

Getting Association Chapter Sponsors – It's Not As Hard As You Think



To meet your association chapter's mission and provide for your members, your chapter needs to be comfortable with the idea of being a non-profit that has money and spends it appropriately. You can't expect the revenue from dues as well as non-dues revenue from things like educational materials, meetings and events and even chapter swag to give you the money you need to do the things your members count on you for.



A strong association chapter sponsorship program can provide the support your chapter needs, financial and otherwise. It can help you cover costs, provide credibility and increase return on investment and let you do all those things you might miss out on otherwise, like:

- Pay for a well-respected speaker instead of relying solely on chapter volunteers to speak
- Hold events in an appropriate space, rather than a space that no longer fits your needs
- Use current audio-visual (AV) equipment, instead of technology from the last century.

If you're at all familiar with association chapter sponsorship programs, you may think annual sponsorships are the only way to go. Annual sponsorship programs can be very successful, but they can take time to plan and execute. They aren't the right fit for all organizations, like those that may be considering sponsorship but aren't ready to commit to a full year, or those that don't have the resources for an annual sponsorship.



Here are some ways to bring in association chapter sponsors more quickly, without the financial and time commitment of annual sponsorships.

If not an annual sponsorship, then what?

Instead of looking for a sponsor for all your monthly meetings for the next year, or someone to sponsor all the food for each of those meetings, look for sponsors who might be interested in attaching their name to a smaller piece of your chapter.

You could have different sponsors for:

A single event or part of an event. We'll use your annual conference as an example, but this could work for any chapter meeting or event. There are many different pieces of that conference, from food to PowerPoint presentations, your quiet room, your virtual platform and even your registration table. Rather than looking for a single sponsor with a larger pool of money, consider sponsors for each activity or area. One organization could sponsor lunch, another dinner, and a third, afternoon snacks. Make a list – the opportunities are endless.

Your technology. Finding organizations to sponsor your technology can help offset the cost of the systems you use and may even provide resources to upgrade. How about sponsors for your association chapter website, your email or your AV systems? You could also consider in-kind sponsorship. Need help running your AV equipment or help you with your website? Find a sponsor to give you the assistance you need, instead of dollars.

Your content. Content sponsorships mean someone other than you and those in your primary audience see value in your content – and they're willing to pay to attach their name to it. Your association chapter blogs, newsletter, even entire sections of your website, like your job board, are perfect for sponsorship. And, maybe in exchange for financial sponsorship, a sponsor would also be interested in writing several blogs or articles or include a few job postings as part of their sponsorship package.

How to bring in association chapter sponsors

Sponsorship doesn't have to be a hard sell. And you don't have to be a trained salesperson to find the right association chapter sponsors. Having a team, a plan and the flexibility to think outside the box can increase the success of your association chapter sponsorship program.



Do your research. Rather than spamming every organization you can find with association chapter sponsorship opportunities, identify the kinds of organizations, individuals and other-non-profits that could be a good fit. Contact different types of organizations locally and even nationally, to learn about their sponsorship programs. Research events, websites, content, etc. like yours, or in areas adjacent to yours, and check out their sponsors. Maybe some of their sponsors would also be interested in your organization.

Use your website to sell your sponsorship program. You'll want a sponsorship landing page dedicated to your sponsorship opportunities. In addition to describing some (but not all) of your sponsorship opportunities, it can help to include:

- Logos and links to your current sponsors.
- Your approach to sponsorship including how you clarify sponsors' needs and create sponsorship packages to meet their objectives.
- Case studies, also called success stories. Show how some of your sponsors have met the objectives they set for their association chapter sponsorship. Ask sponsors for quotes, short summaries or even videos about their experiences.
- Contact information. Make it easy for a potential sponsor to reach you.

Get Creative. Look for sponsors who don't jump out right away as a good match. You might find great fits in organizations that are in industries or advocacy areas adjacent to yours, or those who look for the kinds of people you have in your organization, maybe to fill jobs or as subject matter experts. And look beyond money. There are organizations that can do things for your chapter to ultimately save your organization money. We mentioned technology in-kind sponsorship, but what about connecting with a local restaurant? Maybe you could use their space and they'd provide food, in exchange for your mention of their business.

Sponsors can help increase your organization's value and credibility, raise interest and ultimately attract more members. We've covered some easy ways to strengthen your association chapter sponsorship program. Has your chapter run any non-annual sponsorship programs that have worked well? We'd love to hear about it.

