



How to Use Event Marketing Sponsorships to Support Business Objectives and Deliver Real Value

By Jefferson Davis, *Competitive Edge*

If your company's business objectives include: increasing brand awareness, building brand equity, image enhancement, supporting sales and customer relationship management, then event marketing sponsorships should be part of your overall exhibiting strategy.

Event marketing sponsorships offer many proven opportunities to expand your company's visibility before, during, and after the event. Sponsorships also offer additional communication channels to increase personal interaction and enhance product awareness with the entire event audience, not just those that visit your exhibit.

Two noteworthy research findings support the value of utilizing event marketing sponsorships:

1. *Event marketing offers the greatest ROI, followed by advertising, direct marketing, public relations, sales promotion, and Internet advertising.* Source: MPI
2. *Booth efficiency increases 104% when a sponsorship is included in the exhibit plan.* Source: CEIR

Sponsorships have recall and persuasion effects like traditional advertising. Sponsorships, however, operate in different cognitive processes: advertising changes perception of a specific product, while sponsorship changes perception of the sponsor.

Here are four keys to selecting and making event marketing sponsorships work:

1. **Begin with your business objectives:** What are you trying to achieve as a result of participation in the event? Here are some ideas to get you started: introducing a new company name, increasing awareness of a corporate merger, launching a new product, positioning your company as thought leaders, differentiating the company from competition, driving exhibit and/or event traffic, networking with key buying influences and key opinion leaders, positioning company as a high-level industry supporter. Having absolute clarity on your business objectives will ensure your sponsorship is positioned to deliver real value.
2. **Select sponsorship opportunities that support your objectives:** Navigating the myriad of sponsorship choices and making the best selection(s) is never easy. From having your company logo placed on signage at highly visible locations in and around the event and/or printed on event promotional products to hosting educational, entertainment and/or food and beverage events, and attendee comfort and convenience sponsorships like transportation, charging stations, internet access and more, sponsorship opportunities can look endless.

To make the best selections consider your business objectives. If your company's brand promise is service, sponsoring programs that provide value-added service to attendees would be a natural way to make the sponsorship visibly support your objective. If your goal is to increase product and company awareness, choose sponsorships that are

more likely to end up in booth visits or seminar attendance. Again, just be sure to consider how effectively the sponsorship supports business objectives before deciding.

3. **Effectively execute the sponsorship:** Sponsorships are not an auto pilot initiative. You can't send in a logo alone and expect stellar results. This is part of your marketing strategy and has to prominently factor in your execution plans. For example; if you selected a sponsorship that showcases your company's brand name on all printed materials, signage and banners, why not include additional messaging like the brand promise or unique selling proposition? Or consider adding a call to action such as a question to pique the interest of attendees in discovering the answer. This can be a compelling pull to your booth, seminar session, website or event. If you sponsor an opening night or other conference related event, be sure your staff is poised to meet and greet attendees in branded apparel. Also be sure to position banners and signage at high visibility areas of the room. As you can see, selecting the sponsorship is just the beginning. You also need a sound execution plan to optimize results.
4. **Build in methods to measure sponsorship coverage and overall impact:** The results you achieve are directly related to the sponsorships you select. However, regardless of your choice(s), it is critical to work with the event organizer to accurately assess the number of people who will see, receive, attend or use the sponsored item and/or event. This should be the starting point for your metrics. It will help you calculate a cost per attendee reached. To augment your cost/value metric, consider conducting an event participant survey to gauge awareness, attitudes, and behaviors. Survey questions about the awareness level of the media being sponsored, awareness level of sponsoring company, change in opinion of sponsoring company, change in likelihood of purchase, purchase intentions, as well as brand perception feedback can provide the additional data you need to prove that the sponsorship is delivering real value for your company.

Jefferson Davis, president of Competitive Edge is known as the "*Tradeshow Turnaround Artist*". Since 1991, his consulting and training services have helped clients improve their tradeshow performance and results to the tune of over \$500M. Mr. Davis can be reached at 704-814-7355 or Jefferson@tradeshowturnaround.com