

# Use Impact Communications To Better Engage Sponsors



Sponsorship is a highly effective, crucial way for association chapters to bring in much needed revenue. It's crucial, because, as you know, relying solely on dues won't keep your chapter operating at the level it needs to.



Once you bring in chapter sponsors, how do you stay connected to them? Do you have a sponsor engagement plan, or do you just reach out to them once a year when it's time for them to consider renewing? Many of your sponsors may also be members of your chapter, so they participate in your events and programming, but having regular communications directed to sponsors can help keep your relationships with sponsors going.

## **Engage Chapter Sponsors with Impact Communications**

Your sponsors give you money every year. They get benefits in return, like their name on your materials, a chance to speak at an event, access to your member list, etc. Plus, they get visibility with your members.

Think about the last golf tournament you held. Having sponsors probably allowed you to do some or all the following:

- Hold the tournament at a more prestigious course
- Have a master of ceremonies
- Add a keynote speaker to the agenda
- Have food along the golf course and a more expansive lunch menu
- Give prizes

Those are all great things to be able to add, and you probably thanked your sponsors for making it all possible. However, these are high level chapter benefits. How could you do a better job quantifying to sponsors the way the money they provided for the tournament really helped your members, outside of their ability to have more fun and meet more people?

Here's an idea.

What if you flipped the story and showed how, at a granular level, how the chapter and members really benefit from sponsorship? Sponsorship impact communications (which you might also hear called sponsorship information reports) are a great way to provide this information in ways sponsors can easily understand and relate to.

### **What are sponsor impact communications?**

Rather than simply saying your gold sponsor paid for the food at the tournament, sponsor impact communications give your sponsors a more complete picture of how you spend their money and how members benefit because of their funds. Through these updates, you can give the impact of sponsorship more relevance. And showing this sort of data to potential association chapter sponsors can motivate them to join your sponsorship program, by clearly showing the difference sponsorship makes.

### **What should be in your sponsorship impact communications?**

A robust sponsor impact communication should include what you spend the money on along with the benefit members receive. Here are some examples that demonstrate the true value to members of different dollar levels of sponsorship:

- **\$500 pays for a student membership.** Student memberships help younger people learn about our industry and opportunities in it, before they start looking for a job.



- **\$1,000 let us develop a workbook for our mentorship program.** This provides a takeaway that mentees can refer to for reminders of all they learned from their mentor.
- **\$1,500 covers a year of our association management system (AMS).** Through things like a chapter forum, job board and other members-only resources, members can get added local value and easily access all they need in a single place.

Does a sponsor really care about seeing their name on a program or mentioned at your breakfast meeting? Yes, of course. But it may be even more important to help them see the real benefits your members receive because of their sponsorship.

Giving this perspective to sponsors can have even more impact when they hear from your members how they benefit. Include member testimonials – with quotes or link to videos. Ask members to share what they get from your events, conferences and programming. Does it make them better at their job? Make it easier to connect with others in their industry? Ask members some specific questions and ask them to share their responses.

### **What should a sponsor impact communication look like?**

Ultimately, sponsor impact communications can take whatever form is best for your chapter. Perhaps you have a member who is a talented graphic designer. Ask them to incorporate the information into an infographic or a chart. No access to designer? A letter or email or sponsors' only section on your website with this information works well, too.

Since people take in information in different ways, you could also combine design and narrative into a single piece.

### **When should you send sponsor impact communications?**

Of course, you'll want to send impact communications in advance of sponsorship renewal. But why send important information like this out just once a year? Sponsorship dollars make a difference to your association chapter throughout the year, so create a communications calendar specific to your sponsors and share the information with them throughout the year.



## **Do More With Sponsorship**

Many chapters find it difficult to illustrate the value of their sponsorship program to their sponsors and accurately measure the impact of sponsorship. Taking the time to make a clear connection to what sponsorship dollars allow you to do, you'll have an impact that goes far beyond numbers – for your sponsors, the chapter and your members.

