
A Tactical Guide to Selling Sponsorships

This guide is designed with the music sponsorship seeker in mind. Whether you are an event organizer, label, promoter, venue owner, developer of educational programs or even a volunteer, the information that follows should help you create more meaningful and productive conversations with potential sponsors.

This document is based on material developed by The Sponsorship Collective. We thank them for their permission to adapt and use it here.

How to Use the Guide

The design is simple. Find the template or section that applies to your particular stage in the sales process and use it! Read the template, read the instructions, plug in your information and start selling sponsorship. The fine-tuning, the details, and the eventual outcomes are up to you.

These templates have been tested in the field and used to raise millions of dollars in sponsorship, cause marketing and events. This material represents years of testing and a great deal of trial and error. The format is simple, direct, and ready for you to use right now.

Index

- I. Sponsorship Sales Checklist
- II. Sales Pipeline Template
- III. Sample Emails That Actually Get the Meeting
- IV. First Meeting Sample Questions
- V. Proposal Template
- VI. Sponsorship Valuation Template
- VII. Activation Strategy
- VIII. Sample Fulfillment Report

I. The 5 Stages of Sponsorship Sales: Sponsorship Sales Checklist

Stage 1: Prospecting and Pipeline Building

1. Do your research first. Make a sales chart in Excel (or use your database) with the following headings (NOTE: for more info, see Section II – “Sales Pipeline Template”):
 - a. Prospects
 - b. Contact Made
 - c. Initial Meeting Booked
 - d. Proposal Submitted
 - e. Follow-up Meeting Booked
 - f. Outcome
2. Identify 25 prospects that align strategically (not just "companies that have money") as a starting point and enter them as a “prospect.”
3. Begin to move them through the pipeline by calling and trying to book meetings.
4. Focus on moving prospects from one step to the next, not on closing the sale in the first meeting.
5. Check out your competitors to see who is sponsoring them.
6. Brainstorm with work colleagues or friends in the entertainment industry about which companies you should be talking to and who can introduce you to those prospects.
7. Identify at least one networking event every two weeks where your prospects are likely to be.

Stage 2: Sponsorship Inventory and Asset Valuation

1. Break each event, program and opportunity into “properties” to sell (e.g., mainstage, backstage / green room, hospitality, print program, free tickets, etc.)
2. Take each property and break it down further into “assets” (e.g., logo placement, speaking opportunities, free tickets, inside front cover, etc.).
3. Create a new chart listing each asset and the value you’ve assigned to it as a starting point.
4. Brainstorm with colleagues to identify *non-traditional opportunities beyond just logo placement* (IMPORTANT). For example, event promo videos that include product placement, artist testimonials, VIP experiences, artists meet & greets, etc.
5. Contact five sponsors, past and present, and ask them what they would like to see as part of their package or what they wish they had more of.

Stage 3: The Sponsorship Package

1. Create one package per property.
2. Identify your audience, program users, event attendees and any relevant demographic information. (IMPORTANT – you have to know at least *some* information about the audience for your event / concert series / tour / whatever! The more you know about your target demographic (average age, income,

education level, location of home, school, or work, spending habits, etc.) the better prepared you'll be to speak to a potential sponsor.

3. List all of your assets and the associated value of each.
4. Think "menu," not "Gold, Silver, and Bronze" – and let your sponsors tell you which entitlements work best for them.
5. Mark your proposal "DRAFT" and connect with five sponsors and five prospects and ask them for their advice on what you are missing.
6. Create a custom package based on each sponsor's interest.
7. Tell your sponsors in person and in the package itself that you want to build something tailored to their needs; and emphasize that everything in the package is negotiable.

Stage 4: Getting the Meeting and Making the Sale

1. Warm up every cold call: get an introduction from a committee member, or a referral from another sponsor, or send a SHORT introductory email.
2. Ask for an advice visit, never a sales call.
3. Never go in with a proposal first – in fact, bring *nothing* to your first meeting.
4. Ask questions! Lots of questions! Spend more time listening than talking.
5. Understand the goal of the first meeting: to gather information and to get a second meeting.
6. *Never* submit a proposal without asking for permission to do so.
7. Think of your meetings as discussions between partners and not about convincing your prospect to buy an off-the-shelf proposal.

Stage 5: Activation and Fulfillment – Once the Sponsorship is Signed, Sealed, Delivered

1. Build a checklist based on your sponsorship package, showing everything the sponsor is entitled to.
2. Assign work back schedules, dates and project leads for every item.
3. Check in with your sponsor regularly to make sure they take advantage of every item in the sponsorship package.
4. Take photos, screenshots and copies of all collateral and put them together for a fulfillment report to be delivered right after the event.
5. Book a follow-up meeting with your sponsor to deliver your report.
6. Ask your sponsors how they thought it went, what they thought of the fulfillment report and what you could do to improve.
7. Ask your sponsors to renew for next year!
8. Schedule regular check-ins in your calendar to stay front of mind with your sponsors.

II. Sales Pipeline Template (see related documents)

How to Use the Sales Pipeline Template:

Don't measure success by how much money comes in – not at first, anyway. Instead, measure success based on how many companies you move through each phase of Stage 1 (listed above). The key is regular movement and consistent tracking. Everyday, make a goal to move X number of companies from prospect to contact and Y number of companies from contact to meeting, etc. If every day you move prospects through every stage, you will generate an immense amount of momentum toward attaining your ultimate sponsorship objectives. And every time you move a company from prospect into another stage, replace it with a new suggestion so your chart is constantly being refreshed and always stocked with prospects.

Every time you send an email, make a phone call, or sit down for a meeting, set up a reminder for yourself to follow up with that person in one week. Your calendar will fill up quickly, and you will find yourself having all the right conversations with existing sponsors and prospects alike.

Sales Pipeline Template Legend:

- **Prospects:** You have done enough research to list which potential sponsors may want to hear from you.
 - Be creative and non-linear in your thinking here – remember, your event / concert series / tour will have many types of sponsorable properties.
- **Contact Made:** You have reached out to someone to find the best contact to move forward with.
 - Once you've contacted this person, do NOT contact anyone else at the same organization without letting your initial contact know you're doing so. It's frustrating and inefficient for an organization to have more than one person engaged in simultaneous & separate conversations with you.
- **Initial Meeting Booked:** You have a meeting confirmed – in person or by phone.
- **Proposal Submitted:** You have submitted a sponsorship package or proposal for feedback.
- **Follow-up Meeting Booked:** You have confirmed a second meeting to get more information about customizing your proposal to the potential sponsor's needs or interests.
- **Outcome:** What was said in response to your proposal and what to do next.
 - If you were asked to alter your proposal, do it right away and re-submit while interest is strong.
 - If you're waiting for a response, set a reminder for yourself to follow up when you said you would.

III. Sample Emails that Actually Get You a Meeting

One of the most common mistakes made by people looking for sponsorship or funding is sending 10-page emails with a proposal attached in hopes that the recipient will open and read the proposal – and respond by purchasing a pre-packaged sponsorship opportunity. Unfortunately, it just doesn't work that way.

Keep your prospecting “cold emails” to no more than two or three sentences. Reference your connection to your reader (if you have one); state your purpose clearly; and suggest an action (e.g., phone call or meeting). Be informal and brief enough that your potential client will already have finished reading your email before s/he hits the delete button.

Below are two examples of the kind of emails that will help you successfully secure meetings and sell sponsorship.

Sample Email 1:

Hi John,

Congratulations on your company's latest collaboration. I read an article in last weekend's Toronto Star and saw that you posted it on LinkedIn. What are your plans for next year?

I'd love to connect and ask your thoughts about a music festival project I'm working on. Are you free tomorrow at 3:00 – I'll be near your office for a meeting just before?

Angie

Sample Email 2:

Hi John,

Michele da Cruz in your North York office suggested I get in touch to ask your advice about a strategy I'm developing to help elevate a live music showcase series planned for next fall.

Could I give you a quick call next Monday at 11:00 am to get your thoughts? Let me know, and thanks.

Mike

Why these emails work:

- they're both so short that John can't help but read to the end
- you flatter him and ask for advice
- you suggest a date and time, changing the decision from yes/no to the conversation to whether or not that time works
- you aren't asking anyone to read a 10-page proposal
- the outreach is focused on John, not on you

Yes, it might be less time consuming to send out a form letter and attached proposal to every single prospect...but you won't get meetings, build trust, or secure sponsorship that way.

What to put in the subject line:

This is important. Write the email first, then grab a short key phrase to re-purpose as a subject line. The subject line for Sample 1 above might be **your thoughts on music project?** and Sample 2's subject line might be **call re music showcase – Mon 11am?**

IV. First Meeting Sample Questions

The objective of your first face-to-face meeting is to learn more about your prospective client. This is NOT the time to “pitch” – so don't bring a one-pager or a leave-behind, and *definitely* not a proposal. In fact, bring nothing except a pen and the questions below.

Print them, take them to the meeting, and ask them in order. Better yet, commit them to memory and work them into the conversation casually.

1. Who is your target audience?
2. How do you normally engage in sponsorship?
3. What does your target market value?
4. What can you tell me about your sales goals for the coming year?
5. What would you consider to be the most important elements of a sponsorship
6. Would you mind having a look at a draft proposal and offering some feedback?

V. Sample Sponsorship Proposal (see related documents)

How to Use the Sponsorship Proposal Template

This template is meant to be a general guide and layout for a simplified sponsorship package. It assumes you know what your assets are worth and that you know a few things about your event attendees or other target demographic. The template will work for event and program sponsorship.

Traditional proposals that group everyone into “Gold, Silver, and Bronze” packages have long been industry standard; but in today’s marketplace, many decision makers prefer a “menu” approach. You can combine the two and offer your prospects a “hybrid approach” – a menu of items to choose from that slots them into tiered sponsorship based on how much they spend. This is the most convenient way to enhance the old-school standardized model without having to move into the world of completely customized sponsorship. The hybrid approach gives you the flexibility to negotiate packages without, for example, forcing people to take a booth or a speaking opportunity when all they really want are product placement opportunities.

Use this template as a guide to give to your designer, or do a really simple version in PDF and drop in logos, graphs and tables from a spreadsheet. As a rule, always meet with your prospects and customize everything before you send it.

Remember: your sponsorship package is not the sales tool...you are!

NOTE: If you are looking for high-value naming rights – a title sponsor whose organization name will become part of the name of your event / concert venue / tour (e.g., “TD Toronto Jazz Festival” “Tim Hortons Southside Shuffle” or “Molson Canadian Amphitheatre”) – do NOT use this template. Such important sponsorships should always be completely customized and are well worth the effort in doing so.

The Standard Deck Template

a) Title Page

Include your logo and the name of the opportunity or program and your tagline. Keep this simple and NEVER call it a “sponsorship package”!

b) The Opportunity

Paragraph one:

Introduce your cause / mission, ensuring you restrict it to just one paragraph. Include who you are and what you do. Keep things plain and simple – don't talk about need or tell sad stories. This is about what you can do for them, not what they can do for you.

Paragraph two:

Explain the opportunity: festival, event, showcase series, conference program, tour, or whatever you're seeking support for.

Paragraph three:

Give some detail about your audience, attendees, delegates, or users, emphasizing the strength of the audience. If you have market research about your brand and who it appeals to, this is where it goes. Use graphs, pie charts and anything else to describe your demographic.

Example: if you are running a music festival or event, try something like this to present your previous year's attendance:

- Pie chart breaking down attendees by gender
- Graph breaking down attendees by age (use only 4-5 categories)
- Pie chart showing attendees by city, province, country.
- Bullet points on audience's estimated salary, interests, education, buying power

Include a good photo showing off your festival – band on stage, lots of people, good times being had by all. Crop the photo if necessary to eliminate anything that doesn't sell your event.

NOTE: it's worth spending a little to hire a photographer who can capture images of this year's event to help you sell next year's. Make sure the photographer takes pictures of sponsor activations, crowds, and any sponsorable properties as well as the entertainment.

The goal of this section is to show off your opportunity, who attends, and key demographic information. You can use two pages for this – but don't write more than three paragraphs. Use two pages because you can show off how much you know about your attendees, or because you have stellar market research or images to share.

c) The Menu

Never say "sponsorship opportunities." Instead use something like "**Engage Leaders in Industry X**" or "**Reach People of X Age or Y Geography**" or "**Come and Meet Canada's X Sector.**" Start with a statement about how you like to work with sponsors and your philosophy.

Most organizations put a statement at the end of their package stating, “We are also willing to customize. Contact us.” **Don’t do this!** Instead, open by telling your prospects that these “menu items” are suggestions to get the discussion started. Invite them to have a look and contact you with their own suggestions about how they want to engage your network.

List your assets – for example:

- stage recognition (e.g., main stage, satellite stages)
- brand recognition in marketing campaign
- booths or tables
- product placement
- event program or mobile app sponsorship
- session speakers
- AV sponsorship
- beer or wine sponsorship
- catering / hospitality sponsorship
- delegate badge / name tag / lanyard sponsorship

Add a note encouraging potential sponsors to choose from the list above or suggest some custom opportunities (or both!). Point out that stage presence and speaking opportunities are reserved for title sponsorship only (if that’s true) and that title sponsorship is a completely customized opportunity in the range of \$X--\$Y. Don’t make this number up. Base it on the proven value of your assets. Let your sponsors pull from the menu items to get them to, e.g., \$25,000 for the vaunted position of Title Sponsorship.

d) The Benefits Matrix

This is the typical “gold, silver, bronze” part that most people start (and stop) at. Our enhanced suggestion is below; we recommend laying this out in Excel and then copying and pasting it.

If it looks boring, get a designer and tell them you want something simple and clean. Don’t have the budget? No problem – highly designed packages as well as lo-fi but well thought out packages can make an impression. Because the package itself isn’t the sales tool (you are!) it matters less than you might think.

Warning, this is a sample only. We are not suggesting you use any of these values – or even this structure.

Benefits Chart (see related documents)

Remind your readers that they can decide how to make up the dollar amounts required to get them to title, mid-level, or other sponsorship tiers. Let them know that if they don't want a booth, they can opt to trade it dollar for dollar for something else. In other words, if they want to trade the \$500 booth for \$500 worth of free tickets-- you're happy to do it!

Ask questions throughout the document, engaging and encouraging your prospective sponsors to customize. In fact, state outright that you prefer customized entitlements because only they know their business, not you. Why? Because as they customize, your sponsors tell you what they want, how they measure success and what they are looking for. This is gold for the sponsorship salesperson.

e) The Contact Page

Use a title like **“We want to hear from you!”** Use a call to action. Encourage prospective sponsors to get in touch, tell you what's missing and tell you what they want to add or change. Make it clear that your proposal is a conversation tool and not set in stone. It's important to state this in multiple places throughout the document – once per page. This way, your philosophy will be understood even if your entire proposal isn't read. Make your contact info bold, obvious and uncluttered. Don't use an impersonal “info@” email address! Provide a real person with a real name only.

VI. Sponsorship Valuation Template (see related documents)

How to Use the Sponsorship Valuation Template

Determining the value of your sponsorship assets is probably the step that causes the most confusion among sponsorship sellers. At best, most guess at the value of their assets: and at worst, people badly undervalue their assets. Neither is desirable. Some common examples include “selling” a beer sponsorship in exchange for free beer, or an AV sponsorship in return for provision of in-kind sound equipment. Such giveaways completely ignore the value of your brand, audience and stakeholders.

As a music stakeholder, you may have given away product placement opportunities since they don't cost you anything and may be seen as a benefit to your audience. But there is a dollar value for every person who sees a logo, hears a company name and clicks on a link on your website. Assessing that value is part science and part art, but it must be done. The various ways to evaluate your properties tend to fall into one of two categories: **the transaction method** and **the value method**.

The transaction method applies a value to every logo placement, booth, ad,

speaking engagement or stage sponsorship. You use current advertising rates to come up with these values, apply a percentage for aligning with your brand and that becomes the sponsorship value.

- Let's use beer sponsorship as an example. We'll assume your beer costs are \$1,000 net – but then you add logo placement at \$5 per attendee impression, plus acknowledgment from the MC twice at \$250 each, plus a 10% affiliation bump. Add them all together and you are at \$2,750 for the beer sponsorship.

The value method is easier in many ways and is more art than science.

- For example, you determine that the sponsorship of the beer is worth two or three times the cost to purchase the beer and recognize your sponsors. So, if beer actually costs \$1,000, then the beer sponsorship is a \$3,000 opportunity. You can have the beer donated, but that company still has to give \$2,000 cash on top of the in-kind gift.

Both methods work, both have their shortcomings, and both are better suited to some scenarios than to others. Sometimes just adding up the transactions leaves you way undervalued. Other times certain elements, like product placement, can be really hard to put a value on. Blending both methods allows you the flexibility to make maximum revenue and still be able to justify to your sponsors how you came up with a particular value.

Valuation Template (see related documents)

Notes:

- Some things have hard costs, while others have a value elsewhere (like advertising). Others still have no value in the marketplace.
- This template represents a blend of the two approaches.
- Always include a percentage to be able to activate the sponsorship properly.
- You can play with the numbers that don't have an external value to get the number that fits your goals. The best way to increase the cost is to add valuable benefits that you can charge for.
- Do this for every sponsorship asset and be ready to share it when sponsors ask how you came up with a particular number.

VII. Activation & Critical Path Template (see related documents)

When you sell a sponsorship package, the first thing you should do (yes, even before sending an invoice) is to build a strategy based on your sponsorship levels for how you

are going to make sure that your sponsors take advantage of, or “activate,” their sponsorship benefits. This strategy must include key dates, who on your team is responsible for each item, and what the sponsor needs in order to activate fully. Create a table like this for every single sponsorship package you sell. Meet with your team to discuss expectations and add these dates to your calendar. Do all this and the likelihood that you miss something will drop significantly.

VIII. Sample Fulfillment Report

How to Use the Sample Fulfillment Report Template

Once your festival / tour / concert series / sponsorship agreement has finished, you want to show your sponsors that you delivered on your promises. Arrange a meeting (a separate one with each sponsor!), and invite the sponsors to bring anyone else on their team who has a hand in guiding their sponsorship spending, to seek their feedback as well. Before you meet, create and deliver your fulfillment report, which documents everything you said you would do along with all of the things you missed and why. Go one step further and include pictures, screen shots of sponsor logos, recordings of speaking engagements, product placement...everything!

What purpose does this serve? It does all of the following:

- proves to your sponsor that you delivered
- gives your sponsor something to share with their superiors to justify the investment
- tells your sponsor that you know how important their investment is
- reminds them of all of the things they received in their sponsorship package
- sets you up to ask for feedback and more questions about their goals to give you sponsorship package ideas for next year

You have to be honest, though – if you missed something, then admit it here and explain why.

The Template

a) Title Page

Include your logo and the name of the opportunity or program and your tagline. This part will look just like your sponsorship package but with updated information.

b) Describe Your Opportunity...Again!

Paragraph one:

Talk about your cause – one paragraph only! Who you are and what you do. Plain and simple; this is just a simple reminder.

Paragraph two:

Talk about the opportunity, program or event. How it went, how it exceeded your expectations and testimonials from people of note.

Paragraph three:

Give some detail about your audience, attendees, delegates, or users, emphasizing the strength of the audience. If you have market research about your brand and who it appeals to, this is where it goes. Use graphs, pie charts and anything else to describe your demographic. Use similar stats to what you featured in your sponsorship package but updated with the most current stats.

Example: if you have run a music festival or event, try something like this to present your previous year's event attendance:

- Pie chart breaking down attendees by gender
- Graph breaking down attendees by age (use only 4-5 categories)
- Pie chart showing attendees by city, province, country.
- Bullet points on audience's estimated salary, interests, education, buying power

The goal of this section is to show off what happened: who attended, and key demographic information. Again, you can use up to two pages for this – but do so to show off how much you know about your attendees, or because you have stellar market research or images to share.

c) The Fulfillment Report

This is it, the moment of truth! Remember, the activation schedule is based on the sponsorship proposal – and so the fulfillment report is based on the activation schedule. This template is a repeat of your benefits chart with a "status" and "notes" section. If you provides added value by offering an asset or experience that was not in your initial contract, add this into the "other" section" at the end.

Using the same example as above, here is how the fulfillment report will look:

Fulfilment Report Template (see related documents)

Take a close look here. Where you over-delivered, you tell them how you did so. Where you did not deliver, you tell them that too! If it's your fault, admit it and be sure to show them how you made up by over delivering elsewhere. Be honest. Your sponsors already know if you missed something, but this is your chance to remind them of how great other elements were.

Remember the valuation template? Well, if you miss something, it has a firm value to you and to your sponsor. Your sponsors can ask for a refund for missed

delivery, which is why activation and fulfillment are so important.

i. ii) Pictures, Samples and Everything Else

This may be your favourite part of the fulfillment report to put together. In this section you include every photo you can find with a sponsor's logo displayed, or an employee of your sponsor's company.

- If you've done your homework ahead of time and given your event photographer a list of assets to take a picture of, this shouldn't be hard; you should also have taken backup photos for yourself with your phone. That's how important this piece is.
- Include pictures of the program with your sponsor's ads and screen shots of the website.
- If you sent out hard copies of invitations, include those too.

ii. The Last Page

The final page is simple. Use it to thank your sponsor and to remind them of how valuable this property (or sponsorship opportunity) is. Tell them how much they added to the event with their brand and their support. Also use this section to ask them for feedback so that you can improve next year.

In the meeting, ask them what might entice them to send more people to the event next year, and then use that information to find out more about what they value. Always ask what you need to do next year to make the experience even better; and never leave without asking them to confirm their support for next year and when the best time would be to submit a draft sponsorship proposal for their feedback.

The fulfillment report closes the loop, sets you out above the rest and starts the sponsorship prospecting process all over again. The last thing your sponsor remembers of you is how much value you provided. In this way you've controlled their experience and taken the opportunity to correct anything that went wrong.

This is how you want to leave your sponsors feeling every single time you talk to them.

Conclusion

We hope that you find some valuable information in this toolkit, and that you are able to implement a few of its suggestions immediately to help you secure sponsorship for your music-based idea or operation.

Remember that these are very general ideas and basic templates that should be significantly customized to reflect your own situation. The figures are samples only. Also remember that finding sponsorship is a serious job – the more serious and professional your approach, the better your chances of locking in sponsors that will be pleased to work with you to help bring your ideas to life. Finally, look on your sponsors as partners:



bring them into your discussions early, share your thoughts and plans, and invite them to contribute their own ideas to make yours better. Doing so ensures that your sponsors are invested in the success of your event as more than financial supporters – and increases your chances of confirming their participation year after year.

Good luck!