



7. Resourcing a sponsorship & managing expectations of sponsors



What's covered in this chapter

This chapter runs through the importance of developing a good club/sponsor relationship, from when you first agree a deal and the initial information exchange between the two parties.

It goes on to cover your 'kick-off meeting' and the key points to discuss, and agree including ways of working, a 'who's who' on both sides.

The importance of good communication between the club and the sponsor can't be overstated, and that is a key point in the slide which covers 'how to build a strong relationship with your sponsor'. Then there are a few additional 'tips to keep sponsors happy', which should add value.

Moving on then to thinking about preparing for renewal conversations, we set out the 'measurables' you will need to demonstrate to the sponsor at the end of each contract year, and these become very important when it comes to renewal conversations.

We set out when to broach the subject of contract renewal to your sponsor, how to prepare for that meeting including agenda points for discussion.

Finally, we run through what happens when either side decide not to renew the partnership and the processes to go through to manage that.



How to develop a good club/sponsor relationship

A good club/sponsor relationship is much more likely to result in a successful sponsorship – meaning a sponsorship which is beneficial to both parties, achieves the objectives of the sponsor, and ultimately one which is renewed.

Sponsor relationships are lots of work to manage (on both sides), they require a high level of information sharing, honesty and regularity of contact.

However, they can be fun and result in very strong working relationships which last for years.

If the time isn't taken to resource and manage the sponsorship properly, the relationship can be hard work, and if it breaks down, the risk is that the sponsor requests some of their investment back if they believe the relationship hasn't been delivered to expectations.

Remember, as the rights holder, the onus is on the club to ensure all sponsorship rights are delivered, maximised and that the agreement is delivered.



Initial exchange of information/IP

At the very start of the contract a lot of information must be shared and exchanged such as:

- ✓ Logos in different formats (both parties will need to use each other's logos correctly)
- ✓ Any brand guidelines – this document shows how the brand IP (intellectual property) must be used
- ✓ Imagery – ideally the club should share a bank of club imagery which the sponsor is able to use for free, you can also advise when and how they use it if there are any restrictions
- ✓ Organisational structures – who's who in the business
- ✓ Roles and responsibilities and contact numbers/emails. Be very clear who are the key contacts for the sponsor
- ✓ Event/season calendars showing all important events and matches
- ✓ Team information the sponsor might find useful such as player biographies which they might want to share on their channels/with their employees





Kick off meeting and developing the activation plan

Once the contract has been signed, organise a kick-off meeting with the sponsor to plan how you will approach the sponsorship.

The objective of this meeting is to look at the first year of the sponsorship and work together to ensure both parties are going to get what they need from each other.

- A calendar approach is a good way to focus your plan. Ensure all matches and key events (e.g., club/company meetings, team selections,) are on the plan
- Discuss what each party need from the other ahead of each event e.g., understanding ticket, hospitality, branding and marketing & communications requirements
- Use the calendar to work out good dates for sponsor promotions and player appearances

Following this kick-off meeting, suggest a brainstorm meeting where the club, the sponsor and their agencies get together to plan additional activation ideas for the rest of the year to add to the plan.



Communication – ensure your sponsor feels part of the team

Communication with sponsors is so important. They should be made to feel like part of the club team – they should hear club news slightly before the news comes out publicly.

These small things will go a long way to maintaining a good club/sponsor relationship.

Keep your sponsor informed when:

- ✓ You're signing a new player
- ✓ A player is retiring
- ✓ There is important club/selection news
- ✓ There is a new sponsor coming on board
- ✓ There are funding announcements
- ✓ There are any new events being announced

With the exception of the new sponsor being announced, your sponsor may want to share the news on their own channels to support the club, or they may ask to be involved at a higher level.



How to build a strong relationship with your sponsor

Good communication is central to a successful sponsor relationship, so from the outset, the club's team should aim to develop:

- ❑ An open, two-way dialogue
 - ❑ Regular communication, keeping the sponsor updated as to what is happening at the club
 - ❑ Agree 'ways of working' – understand who the key contacts are on both sides, remembering this may be managed by the sponsor's agencies, and be clear about who the sponsor's 'point-person' is at the club – e.g. sponsorship account manager – that person will manage the relationship day to day, ensuring the sponsorship runs to plan...
 - ❑ A clear sponsorship activation plan/calendar which details how and when all the assets will be delivered, including deadlines for artwork and who is responsible for each aspect
 - ❑ Plan regular meetings to update on the activation plan – weekly calls is usual, with a more detailed monthly meeting, depending on the size of the sponsorship
- ❑ Keep a record of all media/PR/social coverage to include stats and examples in your monthly reports back to the sponsor
 - ❑ Be proactive - it is the remit of the Sponsorship Account Manager to remind, nudge and sometimes cajole the sponsor into delivering their artwork on time/ use their allocated event tickets/ utilise the rights they have bought as part of the sponsorship package. Rightly or wrongly, the onus is on the club to ensure delivery of rights, not on the sponsor
 - ❑ Get the sponsor as engaged as possible in your club, the more engaged they are, the more likely they are to renew e.g. invite staff to a team training session, to meet the players etc

If the sponsor don't require such regular updates, it is important that you collect and collate all the information anyway for your records. This will be useful when going into renewal conversations or when you go out to pitch to new potential sponsors.



Some additional tips to keep sponsors happy

- Give the sponsor signed kit/memorabilia for their use in competitions or for staff giveaways
- Ensure your website features their logo on your partner page, plus a paragraph about them and a hyperlink to their website
- Retweet/share their social media posts and encourage your fans to follow/retweet them too
- Send thank you notes for their support after they attend your events. If it feels right, you can also do this more overtly through your social media channels
- Offer the sponsor access to your top coaches to do a talk at their Head Office or Employees Christmas Dinner





Managing the measurables

It is important to remember that media values/PR values/social media stats are of importance to many brands.

Ensure you know what marketing metrics are important to your sponsor, and measure these metrics in relation to the sponsorship assets you are delivering.

Marketing metrics which might be important to your sponsor:

- Media – TV/streaming viewing figures
- PR – reach, viewership, titles
- Social media – likes, views, shares
- Digital stats – views, shares, interactions





Renewal conversations – when to start conversations

Keeping an existing sponsor is easier and cheaper (time and budget-wise) than searching for a new sponsor, so give yourself plenty of time to have renewal conversations.

6-9 months before the end of the contract, request a meeting to discuss renewal.

You will need to prepare for the meeting by:

- collating information which shows how you have delivered on the sponsorship contract, so check back on the assets mentioned in the contract and prepare a presentation to show the best examples of your delivery, there is more detail on this in the next slide
- reports which make the sponsor feel proud of the partnership
- think about the sponsor's objectives for the sponsorship which you discussed right at the start of the partnership, and demonstrate any ways in which you can show success in these areas



Renewal conversations – what to prepare for the meeting

Useful information to collate for renewal conversations are all of the ‘measurables’ from the last page:

- PR coverage/ any media monitoring reports you have showing the sponsor brand
- TV and digital viewership of your matches showing the sponsor brand
- social media which mentions the sponsor brand – particularly powerful are player or coach tweets/engagements with the sponsor brand, which provide a real feel-good factor
- a list of all other delivered assets such as tickets, hospitality
- any testimonials which show the sponsorship is a success e.g. a quote/thank you from the head of the club to the sponsor, thanking them for their support





Renewal conversations – questions/agenda for the meeting

You will also need to go into the renewal meetings prepared to ask questions and listen.

Questions you should begin with:

- How does the sponsor feel the partnership has been?
- Has it delivered on their objectives?
- What feedback have the sponsor received from their employees, customers, other stakeholders?
- What elements of the sponsorship have worked well?
- What could be better?
- What other plans do the sponsor have in the next two or three years? (E.g. if the company are expanding, launching a new product, upgrading their website, there are ways a sponsorship can support these plans)
- Would they like to renew? As part of your initial contract, there will have been a renewal clause in there, or ‘first right to refusal’, meaning you would ask them if they want to renew before you start conversations with a competitor/another sponsor for the same rights/package



No renewal – when the partnership ends

When the partnership ends, try to end it on good terms. As with everything else, sponsorships can come to a natural end where the sponsor decides to try something else, or has a change in their objectives which means the sponsorship no longer fits.

Here is a process to follow when a partnership is coming to an end:

Try to end on good terms because the sponsor speaking highly of the club will benefit you in the long run

Mutually agree a short statement for the media, and to share on your own channels. The club and the sponsor should be saying the same thing, otherwise it could negatively affect your reputation and therefore future sponsorships



Task: Develop a sponsor plan

Using the information shared in this chapter, sketch out a sponsor plan to incorporate all the key dates for the sponsor, and demonstrate how you (both club and sponsor) can activate the new partnership.

Considerations:

Include all key club dates
such as fixtures, new season announcements, family days, networking dates, end of season dinner

Add in some (fictional at this stage) player appearances for the sponsor

Add in some dates for social media posts where the club will focus on the sponsor/their products/key messages

Any key sponsor dates in their marketing calendar where the club can support



Chapter takeaways and top tips

Managing sponsorships is time-consuming but the relationship between club and sponsor is key to a successful sponsorship.

These tips should help along the way:

<p>Communication is key. Developing a trusting, open and honest, two-way dialogue is really important to make managing the sponsorship easier and more successful</p>	<p>Know that the time taken on managing the sponsorship properly will be worth it. Building the relationship, sharing information, planning and execution of a sponsorship takes time, detail and good organisational skills</p>
<p>Agree ways of working which include the ‘point-people’ on both sides and diarise regular meetings from the outset</p>	<p>Manage (and measure!) the measurables from day one – keeping a record of all media/PR/social media coverage stats as well as tickets given to sponsors in order to report back at the end of the contract is really important</p>
<p>Be proactive: the onus is on the club to do everything they can to ensure the sponsorship is successful</p>	<p>Start renewal conversations early</p>

