporate giving budget.
3. Connect the money sponsors give you with direct results that advance their goals.
4. Position your cause as a vehicle that will promote the company's overall image and reputation.
5. Get to know someone in the corporation's upper management who can help you navigate the system.
6. When selling your organization to the corporation, give equal weight to the marketing and goodwill results you can provide.
7. Create a sustainable relationship that's integrated with the company's long-term plans.

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objectives for the company. Goodwill objectives focus on the company's image as a good citizen in the community, while marketing objectives encompass the company's overall image.

- **Keep in mind** that companies view sponsorship as a marketing activity. Approach them with a marketing mindset.
- **Show sponsors what results they'll attain** for every dollar they give you.
- **Strive to become part of the business's marketing budget** and not merely the beneficiary of corporate donations or sponsorships.
- **Create linkages** that tie directly into the sponsor's long-term goals.
- **Help your employees think** beyond this year's events. Educate them to see your sponsor not just as a contributor of funds but as a partner in attaining strategic goals. ■

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### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>"International Events Group Sponsorship Report," Cause Marketing Forum, <http://www.causemarketingforum.com/page.asp?ID=188>.

<sup>2</sup>Kelley, C. and T. Kowalczyk, "Cause Marketing: Opportunities for Assisting Exempt Organizations and Sponsors," *The CPA Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 2; Mack, R., "Event Sponsorship: An Exploratory Study of Small Business Objectives, Practices, and Perceptions," *Journal of Small Business Management*, Vol. 37, No. 3; and O'Hagan, J. and D. Harvey, "Why Do Companies Sponsor Arts Events? Some Evidence and a Proposed Classification," *Journal of Cultural Economics*, Vol. 24, No. 3.

## All companies have both goodwill-oriented and marketing-oriented objectives.

### Creative Corporate Collaborations

For more on raising funds from corporations, see these resources at [www.snpo.org/members](http://www.snpo.org/members).

**Making the Business-Nonprofit Partnership a Win-Win** (Vol. 22, No. 1)

**How to Target Corporations to Diversify Your Funding Mix** (Vol. 25, No. 1)

**For-Profits and Nonprofits Meet Missions Together** (Vol. 25, No. 4)

**Enlightened Self-Interest: Selling Business on the Benefits of Cause-Related Marketing** (Vol. 15, No. 4)

**Straight Talk from Foundations and Corporations** (Vol. 3, No. 5)

**Learning Institute programs on-line:** Resource Development and O for Opportunity: Exploring New Revenue Opportunities for Nonprofits (<http://www.snpo.org/lino>).

## Creative Fundraising Ideas

### Let Humor Take Center Stage

Nothing gets people on your side more quickly than giving them a reason to smile and laugh. That's the key behind Roast-a-Doc, the annual event for Sutter Davis Hospital Foundation in Davis, California. Each year, one or two doctors are targeted for good-natured jokes from colleagues, family, and friends. The target of the roast, in return for being a good sport, gets to choose which part of the hospital will benefit from the proceeds. For more creative fundraising ideas, see "Special Events Galore!" ([www.stevensoninc.com](http://www.stevensoninc.com)).

### Target Singles Looking for Love

Realizing that most fundraising events were couples-driven and that over-30 singles didn't have many chances to meet, Singles with a Cause reached out to an often-overlooked group. The evening of cocktails, appetizers, and music at an upscale restaurant raised \$6,000 for the Center for Autism Research at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. The big draw—and the reason professional people between 30 and 60 were willing to pay \$75 apiece for the evening—was the chance to mingle with like-minded singles and maybe meet that special someone, and that's what event organizers reinforced in the invitations and the atmosphere of the evening.

### Try a Food-Centric Smackdown

Capitalizing on people's interest in TV's celebrity chefs, an Austin nonprofit held its own smackdown-style food-centric fundraiser, in which it invited local chefs to present their best take on macaroni and cheese to judges and attendees. The idea came from the kids served by the organization (Theatre Action Project, which builds children's self-esteem through educational theatre). The same idea would work for a black-tie or family-friendly event, and the same type of food can be both plain and fancy. (Ever heard of lobster mac and cheese?)

Companies place more importance on objectives associated with marketing.