

SPONSORSHIP

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One of the best ways to increase fundraising efforts is to obtain sponsorship for an event, either through underwriting or direct contributions from companies.

Businesses will often help to fund an event if it is in their marketing plan. Are their customers likely to come to this event? Will sponsorship in an event help them attract new customers and get their name seen?



Who to Ask:

Since many organizations are in need of the same kinds of donations and will be asking the same local companies, it is a good idea to think of all the different possibilities. Your best efforts will be made with those firms and companies that primarily market their products or services to college-age students. Some examples are:

- Businesses located around campus are good, but sometimes they are overused and get approached a great deal. Be creative when selecting the businesses you will target for donations.
- Fast food companies (ice cream, frozen yogurt, hamburgers, etc.). You may need to ask the local manager or may need to write their district office. Local fast food chains may provide free punch and drink cups if you are having a sporting event or project to benefit a local charity.
- Real estate companies that specialize in rentals to college students.
- Beauty supply distributors. Beauty shops may get ten requests for free gift certificates, but the distributors that sell them the products may not get any requests. Ask for the distributor's name and email to contact them directly.
- Sportswear and clothing manufacturers
- Health clubs
- Cosmetic companies

How to Ask:

Plan far in advance! Most businesses plan their donation budgets six to twelve months in advance. Talk to a company as early as possible. Do not expect to get donations in less than a month.

Start by creating a master list of businesses in the area that you would like to reach out to. First on your list should be any vendors that you or your group members use regularly or work at. A connection with a business can make a world of difference!

Know your platform and the companies that match it. Try to target a specific company that could benefit from your cause rather than sending out blanket letters to everyone. By matching your cause and the company, there are better chances for a positive answer.

Learn as much about the organization you are soliciting before you actually ask for a dime. Knowledge of the company, their products and services, and their past charitable events will help see if they are the right match for you. It is worth taking a little extra time to learn the names and roles of the individuals you will be reaching out to. Once you have obtained this information it will be easier to write a compelling pitch that makes it clear why a corporation should sponsor your organization.

Requests to potential sponsors should be made in writing with a professional letter or proposal. Be sure to include the following pieces of information:

- Address your pitch letter to the person in charge. Do NOT just write "To Whom It May Concern" or "Dear Sir/Madam." Call and obtain the person's appropriate name and title.
- Be sure to include the purpose of the request. Put your proposal in writing. Enlist the help of your marketing and business majors to write the proposal in marketing terms.
- Include the history of the event and/or organization. Why was this event created? Why is this event important to the organization, campus, and community at large? How successful has the event been in the past?
The recognition being offered to donors. How will the donors be recognized? In a program, on a banner, verbally?
- State your cause in terms of benefits to the company. For example, a \$25 ad in an ad book or a \$25 poster that is going to be seen by 1,000 students at an event is inexpensive advertising for even small businesses. If your organization, national organization, or charity with which you are working) has 501 (c) tax-exempt status, sponsor gifts may be tax deductible.
- Instructions on how to make the donation.
- Information on how the student organization will follow up with the corporation.

Student organizations should give donors visibility for their donations by noting their support in promotions related to the event or organization. Students should contact the sponsor and inform them of how their name and logo will be used in the marketing of the event or organization. Companies may have policies regarding the use of their name and logo in publications and on the internet.

Student organizations should also send copies of the marketing pieces to donors and write a thank you letter to each donor after the event. The letter should highlight the success of the event or organization and include information about attendance, media coverage, etc. Student organizations should be sure to recognize sponsor support in event press releases and news articles.

Adapted from:

ACPA Commission for Student Involvement. (2005). Advisor manual. Retrieved January 15, 2020, from <http://www.myacpa.org/sites/default/files/acpaadvisormanual.pdf>

Ball State University. Downloads for student organizations and advisors.

University of Southern California. Guidelines for Marshall Student Organization Corporate Sponsorships.

Retrieved August 4, 2009, from <http://www-scf.usc.edu/~mcouncil/Resource%20Articles/CorporateSponsorship.pdf>