

Finding Sponsorship for Your GAA Club: A Quick Guide

Stephen O'Rourke, Sponsorship Officer, Gaelic Games Europe

1. Introduction

So you've founded a new GAA club (or are an established club caught in the wilderness!) and now you need equipment and other supplies to get the club up, running, and maintained. While there is some help from Gaelic Games Europe for new clubs that start up, such as a hurling grant for the purchase of supplies, clubs really need to seek out sponsors and other contacts that will help them along the way to becoming an established club in their city.

Before I go into all the ins and outs of finding and maintaining a relationship with a company and individuals to support your new GAA club, let me first start with the following:

CHANCE YOUR ARM!

You would be amazed at how successful the above concept can be. Is there a company in the city which you think might be interested in helping the club out? Contact them! Do some of your members work at big multinational firms? Get them to ask their boss! By simply seeing a possible opportunity and asking you have already increased your chances of getting a return out of it for your club. There is a whole host of people and companies out there who may want to get involved in the local community and help out a new up-and-coming club – they first need to know that your club exists!

2. My background in the GAA and sponsorship

As the Chairperson of Hamburg GAA (from 2015 until my transfer to Cologne Celtics GAA in summer 2017) I was involved in attracting and maintaining three sponsors for the club since its foundation. In this article I'm going to explain the approach and strategies I used in carrying this out as well as share with you my experiences when it comes to sponsorships.

3. First thing's first

Usually the best thing to do at the outset of a new club (apart from the key step of establishing a full and dedicated Committee!) is to find someone within the club who has a passion for all things sponsorship. Find this person and ask them to be the club's **Sponsorship Officer**. The reason for this is it is best to have a dedicated person who will look after the ins and outs of finding potential sponsors (or 'Partners' as they are increasingly becoming known) and can really concentrate their efforts and stick with the search if and when it becomes tedious and stressful.

Of course, many newly-established clubs face the issue of low membership numbers, so finding someone to take on the responsibility as Officer is sometimes not such an easy task. However, don't let that put you off – divide the Sponsorship tasks among all of you and you'll be flying in no time. After all, although it's good to have a dedicated Officer, the task of getting the club name out there and finding potential leads is actually a task for all of the club's members. To that, it should be pointed out that the Sponsorship Officer and the Public Relations Officer should be working quite closely together – the job of the PRO is to promote the club within the community and let the locals

know about the club's existence, which when you think about it is also beneficial to the Sponsorship Officer. Therefore, at the outset of your club and when it comes to sponsorship, ensure that these two Officers are staying in regular contact!

4. Types of sponsor

It is safe to say that just about every major city (and even some far flung) has an Irish pub. An Irish pub is a natural choice when it comes to approaching for sponsorship, as there is already a common link. In terms of getting the pub on board, head along there with a few of your team mates, bringing the hurls or football along, and have a chat with the boss. Let them know that you are trying to create a bit of Ireland in the city, just like they are doing with their pub, and show them that you are willing to work together – you'll drop in after training to support the business, host some club events there, while they support you with the acquisition of equipment and kits. It's a mutual partnership with benefits for both.

Maybe someone on your team works in a big company (or even a small one) and they might think the boss would be interested in helping out in the community? Get them to have a chat with the boss. And keep in mind that many companies can write off these spending in their taxes. Be sure to raise this point in a meeting you have with them. On that point, it is vital that you are equipped with the necessary documentation for that all-important follow-up meeting with any potential sponsors (See the section below for info on one aspect of this - a Sponsorship Proposal Template).

Sometimes a bit of luck and circumstances can lead to big things. To give you an example, when I was in the sponsor pub around the time the club got going, there were two lads having a few pints on a Sunday evening. When they saw my Hamburg GAA promo T-shirt (which I wore whenever possible!) we got chatting about the club. Long story short, the two lads turned out to be directors of an Irish company with a base in the city and offered there and then to come on board as sponsors!

5. Conclusion

The main point I want to get across is that when you are on the lookout for sponsors, chance the arm and give it a go! With effort, organisation, and a fair bit of luck, your new GAA club can get local companies on board to help push the club and community to the next step.

The above tips are just a taster of what I can offer you in my role as Sponsorship Officer. Over the coming season this **Sponsorship Resources** section of the GGE website will be updated regularly with documents that will be helpful in your quest to find financial supporters. To that, I want to work closely with your clubs and sponsorship officers – email me now at

SponsorshipOfficer.Europe@GAA.ie outlining your current progress with potential sponsors and I'll be in touch with advice which will guide you in negotiations. Furthermore, I'll further share with you my own experiences in this area as well as provide a Sponsorship Proposal Template which you can bring along to that all important first meeting with a potential sponsor!

I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

Stephen