

Not Ready to Cold Call Potential Association Chapter Sponsors? Try a Sponsorship Letter



Sponsors are a significant source of a chapter's non-dues chapter revenue. These funds often provide the support to deliver the services your association members expect from you, like networking, education and mentoring, which you might not be able to offer just through what you collect in dues.



Sponsors can come to your association chapter in many ways. Organizations become sponsors through existing and new chapter members who understand how the connection to your members is valuable to them. Those warm connections see the value of your chapter and are often easy to turn into sponsors.

Don't wait for those warm referrals; you can't guarantee a steady stream will appear. Your association chapter sponsorship plan should include contacting people you don't know, those people you've heard about from members and names you've found in research. The difficulty with these individuals is that you often have no real connection to them, so it's up to you to "sell" the benefits of sponsorship.

Who knew sales would be part of your volunteer responsibilities? Bringing in new association chapter sponsors can be a little more difficult these days, when you may not believe your chapter provides the

value it has in the past and you're not sure how to show your association chapter value to potential sponsors.

How can you, or others in your chapter, easily demonstrate your value and the value of sponsorship to those you aren't really connected to?

Starting with an Association Chapter Sponsorship Letter to Provide Easier Engagement

"There are so many different sponsorship opportunities for corporate sponsors," says Paul Fitzpatrick, president Connecticut AAHAM (American Association of Healthcare Association Management). It's good to delineate exactly what they're getting for their sponsorship," he adds. "The more detailed you can be, the better. The letter helps us better demonstrate what the level of exposure will be."

Whether by email or regular mail, starting with a sponsorship letter gives the recipient a chance, on their schedule, to learn about your organization and the benefits they'll get from sponsorship, before you call them. In some cases, a sponsorship letter can even eliminate the need for that phone call. Written well, it demonstrates the value of your association chapter to members and how that value translates to value for sponsorship, while providing the details they need to determine the right sponsorship level for their needs.

5 Things to Include in Your Sponsorship Letter

1. The name and contact information of the person you're contacting. "To whom it may concern" or "dear sir," won't help you connect. Do some research and figure out who the letter needs to go to and be sure the recipient's name is spelled correctly!
2. Personalization. Use standard copy for things like value, benefits and sponsorship levels, but where you can, personalize the letter to the individual, or at least the organization, to tie what you know about them to the benefits of sponsoring your chapter. If possible, get someone they may know to sign the letter. If it's truly a cold outreach, have your board president sign the letter.
3. Sponsorship level details. Break down what sponsorship means at each level, whether that's a chance to speak at all of your breakfast meetings (in person or virtual), their logo on a presentation or your association chapter website, an ad in your newsletter, a presentation focused on them, etc. Include the details important to them up front, like costs and whether sponsorship is



by calendar year or fiscal. Based on the events of the past year, some may not be able to commit to a sponsorship level but could sponsor a single item or event. Include any a la carte items you offer, like sponsoring a single breakfast, one event or your job board.

4. The value of sponsorship. This is just as important to include as what they get for being a sponsor. Remind them of the benefits of sponsoring your specific chapter, like visibility, increased sales and organic growth and include how those benefits can translate to their organization.

5. A way to sign up as a sponsor and a contact for questions. Some may sign up immediately. Give them an easy way to do it, whether a link to a page on your chapter website or a form to complete and email. However, since not everyone will be ready to participate as soon as they finish reading, make it easy to get their questions answered, with a phone number and email address, with a contact name.

Of course, getting new sponsors takes more than sending out a few letters. This letter should be part of your larger association chapter sponsorship plan. You have an audience many can't reach without your help and access is something that they won't mind paying for.

