

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

SETTING UP A SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM FOR YOUR CHAPTER

Running a chapter costs money. That is a given. Membership dues provide a steady stream of financial resources that cover the very basic of member value. To become a consistently growing elite chapter, more money than membership dues alone is needed. To keep attracting new members, it takes partnerships and sponsorships within the industry community to achieve success. Below is a step-by-step guide to increasing revenue through sponsorship.

- 1** Define clearly who you are as a chapter. Having and sharing an understanding of your chapter's mission illustrates the value to potential sponsors. You want potential sponsors to have a clear vision of what they will gain. Ensure that the sign up process is simple to increase the likelihood of their support.
- 2** Establish a sponsorship committee. Have a dedicated team of volunteers whose sole purpose is to acquire and keep sponsors.
- 3** Build partnerships. Local businesses and industry experts are where your sponsors are going to come from, so even if not yet serving as a sponsor, be sure to cultivate these relationships.
- 4** Provide strong content. Having solid material for your members and the industry is important. As a chapter of your association you have a unique insight into the inner workings of your industry within your local area that is of extreme value to your sponsors.
- 5** Ask for it. By being direct about your chapter's need for financial support, you garner greater respect from potential sponsors.
- 6** Know what you need the funding for. Be clear what you will be using the sponsorship money towards. Be prepared to provide a budget.
- 7** Create various sponsorship types – the low-budget sponsor, the high-budget one-time sponsor, the high-budget long-term sponsor, or even a member sponsor. This allows for anyone who wants to get involved having a sponsorship that will fit their needs. Accepting in-kind sponsorships is another option. An organization may want to offer up the actual items you need to create an event, such as the awards for your annual event, promotion products for the chapter, or even services to improve the chapter.

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- 8 Market the need for sponsorships. Sometimes it does cost money to make money. Having a campaign centered on the need for sponsors will attract both sponsors and members.
- 9 Utilize members to find potential sponsors. While you have a committee, whose purpose is to find sponsors, ask members regularly for input. They work within the field and know who is interested and has the means to give back.
- 10 Maintain a list of sponsors. This is essential as sponsors like to repeat sponsorship. Unless a sponsor specifically asks to be removed from the list, keep their information on file, updating as needed. Reach out periodically over the year to past sponsors for renewals.
- 11 Invite sponsors to create content. While having good, solid content gets sponsors interested in becoming sponsors, offering them a chance to add to the content the chapter provides shows the respect their role in the industry deserves and increases the value their partnership brings to your chapter beyond the financial contribution.
- 12 Create an annual summary report. Provide sponsors with an account of how the funding was allocated and any benefits realized, which may vary from clicks on their ads to views of their blog posts. Also make sure the renewal is very simple without any unnecessary roadblocks.
- 13 Thank sponsors. Be sure to thank sponsors either verbally or in writing at every meeting and on the website.
- 14 Honor sponsors. The annual awards for your members is a good time to also honor sponsors. Make sure they are invited and have a seat of honor. Maybe even select a Sponsor of the Year. It shouldn't just be about the actual dollar amount, but also the overall contribution to your chapter and its success.
- 15 Survey sponsors. Ask your sponsors for feedback on your sponsorship program. If there is negative feedback shared, follow-up with them to find out more and how to improve.