The Sponsorship Connection
Practical Guide for High School Athletic Directors and Coaches

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Endorsements

"This is probably the most usable fund raising information that I have ever read. We has our annual conference at Atlanta Beach, NC. It was impressive to have most in attendance make some comment about the series. The most frequent was … "that information on fund raising has helped me more than you will ever know!""

Mac Cumbo, North Carolina Atlantic Directors Association

"It is an unfortunate fact of life for many school districts today that budgets are shrinking. Many athletic programs must look to corporate America for support of programs and to underwrite the cost of equipment. Dr. Forsyth's suggestions provide insight into those seeking sponsorship."

Treva Dayton, Interscholastic Athletic Administration

"It's one thing to have a person present a menu of ideas, but another to actually have a workable program laid out for them. This is what Dr. Forsyth does so well. The National High School Athletic Coaches Association strongly endorses Eric's research because of his thorough knowledge of the educational system and the ability to relate to not only the professionals in the system but the lay people as well."

Richard Galiette, National High School Athletic Coaches Association

"Many physical education teachers and coaches just do not understand why companies give, and Eric's research presents 'behind the scenes' background in this area. Eric's work is a credit to Bemidji State University, and as well is an excellent research for coaches and community organizations alike."

Morris Glimcher, Manitoba High Schools Athletic Association

"Dr. Forsyth's research focuses on critical issues and policies which in many cases will make the difference to whether school programs continue or not."

Colin Hood, Ontario Federation of School Athletic Association

"Eric has developed some of the best articles concerning sponsorship of high school athletic programs. Over the years Eric has not been satisfied with just writing articles, but he has continued to research and develop ideas concerning high school sponsorships."

Larry Klaassen, Wyoming High School Activities Association

"I have searched high and low to find information on revenue streams which would assist athletic departments at the high school level. Unfortunately, I was unsuccessful, until I discovered Dr. Forsyth's research. I firmly believe this information will be invaluable to high school athletic programs in the years to come."

Tom Kolbo, VarsityOnline.com

"Dr. Forsyth's article in Athletic Business was the basis of several long discussions at the Nebraska State Interscholastic Athletics Administrators Association board meetings. The organization has used information from Dr. Forsyth to find corporate sponsors for the organization."

Jim Mann, Nebraska Athletic Directors Association

"Dr. Forsyth's research has developed planning and strategic guidelines that have potential to significantly enhance program operating funds with minimal efforts and maximum productivity."

Dr. John Olson, Madison School District, Wisconsin

"The role of Athletic Directors has become in many instances one of fundraising to keep school athletic programs afloat and thanks to the work Dr. Forsyth has done, Athletic Directors and school booster clubs now have a resource that they should be able to use to their benefit."

John Paton, Alberta Schools' Athletic Association

"Thanks to Eric, I have been able to raise funds that have resulted in a brand new football stadium scoreboard, a new press box, a new baseball stadium backstop, team uniforms, as well as sponsorships for our invitational track meets."

Al Rabenold, Athletic Director Montezuma Schools, Iowa

"This research provides a clear picture into how businesses arrive at the decision to sponsor an athletic program and I feel the insight Dr. Forsyth provides is essential knowledge for an athletic administrator to have in seeking business sponsors."

Phil Ricci, Rhode Island Athletic Administrators Association

"Athletic Directors are constantly looking at positive means of gathering additional revenues for athletic departments. The athletic directors of Iowa appreciate the positive impact Eric has made regarding corporate sponsorship ideas."

Gary Ross, Iowa High School Athletic Directors Association

"Dr. Forsyth's research and meaningful suggestions have given our school district athletic administrators needed encouragement and understanding of ow we a look outside the traditional available financial resources."

Ed Tingstad, Washington State Athletic Directors Association

"It is my opinion that Dr. Forsyth is one of the foremost authorities approaching and preparing organizations to attain sponsorship."

Pete Veldman, Minnesota State High School Athletic Directors Association

"As the Director of Sports Marketing at Inflatable Images, I have found Dr. Forsyth's work to be original and unique. High school athletic administrators as well as marketers to these programs can develop significant understanding of the issues in marketing and sponsorship at the high school level."

Mac Yates, Inflatable Images

About the Author

Dr. Forsyth received his Ph.D. in Sport Administration, with a minor in marketing management, from The University of New Mexico (UNM). During his studies at UNM, he completed a doctoral internship with the Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) Athletic Department under the direction of the department's marketing and promotion specialist. He then went on to complete a second doctoral internship with the New Mexico Activities Association. During these internship experiences, he became quite aware of the financial hardship high school athletic administrators across the country were having funding their programs.

As a result of his internship experiences, he conducted a research study that focused specifically on: (a) companies' discernment, (b) key decision-makers involved, (c) the decision-making process, and (d) the decision criteria in sponsoring high school athletic programs. Upon completing his dissertation, he then conducted additional research studies at both the local and national levels that centered on five basic premises: (a) the motivation of companies to sponsor high school athletic programs, (b) the decision-making process in evaluating sponsorship proposal, (c) the decision-makers who evaluates sponsorship proposals, (d) the decision criteria to accept or decline a sponsorship opportunity, and (e) securing the partnership.

Dr. Forsyth has published articles in numerous publications: Athletic Business, Interscholastic Athletic Administration, National Coach, and State High School Athletic Association Quarterly's throughout the United States and Canada. As well, he has been an invited speaker to present his research on the local, state, regional, national, and international conferences around the country and abroad.

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FORWARD

This manual is a "must read" for any athletic administrator or coach who is interested in seeking sponsorship funding for their sport program.

During these times of public scrutiny of the public educational sector, athletic administrators are hard pressed to fund their sport activities and programs. With increasing public outcry of the expenditures on public education, the interscholastic athletic budget is usually near the top of the endangered list. Consequently, athletic administrators and coaches are compelled to seek alternative funding sources for their programs and sports.

Dr. Forsyth has conducted very meaningful research into the who, why, what and how of making the sponsorship connection. And, most importantly, this manual has been based on research and readings specifically targeting the high school sports market. This manual is the first of its kind to address the critical issue of alternative funding for high school sports. It is an important resource to be found in any high school athletic department.

After reading Dr. Forsyth's manual, I was extremely impressed with the fact that this is a practical and useful guide. This is really a tribute to Dr. Forsyth's ability to translate his research into an honest, accurate and reliable "how to" guide for athletic administrators and coaches. This is not a conceptual approach to making the sponsorship connection. This is a useful manual based on the realities of the business world and how to be successful when seeking a business partner to sponsor an event or program.

In my position with the Pennsylvania State Athletic Directors Association, I can attest to the reliability of the information and strategies presented by Dr. Forsyth. They work!

One of the prominent features of this manual is the consistent comparison that is made between small companies and large companies as well as the distinction between local and national companies. This background provides a distinct framework for the athletic administrator and coach to work within when pursuing a sponsorship. This information that is presented provides a practical approach to the overall process of making "the sponsorship connection."

Perhaps one of the most outstanding features of Dr. Forsyth's manual is found in the segment "Bringing Everything Together." Two models are presented for the reader to get the big picture look of just what is all involved in the process of pursuing corporate sponsorships.

Congratulations to Dr. Forsyth for writing a very insightful, practical and reliable manual that will serve as a valuable resource and guide for any athletic administrator or coach in making "The Sponsorship Connection."

Robert Buckanavage, PSADA Executive Director

Sponsoring High School Athletic Programs: Tailoring Your Sponsorship Proposal

Introduction

The promotion and marketing of high school athletic (and non-athletic) programs has taken a new direction in the difficult task of coping with financial problems. As rising costs continue to affect high school athletic budgets, corporate sponsors will continue to be a source to supplement athletic budgets in lieu of rising costs. However, finding a corporate sponsor that will fund a high school sporting event or program can become an extremely competitive business. The key's in securing a corporate sponsor are: a) to know the company's motives in sponsoring high school athletic programs, b) to discover who within the company evaluates the proposal, c) to determine what these decision-makers are seeking from the sponsorship, and d) to tailor the sponsorship proposal to key influencers and the company's decision criteria.

Conducting the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine whether small and large companies differ in: a) their motives in sponsoring high school athletic programs, b) their level of management involvement evaluating the proposal; who are the decision-makers, and c) their decision criteria. Questionnaires were mailed to 700 companies (350 large companies and 350 small companies) in the Southwest/Western United States; Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah. Large companies were determined by having 100 or more employees and small companies were determined by having 99 or less employees. Once the questionnaires were completed and received from the companies, the data was analyzed to determine if there were any differences between large and small companies sponsoring high school athletic programs. The following sections will reflect the findings.

Why Companies Sponsor High School Athletic Programs

The primary reason both small and large companies sponsor high school athletic programs is their willingness to support the education system. Beyond this primary reason, small and large companies do differ. The order of preference in sponsoring high school athletic programs for small and large companies are:

	Small Companies	Large Companies
1.	Support Education	Support Education
2.	Sponsorship Goodwill	Public Image
3.	Personal Enjoyment	Sponsorship Goodwill
4.	Public Image	Company's Exposure
5.	Provide Scholarships	Increase Business Objectives
6.	Company's Exposure	Provide Scholarships
7.	Increase Business Objectives	Enhance Prestige
8.	Enhance Prestige	Personal Enjoyment

Therefore, high school athletic administrators need to incorporate these benefits in order of preference associated with a sponsorship in their proposal in reference to a small and/or large company. Companies will evaluate proposals that provide the most benefit for the company. The more benefits athletic administrators can offer associated with their proposal, the more likely a company may approve the sponsorship proposal.

Who Makes the Decision to Approve the Sponsorship Proposal

Identifying a company's decision-makers is most important, because marketing efforts need to be tailored to key influencers. Decision-makers who are likely to be involved in the decision-making process, to approve the sponsorship proposal, depends mostly on the individual's status or power they hold within the company and their ability to elicit expertise. In virtually every phase of a company's decision-making process for both small and large companies evaluating a high school athletic sponsorship proposal, upper management decision-makers were more involved than middle management decision-makers. Upper management decision-makers include the CEO, President, Vice President, Chairman, and Owner. Middle management decision-makers include the Marketing, Advertising, and/or Finance Director, Managers, and Assistants.

What is Important to Companies When Sponsoring High School Athletic Programs

The following decision criteria are important factors both small and large companies evaluate in sponsoring high school athletic programs. The criteria in rank order is as follows:

Rank Order	
1.	Cost of the Sponsorship
2.	Quality of the Sponsorship
3.	Company's Exposure
4.	Reaching Target Market
5.	Return on Investment
6.	Competition between Competitors

Therefore, since companies evaluate proposals on the bases of these expectations, high school athletic administrators need to incorporate these expectations into their proposal. A proposal that is capable of meeting these expectations is more likely to receive sponsorship approval.

Tailoring the Sponsorship Proposal

The following recommendations should be utilized by high school athletic administrators when developing and implementing a high school athletic sponsorship proposal to companies in their local community:

- The Owner should be the initial contact for a small company in order for the proposal to be considered and advanced to other stages in a company's decision-making process.
- The Marketing, Advertising, and/or Finance Director, Managers, and/or Assistants should be the initial contact for a large company. These middle management decision-makers have access to upper management, and will in turn advance the sponsorship to the upper management decision-makers within their company for consideration.
- Whether directed at a small or large company, the sponsorship proposal should highlight how the athletic program is an important function of the high school education system. The athletic administrator(s) should provide evidence in the proposal as to how their athletic program benefits the students and the school.

- Sponsorship proposals directed to a small company should also concentrate on benefits such as the sponsorship goodwill, the ability to provide corporate hospitality in entertaining business guests, and the positive image the company will receive from the spectator and media audiences.
- Sponsorship proposals directed to a large company should also concentrate on benefits such as the ability to create a positive image for the company and its products/services, the visibility the company will receive through the spectator and media audiences, and the opportunity to increase their business objectives through new business contacts.
- The proposal must entail the sponsorship's capability and its quality such as, a) the sponsorship guarantees, b) the sponsorship benefits, c) the sponsorship expectations, and d) the sponsorship time commitments (time frame of event).
- Enhance features of the proposal to the key decision-makers such as: potential tax benefits, b) the exposure the company will receive, c) the size of the spectator and media audiences, d) the possibility of increasing their sales or market share, e) the possibility of creating a competitive edge over the competition, and f) the athletic administrator's competence and ability to administer a successful event or program.
- Don't pressure decision-makers into a decision. Check with the company's decision-makers frequently, yet tactfully, and provide additional information when needed. Do not assume that information presented earlier in the process will be adequate.
- Keep in mind, when developing and implementing a sponsorship proposal, be sure your proposal is efficiently complete. Address all sponsorship issues in detail so decision-makers fully understand the sponsorship opportunity before them.

Why Companies Sponsor High School Athletic Programs

Introduction

Today, many school districts throughout the country are continually faced with rising costs (e.g., salaries, insurance, supplies and equipment, work shops, sick leave). These costs inevitably take away funds from the athletic budget administrators need to maintain a quality program. Due to these rising costs, athletic administrators are looking for other revenue sources to compensate for their budget cuts. One particular school district which consist of 11 high schools in the State of New Mexico was facing drastic programmatic reductions from 1989 through 1994 due to rising costs. Before hiring a promotion and marketing specialists, the Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) Athletic Department incurred over $600,000 in budget cuts during this period. As a result, 62 coaching position were lost, 24 athletic teams were eliminated, and there was a dramatic decrease in athletic participation. During my doctoral internship with APS in 1995, I was able to witness the impact corporate sponsorships had in stopping additional programmatic reductions from occurring. Although these losses have not been fully replenished, corporate sponsorships are helping APS gradually reach the quality status they were known. Given this example, I believe many high school athletic administrators can relate to similar effects rising costs is having on their programs.

Purpose of This Article

In my previous article titled, "Sponsoring High School Athletic Programs: Tailoring Your Sponsorship Proposal to Key Influencers and the Company's Decision Criteria", I discussed four important areas high school athletic administrators need to be aware when pursuing companies for funds. They were: (a) why companies sponsor high school athletic programs, (b) who makes the decision to approve the sponsorship proposal, (c) what is important to companies when sponsoring high school athletic programs, and (d) tailoring the sponsorship proposal. I believe it is important to explain in greater detail these four areas so administrators will have a better understanding. This article (first of four) will concentrate on why companies sponsor high school athletic programs. Also, recommendations are provided to help athletic administrators strengthen their sponsorship proposal before submitting to companies in their community.

A Closer Look

The following eight reasons come from a combined effort of: (a) taking information from the literature, and (b) testing this information in my doctoral research study. The results of my study will be implemented in the recommendation section. The reasons why companies sponsor high school athletic programs are:

1. Sport sponsorship can create a positive image for the company, its products, and its services.
2. Sport sponsorship can achieve media coverage and visibility to the company's consumers.
3. Sport sponsorship can impact the company's goodwill in a positive way -- meaning the company really cares.
4. Sport sponsorship can enhance company values -- its size, financial muscle, and business status. In turn, sport sponsorship will enhance high school athletic values -- an increase in participation, an increase in new teams, an increase in new coaching positions, and an increase in supplemental funds.
5. Sport sponsorship offers an opportunity for new customer accounts and retail sales during the event.
6. Sport sponsorship can provide hospitality for the company's employees, friends, and business guests.
7. Sport sponsorship shows the media and spectator audience's the company's willingness to support their local schools.
8. Sport sponsorship can provide fellowships and scholarships to student-athletes.

A Brief Recap

My research study indicated the primary reason small and large companies sponsor high school athletic programs is their willingness to support education. However, beyond this primary reason small and large companies did differ. The following table shows the order of importance why small and large companies sponsor high school athletic programs.

	Small Companies	Large Companies
1.	Support Education	Support Education
2.	Sponsorship Goodwill	Public Image
3.	Personal Enjoyment	Sponsorship Goodwill
4.	Public Image	Company's Exposure
5.	Provide Scholarships	Increase Business Objectives
6.	Company's Exposure	Provide Scholarships
7.	Increase Business Objectives	Enhance Prestige
8.	Enhance Prestige	Personal Enjoyment

Note. Small Company (1-99 employees), Large Company (100 or more employees)

Although the order of importance is different between small and large companies, it is important for athletic administrators to know that each item was rated as important when sponsoring high school athletic programs.

Recommendations for High School Athletic Administrators

The following recommendations are steps high school athletic administrators should take in order to strengthen their sponsorship proposal before submitting the proposal to companies in their community. My advice for administrators is to include these recommendations in order of importance for small and large companies as the table indicates. The recommendations are:

1. Supporting Education: Each sponsorship proposal should highlight how the athletic program is an important function of their high school education system. Provide evidence as to how their athletic program benefits the school, students, and the community. An excellent reference is an article written by the National Federation of State High School Associations titled, "A Case for High School Athletics". Administrators can contact the National Federation at 1-317-972-6900 and request a copy.
2. Public Image: Indicate that the sponsorship is a great tool for creating a positive image for the company, its products, and its services.
3. Sponsorship Goodwill: Publicize during the event, that without the company's support this event could not have taken place. This 'good neighbor' image will

enhance the company's sponsorship goodwill. The publicity will also show the media and spectator audience's that the company really cares.

4. Company's Exposure: Let companies know that the event will be exposed to their consumers and achieve the market awareness they desire.
5. Provide Scholarships: Present opportunities in which companies can provide fellowships and scholarships for student-athletes wanting to attend college.
6. Personal Enjoyment: Present opportunities in which companies can provide corporate hospitality for themselves, friends, and business guests. For example: special seating, tickets, souvenirs, etc.
7. Increase Business Objectives: Present opportunities in which companies can make new customer accounts and retail sales during the event. For example: vendor booths, special discounts, and give-a-ways.
8. Enhance Prestige: Let companies know the athletic program will gain prestige values, such as an increase in participation, an increase in new teams, an increase in new coaching positions, and an increase in supplemental funds. In turn, the company gains prestige values, such as their discernment, financial muscle, and business status.

A Final Thought

My intent is to provide valuable information to high school administrators to help them prevent programmatic reductions from occurring within their athletic programs. Unless athletic administrators are able to find additional revenue sources, I believe many school districts will no longer have an athletic program. Athletic programs will eventually be structured under community based sport programs. This has already happened at the middle school level in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I hope this will never happen at the high school level in any school district. I truly believe corporate sponsorships are one affective revenue source to prevent programmatic reductions from occurring. My next article will look closer at the decision-criteria companies use to rate sponsorship proposals.

The Decision Criteria Companies to Rate High School Sponsorship Proposals

Introduction

Due to rising costs and decreasing allocations, high school athletic administrators have regrettably dropped individual sport teams and eliminated coaching positions from their athletic program to maintain other teams. In order to prevent additional programmatic reductions from occurring, athletic administrators started searching for supplemental funds to compensate for future budget cuts. During my doctoral studies at The University of New Mexico (1993-95), a number of athletic districts were in search for additional revenue sources to offset rising costs. They were: Glendale School District in Arizona, Anaheim School District in California, Denver East School District in Colorado, and Independent School District in Texas. Perhaps these districts were not alone facing programmatic reductions, but rather many districts throughout the country. I believe corporate sponsorships can help replenish the programmatic reductions these districts encountered.

Purpose of This Article

In my previous article titled, "Why Companies Sponsor High School Athletic Programs: A Closer Look", I indicated eight reasons why companies sponsor high school athletic programs. They were: (a) support education, (b) public image, (c) sponsorship goodwill, (d) company's exposure, (e) provide scholarships, (f) personal enjoyment, (g) increase business objectives, and (h) enhance prestige. Now that we know why companies sponsor high school athletic programs, the next important step is to determine the decision criteria which companies will rate sponsorship proposals. The ability to pinpoint the decision criteria, high school administrators will then be in a position to properly market their athletic program to companies in their community for corporate funds. This article (second of four) will concentrate on the decision criteria's companies will use to rate a high school athletic sponsorship proposal. Also, recommendations are provided to help athletic administrators to be sure their sponsorship proposal is complete before submitting the proposal to companies in their community.

A Closer Look

The following description comes from a combined effort of: (a) taking information from the literature, and (b) testing this information in my doctoral research study. The results of my study will be implemented in the recommendations section. The criterion selection companies will use to rate a sponsorship proposal are:

1. Companies will consider the cost and the tax benefits of the sponsorship.
2. Companies will consider whether their competitors are involved in the sponsorship.
3. Companies will consider the size of the media and spectator audience's during the event.
4. Companies will consider whether the organizing committee is competent to administer a successful event.
5. Companies will consider whether the sponsorship will help increase their customer base.
6. Companies will consider whether the sponsorship will help increase their sales and market share.

A Brief Recap

My research study indicated that small and large companies do not differ in ranking six criterion items in order of priority. The following table shows the rank order.

Criterion Items in Rank Order	
1.	Cost of the Sponsorship
2.	Quality of the Sponsorship
3.	Company's Exposure
4.	Reaching Target Market
5.	Return on Investment
6.	Competition between Competitors

However, my study also indicated that both small and large companies do consider additional criterion items when rating high school athletic sponsorship proposals. They are:

1. Companies will consider whether the sponsorship will provide benefits to the student-athletes and the athletic program.

2. Companies will consider whether the sponsorship will create a partnership with the athletic program.
3. Companies will consider whether the sponsorship will benefit a lifetime sport.
4. Companies will consider the sport being sponsored.
5. Companies will consider the student-athletes economic status.
6. Companies will consider their financial situation.
7. Companies will consider whether employees are related to student-athletes.
8. Companies will consider whether employees are personal friends with members of the athletic staff.
9. Companies will consider health related concerns of particular sports.
10. Companies will consider whether they are currently helping the school outside the sponsorship.

Until all criterion items are ranked by companies in a national study (and one day I hope to accomplish this), I have provided recommendations high school athletic administrators should take in order for their sponsorship proposal to be complete before submitting the proposal to companies in their community.

Recommendations for High School Athletic Administrators

The following recommendations are suggestions high school athletic administrators should include in their sponsorship proposal before submitting the proposal to companies in their community. They are:

1. Indicate the dollar amount you are asking the company to donate.
2. Indicate the potential tax benefits the company can receive for their donation.
3. Indicate your competence and ability to administer a successful event.
4. Indicate how the company will be exposed to its consumers.
5. Indicate how the company can increase its current customer base.
6. Indicate the size of the media audience.
7. Indicate the size of the spectator audience.
8. Indicate how the company can make sales during the event.

9. Indicate how the company may increase sales after the event.
10. Indicate how the company may increase their market share after the event.
11. Indicate that the company will be the sole sponsor among their competitors.
12. Indicate the student-athletes economic status to show a need for funds.
13. Indicate the benefits the student-athletes will receive from the sponsorship.
14. Indicate the benefits the school will receive from the sponsorship.
15. Indicate how the company can be personally involved during the event.
16. Indicate how the sponsorship can create a partnership with the athletic program.
17. Indicate the sport the sponsorship will benefit.
18. Indicate whether the company is already involved with the school.
19. Indicate, if appropriate, any relationship between company employees and student-athletes (for example: the owner has a daughter competing on the soccer team).
20. Indicate, if appropriate, any relationship between company employees and members of the athletic staff (for example: the owner and the football coach have been friends for many years).
21. Indicate, if appropriate, if the sponsored event is a lifetime sport.
22. Indicate, if appropriate, health related concerns associated with the event.

A Final Thought

Although the criterion is extensive, the more complete a proposal, the more likely a high school athletic administrator will succeed securing funds from companies in their community. This will also indicate the administrator is competent to administer a successful sponsored event. My next article will look closer at the decision-makers who evaluate high school athletic sponsorship proposals, and the importance of making contact with these key individuals.

Decision-Makers Who Evaluate High School Athletic Sponsorship Proposals

Introduction

Rising costs are not only affecting district athletic programs, but also state high school associations. According to John Gillis, Assistant to Director for the National Federation of State High School Associations, "each High School State Association are continually faced with rising costs, causing further reductions in their state high school athletic budget". One example of the competitiveness for corporate sponsorships is the State of Illinois. Jim Flynn, Assistant Executive Director for the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) indicated that until the 1992-93 school year, his Association was able to attract a number of corporate sponsorships in support of Illinois high school state championship events. Then in 1992, Illinois professional franchises (baseball, basketball, football) started winning and companies became attracted to the number of fans attending professional events. The professional franchises inevitably won the support from companies previously supporting the IHSA. This lack of support made it more difficult for Mr. Flynn to offset rising costs.

Purpose of This Article

Finding a corporate sponsor that will fund a high school athletic program can become extremely competitive. If high school athletic administrators become dependent upon revenue sources such as corporate sponsorships to offset rising costs, they will need to know the key individuals who will evaluate a sponsorship proposal. Also, administrators will need to know the decision-maker's role in order to properly market their athletic programs. This article (third of four) will concentrate on the decision-makers who evaluate proposals, and the importance in making contact with these key individuals. Also, recommendations are provided to help high school athletic administrators submit a sponsorship proposal to companies in their community effectively.

A Closer Look

The following description comes from a combine effort of: (a) taking information from the literature, and (b) testing this information in my doctoral research study. The results of my study will be implemented later in the recommendation section.

The most important factor is that decision-makers must have adequate knowledge of the market. Decision-makers who are likely to be involved depends mostly on their ability to elicit expertise. An individual's influence on a purchase is directly determined by his organizationally defined responsibility. His/her responsibility will be a function of: (a) their ability to understand products and services, (b) their ability to understand the relationship products and services are to the company, (c) their ability to understand the benefits products and services can provide the company, and (d) their ability to chose the best available products and services for the company. Identifying the company's decision-makers is crucial since marketing efforts must be tailored to the specific needs and interest of these individuals. If a seller does not identify and communicate with key influencers the sale may be lost. A seller must make multiple contacts, often informally (e.g., a phone call, a letter, in person) and respond to the needs and desired benefits of a wide range of decision-makers. The most productive way to identify key influencers is through a company's gatekeeper. A gatekeeper (e.g., receptionist, secretary, office manager) is an individual who controls the flow of information to and from the seller and buyer, and has access to decision-makers. Sellers can identify key influencers through inquires (the gatekeeper) about who is involved (the decision-makers) in making decisions.

A Brief Recap

My research study indicated the key individuals high school athletic administrators need to contact in order for their proposal to be seriously considered. The following table shows the key decision-makers for small and large companies.

Company	Upper Management	Middle Management
Small	Owner	Office Manager
Large	CEO	Marketing Director
	Owner	Advertising Director
	President	Finance Director
	Vice-President	Office Manager

Note. Small Company (1-99 employees), Large Company (100 or more employees)

The importance in making contact with these key decision-makers when presenting a sponsorship proposal is indicated below.

Recommendations for High School Athletic Administrators

The following recommendations are suggestions to ensure high school athletic administrators reach key decision-makers when presenting a sponsorship proposal to companies in their local community. The recommendations are:

1. The initial contact for a small company should be the office manager and the owner.
2. The initial contact for a large company should be the marketing director, the advertising director, the finance director, and the office manager. These middle-management decision-makers will advance the proposal to upper management.

Contacting these key decision-makers will help the athletic administrator's proposal to be seriously considered. Administrators should also be aware of:

3. Middle management decision-makers will first consider the proposal guarantee's before advancing the proposal to upper management decision-makers.
4. Once the middle management decision-makers have become attracted the guarantees, they will advance the proposal to upper management decision-makers.
5. Upper management decision-makers will then consider the strategic and competitive aspects of the proposal.
6. Upper management decision-makers for both small and large companies are more likely to approve and commit funds for a sponsorship than middle management decision-makers.

A Final Thought

For many years corporate sponsorships has been a major source of income for the Olympic Games, professional franchises, and intercollegiate athletics. I believe corporate sponsorships can become a major source of income for interscholastic athletics. Now is the time for high school athletic administrators to be just as competitive marketing their athletic programs

as the higher levels of sport. The administrators for the higher levels of sport knows exactly who the key decision-makers are to receive approval for their proposal. Now high school athletic administrators also know who the key decision-makers are to approve their sponsorship proposal. My next article will look closer at the decision process (stages) in which companies will evaluate high school athletic sponsorship proposals, and at what stage decision-makers are involved.

The Decision Process Companies Evaluate Sponsorship Proposals

Introduction

The promotion and marketing of high school athletics has taken a new direction in the difficult task of coping with the financial problems administrators are facing. One direction I believe high school athletic administrators should take is to secure corporate funds from companies in their local community. However, the key in securing a corporate sponsor is understanding the decision-making process (stages) companies use to evaluate sponsorship proposals. It is important that administrators understand the uniqueness of every situation in the decision process. Administrators must be aware of the decision process in order to know who to present their proposal. The ability to understand a company's decision process would be extremely valuable for high school athletic administrators because it will allow them to develop and implement strategies when marketing their athletic programs to companies in their communities.

Purpose of This Article

In my previous three articles I discussed: (a) why companies sponsor high school athletic programs, (b) the decision criteria companies will rate high school athletic sponsorship proposals, and (c) the key decision-makers who will evaluate high school athletic sponsorship proposals. The next important step is to determine the decision process companies will evaluate sponsorship proposals. This article (fourth of four) will concentrate on the decision process -- stages decision-makers evaluate high school athletic sponsorship proposals. Also, recommendations are provided to help high school athletic administrators take the necessary steps to increase their sponsorship proposal's chance of being approved.

A Closer Look

The following description comes from a combine effort of: (a) taking information from the literature, and (b) testing this information in my doctoral research study. The results of my study will be implemented later in the recommendation section.

When presenting a proposal to a company, marketers will identify key decision-makers through a gatekeeper (for example: an office manager) and determine who is involved in the decision process. Once the marketers product is presented to the company, objectives are then

set that represent the goals the company is seeking. During the search for available alternatives, decision-makers may find that: (a) one or more of the goals are unattainable, (b) two or more of the goals are in conflict, or (c) the goals have been set to low. Decision-makers will then revise the goals and set a new criteria. Decision-makers will then search for available alternatives enabling them to determine whether all available products offer potential advantages the company desires. The expectations decision-makers look for in available alternatives are: (a) product quality, (b) product delivery, (c) product packaging, (d) product performance/ capability, (e) product guarantee, (f) product time commitment, and (g) product technical assistance. The search for available alternatives terminates when a satisfactory number of products are found. Sometimes decision-makers are faced with uncertain decisions that involve risks. Decision-makers will take necessary steps to solve the situation. Marketers must be particularly attentive to information exchanged at the alternative evaluation and selection stages, because this information can be the deciding factor to select or not to select their product. Marketers should incorporate features that will enhance the attractiveness of their product to the more influential decision-makers in the buying center. Upper management decision-makers have considerable influence in the decision to: (a) buy or commit funds to a purchase, and (b) provide ultimate approval for purchases of expensive major capital.

A Brief Recap

My research study indicated that companies do evaluate high school athletic sponsorship proposals in a five-stage process. The following table indicates this five-stage process.

The Decision Process (Stages)
1. Initial Contact
2. Decision-Makers Establishing a Criteria
3. Consideration for Alternatives
4. Evaluation of Alternatives
5. Making a Decision

Athletic administrators need to be aware that the amount of time it takes for decision-makers to go from the first stage to the fifth stage depends on: (a) the completeness of the sponsorship proposal, (b) the dollar amount administrators are seeking for the sponsorship, and (c) the company's involvement with high school athletic sponsorships -- first opportunity or an ongoing partnership. The implications for each stage is indicated below.

Recommendations for High School Athletic Administrators

The following recommendations are suggestions high school athletic administrators should take to increase their sponsorship proposal of being approved. Please note, I have reiterated recommendations from my previous three articles. The recommendations are:

1. The initial contact for a small company should be the owner, and the office through a phone call, a formal letter, and an office visit in order for the proposal to be seriously considered.

2. Most larger companies operate in such a way that makes it very difficult to contact upper management decision-makers directly. Therefore, the initial contact for a large company should be the marketing director, the advertising director, the finance director, and the office manager through a phone call, a formal letter, and an office visit in order for the proposal to be seriously considered. These middle-management decision-makers have access to the CEO, the president, the vice-president, and the owner. They will advance the proposal to these key decision-makers for their consideration.

3. Be aware middle management will first consider the proposal guarantee's before advancing the proposal to upper management. Once the middle management have become attracted the guarantee's, they will advance the proposal to upper management. Upper management will then consider the strategic and competitive aspects of the proposal.

4. Be aware companies may have a set criteria in which they evaluate sponsorship proposals. Small companies are more likely to not have a set criteria, whereas, large companies are more likely. Through the initial contact, decision-makers can determine whether or not their company has a set criteria. Should a company

have a set criteria, high school athletic administrators can then incorporate the company's criteria in their proposal. Refer to previous article titled, "The Decision-Criteria Companies Rate High School Sponsorship Proposals: A Closer Look".

5. Be aware that upper management are more likely to have flexibility to change the company's criteria regarding sponsorship proposals when making difficult decisions. Should upper management require additional information, high school administrators need to provide any additional information to assure the company will achieve the potential benefits available.

6. Be aware companies are submitted numerous sponsorship proposals. Decision-makers will approve the proposal that offers the greatest potential advantages for the company. Refer to previous article titled, "Why Companies Sponsor High School Athletic Programs: A Closer Look".

7. Be aware that upper management decision-makers for both small and large companies are more likely to approve and commit funds for a sponsorship than middle management decision-makers. Therefore, high school athletic administrators need to meet with upper management as early as possible, and enhance the benefits the sponsorship will provide the company.

8. Don't pressure decision-makers into a decision. Check with decision-makers frequently, yet tactfully, and provide additional information as needed.

A Final Thought

I hope this series of articles will be helpful to high school athletic administrators throughout the country. Administrators can't escape rising costs, nor can they prevent rising costs from taking away the necessary funds to maintain a quality athletic program. However, it is the administrator's job to find additional revenue sources to offset rising costs and save their athletic programs from being eliminated. I believe corporate sponsorships can be the most effective. The information I have provided in this series can help high school athletic administrators market their athletic program efficiently and effectively.

SPONSORING INTERSCHOLASTIC SPORTS:
More Advice

Introduction

From 1996 to 2001, I published a series of articles in numerous state high school association publications. This series included:

- Sponsoring High School Athletic Programs
- Why Companies Sponsor High School Athletic Programs
- The Decision Criteria Companies Rate Proposals
- Decision-Makers Who Evaluate Proposals
- The Decision Process Companies Evaluate Proposals

During this period, I have received numerous calls from athletic directors and coaches from all parts of the United States and Canada. As well, graduate students and professors have contacted me. I have been asked to speak at conferences, and serve as a consultant regarding the sponsorship of interscholastic sports. Although interscholastic sport sponsorships is not new, it seems that researching this topic is fairly new.

Many school districts in the United States and Canada still do not allow athletic directors and coaches to pursue sponsorships within their respective communities in support of their athletic programs. However, this may be changing in the near future. I have received phone calls from athletic directors and superintendents indicating that they are pursuing the idea. Just recently, I served as an external advisor on a student's Master Thesis who attended the University of Toronto. School districts in Canada seem to be open to sponsorships of their interscholastic sport programs as well. When school districts do become active in the sponsorship arena in their respective communities, it would be to athletic directors and coaches advantage to be effective and tactful when approaching companies. The more information that is available, the more successful they could be in seeking sponsorships. For those school districts that are already active in the sponsorship arena the same principle applies – to be effective and tactful.

The Next Series

It was so encouraging to hear that many found my articles to be practical and useful in seeking sponsorships, it motivated me to continue my research. With the help of two graduate students (co-researchers), I would like to provide another series of articles that will perhaps be as practical and useful to athletic directors and coaches who read them. The next series will include:

- Perceived Effectiveness of Advertising and Promotional Vehicles
- Key Decision-Makers and Their Influence in the Sponsorship Process
- Evaluation Process in Terms of Stages and Contact Preferred
- Corporate Motivation to Sponsor
- Sponsorship Criteria Most Important to Companies
- Influence of Media Coverage
- Information Preferred in a Proposal
- Factors That Control the Decision to Sponsor
- Measuring the Effectiveness of a Sponsorship Arrangement

Duplicating a Previous Study

One of the benefits of being a professor at a university is reading publications in my field of study. I was intrigued when I read a research study conducted by three professors at Illinois State University (ISU) titled, "The Decision-Making Process of Sport Sponsorship." They looked at four companies sponsoring the ISU athletic program. As a result, they recommended future qualitative research only at the local or national level.[1] I decided to do both; however, looking at the decision-making process of sponsoring interscholastic sports.

Conducting the Studies

First at the local level, I wanted to choose companies who were currently sponsoring the Bemidji High School (BHS) Athletic Program. So I contacted BHS's athletic director and he provided me a list of companies. I focused on companies who had a sport sponsorship budget of $2500 or more. I chose this figure because it showed a commitment to sponsoring interscholastic sports.

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[1] McCook, Turco & Riley (1997). The Cyber-Journal of Sports Marketing, http://www.cjsm.com/ Vol1/mcook.html

Then I was able to contact key decision-makers at the national level with the help from individuals on the local level. I focused on companies that had a sport sponsorship budget of $500,000 or more. I chose this figure for the same reason at the local level.

The purpose of sharing this is so that you (athletic directors and coaches) can be assured that the information provided in this next series is honest, accurate, and reliable. All decision-makers we spoke to were very willing to share information with us.

The Focus of Each Article in This Series

My on-going research continues to enlighten me why companies become involve in sponsoring interscholastic sports in their respective communities. As well, I am inspired to enlighten high school athletic directors and coaches with this valuable information. Each article in this series will have a specific focus:

Article 1 – Perceived Effectiveness of Advertising and Promotional Vehicles will focus on how companies view sponsoring interscholastic sports in comparison to sponsoring community events, merchandising, and non-sport sponsorships.

Article 2 – Key Decision-Makers and Their Influence in the Sponsorship Process will focus on individuals that review proposals, and who has the most influence accepting or declining interscholastic sport sponsorship proposals.

Article 3 – Evaluation Process in Terms of Stages and Contact Preferred will focus on how interscholastic sport sponsorship proposals are evaluated in specific stages, and the amount of contact decision-makers prefer during the evaluation process.

Article 4 – Corporate Motivation to Sponsor will focus on those factors that motivate companies to sponsor interscholastic sport programs.

Article 5 – Sponsorship Criteria Most Important to Companies will focus on what decision-makers based their approval in sponsoring interscholastic sport programs.

Article 6 – Influence of Media Coverage will focus on the importance of television, radio, and newspaper coverage in sponsoring interscholastic sports.

Article 7 – Information Preferred in a Proposal will focus on what decision-makers want to see in an interscholastic sponsorship proposal during the evaluation process.

Article 8 – Factors That Control the Decision to Sponsor will focus on those factors that may prevent companies from sponsoring interscholastic sport programs.

Article 9 – Measuring the Effectiveness of a Sponsorship Arrangement will focus on how companies look at the impact of their involvement in sponsoring interscholastic sports.

Something to Keep in Mind

As you read each article, you will notice that I have given simple suggestions that athletic directors and coaches could take in their pursuit of corporate sponsorships. I concentrated on local level sponsorships and state level sponsorships. The research studies were centered on local and national level sponsorships. I have taken the findings from each study and applied recommendations. For instance, the findings from the local study were applied to recommendations for athletic directors and coaches considering sponsorships on the local level (i.e., individual sport programs). The findings from the national study were applied to recommendations for athletic directors and coaches considering sponsorships on the state level (i.e., state championship events).

What is important to keep in mind is that from a research perspective, one cannot assume the findings on the national level will apply to the state level. I am only giving recommendations as a consideration. For example: At the national level companies become involve in interscholastic sport sponsorships to increase their profit margin, given the potential in reaching a large number of people through the media. It just makes since, to me, that if a large number of people become interested in state championship competitions, there could be similarities in sponsorships between the state and national levels. Therefore, the findings taken from the national study are only a consideration in pursuing sponsorships at the state level.

Closing Remarks

I am trying to provide information to help athletic directors and coaches seek sponsorships in their respective communities effectively and tactfully. For example, after attending one of my workshops, an athletic director from Iowa went back to his hometown and put to practice what he had learned. As a result, within one academic year he raised approximately $150,000 in corporate sponsorships to help support his athletic programs. As well, I hope you benefit greatly from the information shared in this next series.

Perceived Effectiveness of Advertising and Promotional Vehicles

Introduction

During our interviews with companies that sponsor interscholastic sport programs, it was interesting to hear that even on the local level, companies at times receive as many as 50 proposals a week. Proposals range from supporting community events, to providing merchandise, sponsoring a tradeshow, or helping a family that lost their home in a fire. Although all proposals that are presented to companies tend to have the same need (looking for financial support), not all proposals will receive approval for support. This brought up a very interesting question: How does interscholastic sport sponsorship proposals rank among all sponsorship proposals considered by companies?

In order to answer this question, sponsorship venues needed to be categorized. Four categories were presented to decision-makers: (a) community events, (b) merchandising, (c) non-sport sponsor, and (d) sport sponsorship. Examples were given for each category before decision-makers were asked to rank each category as important to their respective company. The examples were:

- Community Events: parades, fairs, fundraisers, etc.
- Merchandising: anything that entailed the company logo; t-shirts, cups, etc.
- Non-Sport Sponsor: tradeshows, exhibits, festivals, etc.
- Sport Sponsorship: interscholastic sport programs

Importance of Sponsoring Interscholastic Sports

It was quite interesting to see that sponsoring interscholastic sports was favored high at both the local and national levels. The table below indicates how decision-makers ranked each category for both local and national levels.

TABLE

Perceived Effectiveness of Advertising and Promotional Vehicles

Rank	Local Level	National Level
1	Community Events	Sport Sponsorship
2	Sport Sponsorship	Merchandising
3	Merchandising	Community Events
4	Non-Sport Sponsor	Non-Sport Sponsor

The reason why sport sponsorship did not rank first at the local level is that companies tend to think about the community as a whole, whereas, interscholastic sports is but one part. However, decision-makers also indicated that the opportunity to attend an interscholastic sporting event at the local level out numbers those opportunities to attend community events. Depending on the sponsorship opportunity (interscholastic sports versus community events), decision-makers indicated that they might be more inclined to sponsor an interscholastic sporting event given the time of year and type of sport.

At the national level, decision-makers indicated that sponsoring interscholastic sports can help increase sales in their company's products / services. Given the exposure through television, radio, and newspaper advertisement, the size of the audience is greater than that of other types of sponsorships (i.e., community events, merchandising, non-sport sponsor).

Suggestions for Athletic Directors and Coaches

The following are simple suggestions that high school athletic directors and coaches should consider when presenting a sponsorship proposal to a company at the local level (i.e., individual sport programs) and the state level (i.e., state championship competitions). They are:

- When presenting a company with a sponsorship proposal, be aware that the company has probably received several proposals that week.
- Be aware of all events (main attractions) that will be appearing in your community; type, location, and who the event is primarily intended.

- Indicate to decision-makers the number of sponsorship opportunities associated with your athletic program.
- If you are aware of a major community event coming up in the next month, your proposal should have been presented the month before.
- Remember, timing is important.

Key Decision-Makers and Their Influence in the Sponsorship Process

Introduction

While speaking at conferences, one of the main topics of discussion is who will review a high school athletic sponsorship proposal once it is presented to a company. My response would be a variety of people. To be more specific, I would present a table as the one below indicates:

TABLE 1
Key Decision-Makers

Management Level	Small Companies	Large Companies
Upper	Owner	CEO President Vice-President Chairman Owner
Middle	Manager	Marketing Directors Advertising Directors Finance Directors Managers Assistant Managers

As you can see, there are a variety of people who might review a high school athletic sponsorship proposal. However, a couple questions become relevant: (a) How much influence do decision-makers have in the evaluation process?, and (b) Who makes the final decision to accept or deny the sponsorship proposal?

Influence of Decision-Makers

At the local level there are a number of decision-makers that will evaluate a high school athletic sponsorship proposal. Table 2 indicates the decision-makers involved, and the amount of influence they have in the evaluation process:

TABLE 2
Key Decision-Makers and Amount of Influence

Local Level	Amount of Influence
Vice President	Considerable
Supervisor	Considerable
Director (marketing, advertising)	Considerable
Board of Directors	Some
Manager	Some
Assistant Manager	Some

Before completing each research study, it was believed that more decision-makers were involved at reviewing sponsorship proposals at the national level than at the local level. Table 3 indicates the decision-makers involved, and the amount of influence they have in the evaluation process:

TABLE 3
Key Decision-Makers and Amount of Influence

National Level	Amount of Influence
President	Considerable
Marketing Director	Considerable
Advertising Director	Considerable
Events Coordinator	Some

Although fewer, there are a number of decision-makers at the national level that will evaluate a high school athletic sponsorship proposal. It was quite interesting to see that there are fewer decision-makers at the national level reviewing proposals than at the local level.

Who Makes the Final Decision

Now that you know how much influence each decision-maker has in the evaluation process, this brings us to the second question: who makes the final decision to accept or decline a high school athletic sponsorship proposal? Table 4 indicates those decision-makers that make the final decision at both the local and national level:

TABLE 4
Decision-Makers Who Makes the Final Decision

Local Level	National Level
Owner	VP of Marketing
President	VP of Sales

Before completing each research study, it was believed that both upper and middle management would make the decision to accept or decline a high school athletic sponsorship proposal, particularly at the local level. However, it was quite interesting to see that only upper management will make the final decision.

Suggestions for Athletic Directors and Coaches

The following are simple suggestions that high school athletic directors and coaches should consider when presenting a sponsorship proposal to a company at the local level (i.e., individual sport programs) and the state level (i.e., state championship competitions). They are:

- Prepare multiple copies of the sponsorship proposal that will be presented to a company.
- Contact the company and ask for the names and titles of those decision-makers that will review sponsorship proposals presented to the company.

- Send the proposal to all middle and upper management decision-makers that will evaluate the sponsorship proposal, especially those that will have considerable influence accepting or declining the proposal (note tables 2 & 3).
- If possible, visit personally with the decision-maker(s) that will make the final decision to accept or decline a high school athletic sponsorship proposal (note table 4).

Evaluation Process in Terms of Stages and Contact Preferred

Introduction

Another popular topic I address when speaking at a conference is what happens to a proposal once it is presented to a company. My response would be that some companies do have a formal evaluation process while others do not. For example, the table below indicates that some companies at the local level do have a formal evaluation process while reviewing sponsorship proposal, whereas, companies at the national level do not:

TABLE 1
Companies Indicating Whether They Have a Formal Evaluation Process

Response	Local Level	National Level
Yes	3	0
No	3	5
Varies	4	0

Although only three companies at the local level indicated that they do have a formal evaluation process while reviewing sponsorship proposals, four companies as well indicated that their evaluation process varies (semi-formal) depending on the proposal. Whether they had a formal or informal evaluation process, all companies (decision-makers) described in detail what happens to a sponsorship proposal once it is presented to the company. Table 2 shows the stages in which companies will direct a high school athletic sponsorship proposal while under review:

TABLE 2 Evaluation Process in Terms of Stages
Initial Contact Stage
Involvement Stage
Evaluation Stage
Clarification Stage
Decision Stage
Follow-Up Stage

Below, each stage is described (according to decision-makers interviewed) more thoroughly to help the reader have a clearer picture:

Initial Contact Stage

Most companies indicated that a high school athletic director or coach would need to request a sponsorship application. After completing the application, the athletic director or coach can then submit the application and sponsorship proposal to the company. The proposal should be submitted to either the owner, president, director, or manager. If the sponsorship proposal entices the decision-maker who receives the proposal, the proposal is then directed to the next stage – involvement stage.

Involvement Stage

At this particular stage, the sponsorship proposal is then presented to other decision-makers in the company. Some companies indicated that the proposal may be presented to a board of directors and/or perhaps even the division headquarters, pending on the complexity of the proposal.

Evaluation Stage

During the evaluation stage, decision-makers will evaluate the potential benefits the sponsorship may provide the company. As well, decision-makers want to know what benefits the organization will receive from the company's support. After considering the benefits for the company and the organization, decision-makers will try to determine what the impact will be by

becoming involved in sponsoring the high school athletic program(s). Are the benefits great enough for both the company and the athletic program(s).

Clarification Stage

Once decision-makers consider the benefits, they may wish to contact the athletic director or coach to make sure who is going to be responsible for what. In other words, make sure everything is spelled-out and understood clearly.

Decision Stage

During the decision stage, decision-makers will then decide whether or not to accept the sponsorship opportunity or decline it. A denial is likely before reaching the involvement stage. On a positive note: If the sponsorship proposal has made it this far, it is likely (not always though) to receive approval.

Follow-Up Stage

Most decision-makers indicated that they would prefer to receive some kind of appreciation, feedback, and even a written report of the event that was sponsored by the company.

The Amount of Contact Preferred

Another question that becomes relevant during the evaluation process is: How much contact is preferred by decision-makers during the evaluation process? Table 5 indicates the amount of contact preferred by decision-makers at both local and national level.

TABLE 3
Amount of Contact Preferred by Decision-Makers

Local Level	National Level
2 – 3 weeks	1 – 2 weeks

Before completing each research study, it was believed that decision-makers at the national level would prefer more time to evaluate a high school athletic sponsorship proposal, due to more proposal that are presented at the national level than at the local level. For example: Pepsi at the local level will receive approximately 500 sponsorship proposals annually, whereas,

at the national level Pepsi will receive 1,000 or more sponsorship proposals annually. It was interesting to see that decision-makers at the local level preferred more time than decision-makers at the national level.

Suggestions for Athletic Directors and Coaches

The following are simple suggestions that high school athletic directors and coaches should consider when presenting a sponsorship proposal to a company at the local level (i.e., individual sport programs) and the state level (i.e., state championship competitions). They are:

- Determine whether or not a company has a sponsorship application to be submitted with the sponsorship proposal.
- Determine whether the sponsorship proposal will be considered by other decision-makers in the local office, and whether the proposal will also need to be considered by a board of directors or a division office.
- Send a copy of the application and sponsorship proposal to all decision-makers (including board of directors and division office) that will be involved in the evaluation process. **Note**: review previous article titled, "Sponsoring Interscholastic Sports: Key Decision-Makers and Their Influence in the Sponsorship Process". Your proposal may not entice a particular decision-maker, but perhaps other decision-makers involved in the evaluation process will be enticed with your sponsorship proposal.
- Clearly spell out the benefits the company and your high school athletic program will receive through this sponsorship opportunity. **Note**: the benefits will be covered in the next article in this series.
- Be ready to provide additional information when asked by decision-makers during the evaluation process.
- It is recommended that feedback and a written report at the conclusion of the sponsor event is provided to each company involved.
- It is also recommended that some form of appreciation is given for the company's support (i.e., special dinner, plaque, etc.).

Corporate Motivation to Sponsor

Introduction

A previous article titled, "Sponsoring Interscholastic Sports: Perceived Effectiveness of Advertising and Promotional Vehicles," indicated that companies at both the local and national level favored sponsoring interscholastic sport programs in comparison to sponsoring community events, merchandising, and non-sport sponsorships. Now that we know companies do favor sponsoring interscholastic sport programs, the next question is: What motivates companies to sponsor interscholastic sport programs?

When speaking on this topic at conferences, my response would be a variety of motives. To be more specific, I would present a table as the one below indicates:

TABLE 1
Why Companies Sponsor Interscholastic Sport Programs

Rank	Small Companies	Large Companies
1	Support Education	Support Education
2	Sponsorship Goodwill	Public Image
3	Personal Enjoyment	Sponsorship Goodwill
4	Public Image	Company's Exposure
5	Provide Scholarships	Increase Business Objectives
6	Company's Exposure	Provide Scholarships
7	Increase Business Objectives	Enhance Prestige
8	Enhance Prestige	Personal Enjoyment

Although the above motives are important to decision-makers, upon further investigation we found that particular motives are more distinct to decision-makers when sponsoring high school athletic programs.

Corporate Motivation to Sponsor

Table 2 indicates in rank order the motivation of companies in sponsoring interscholastic sport programs at both the local and national level:

TABLE 2
Corporate Motivation

Rank	Local Level	National Level
1	Community Goodwill	Increase Sales
2	Image Enhancement	Increase Brand Awareness
3	Increase Sales	Favorable Media
4	Favorable Media	Image Enhancement
5	Employee Goodwill	Community Goodwill
6	Increase Brand Awareness	Employee Goodwill

For this table to have meaning, need to first look at how decision-makers view each of these motivating factors. In alphabetical order:

- Community Goodwill: Companies want to the best of their ability to support organizations in the community in which their business operates.
- Employee Goodwill: A company's administration likes to provide opportunities for their employees to enjoy activities outside the company. As well, if a particular employee has a son and/or daughter involved with an activity needing financial assistance, the company may be inclined to support that activity.
- Favorable Media: Local companies are looking to reach consumers in the community through radio and newspaper coverage, whereas, national companies are looking to reach as large an audience as possible through television coverage.
- Image Enhancement: Decision-makers look for ways to enhance the image of the company and its products / services. In other words, to create a favorable image with consumers.
- Increase Brand Awareness: Companies want their brand name in the eyes of the public. Therefore, decision-makers look for opportunities to introduce products / services to consumers.

- Increase Sales: Increasing the company's brand name can help increase sales in products / services. Decision-makers at both the local and national level indicated that they would like to see their company increase its sales.

Although all six motivating factors pertain to companies sponsoring interscholastic programs, companies are motivated for different reasons pending on the level. Companies at the local level are more inclined to sponsor interscholastic programs as an opportunity to give back to the community in which they operate. By having interest and becoming involved in sponsoring interscholastic sport programs in their community, will hopefully create a favorable image for the company and its products / services. Companies at the national level are more inclined to sponsor interscholastic sport programs to increase their sales and brand awareness. Sponsoring interscholastic sport programs on the national level is an effective way to place the company and its products / services in the eyes of the public.

Suggestions for Athletic Directors and Coaches

The following are simple suggestions that high school athletic directors and coaches should consider. They are:

At the Local Level

It is recommended that community goodwill, favorable image, increase sales and image enhancement be the focus when discussing sponsorship opportunities (i.e., individual sport programs) with decision-makers. Note table 2 – local level.

At the State Level

It is recommended that increase sales, increase brand awareness, favorable media, and image enhancement be the focus when discussing sponsorship opportunities (i.e., state championship competitions) with decision-makers. Note table 2 – national level.

Special Consideration

Decision-makers are willing to indicate the benefits their company is seeking from a sponsorship opportunity. Therefore, high school athletic directors and coaches are encouraged to discuss with decision-makers how sponsoring their athletic program can benefit the company. High school athletic directors and coaches are also encouraged to discuss with decision-makers how the sponsorship opportunity can benefit their athletic program. Each high school athletic

director and coach knows and understands his/her respective sport program better than anyone else. The reasons in one community might be slightly different in another. Therefore, how you indicate to companies that sponsoring your athletic program will benefit your program is up to your discretion.

Decision Criteria Most Important to Companies

Introduction

Another topic I address while presenting at conferences is what criteria decision-makers will use to approve or decline a high school athletic sponsorship proposal. When speaking on this topic I would present a table as the one below indicates:

TABLE 1
Interscholastic Sport Sponsorship Decision Criteria

Rank	Decision Criteria
1	Cost of the Sponsorship
2	Quality of the Sponsorship
3	Company's Exposure
4	Reaching Target Market
5	Return on Investment
6	Competition between Competitors

Although the above criteria items are important to decision-makers, upon further investigation we found that particular criteria items are more distinct to decision-makers when approving or declining a high school athletic sponsorship proposal. In rank order, Table 2 indicates the criteria items that decision-makers consider important when sponsoring interscholastic sports at both the local and national level:

TABLE 2
Decision Criteria Most Important to Decision-Makers in Rank Order

Rank	Local Level	National Level
1	Community Goodwill	Increase Company's Image
2	Drive Product in Market	Company's Profit Motive
3	Local Visibility	Broadcast Visibility
4	Media Coverage	Media Coverage
5	Media Time	Media Time
6	Status in Community	Signage

As the reader can detect, the criteria is somewhat different when sponsoring interscholastic sport programs between local and national levels. For this table to have meaning, need to first look at how decision-makers view each of these criterion items. In alphabetical order:

Broadcast Visibility: Companies are attracted to the size of audiences (viewers) that watch sporting events. Viewers are likely to take note of a company sponsoring an event.

Community Goodwill: Companies want to the best of their ability to support organizations in the community in which their business operates. Supporting educational programs can help indicate to the community that the company cares about student-athletes and their educational pursuits.

Company's Profit Motive: Companies are in business to make money (sell products / services). An increase in sales (products / services) results in an increase in profits.

Drive Product in Market: Companies want to promote existing and new products / services to consumers.

Increase Company's Image: Community involvement can help create a positive image for the company and its products / services. Community involvement can also help alter a negative image.

Local Visibility: Companies want to promote their products / services within the community their business operates.

Media Coverage: Companies want to advertise their company and their products / services via television, radio, and newspaper.

Media Time: Space and time allotted (advertisement) via television, radio, and newspaper to promote the company and its products / services.

Signage: Companies want to receive signage via press releases, radio spots, banners, etc. As well, companies may want to receive exclusive signage pending on the level of involvement.

Status in the Community: Companies want to increase their prestige with consumers, stakeholders, and other businesses. On way to achieve prestige is to support other organizations and their causes.

Companies at the local level tend to place more emphasis on giving back to the community when sponsoring interscholastic sport programs. In return, companies receive notoriety and promotional opportunities for the company and its products / services. Companies at the national level tend to place more emphasis on building a positive image for the company and its products / services when sponsoring interscholastic sport programs. In return, companies receive notoriety from a national audience and an increase in sales of their products / services.

Special Note: Decision-makers at the national level indicated that unless they increase sales, they would not become involved in sport sponsorships. On the other hand, decision-makers at the local level tend to be more altruistic – to give back. Decision-makers at the local level would like to see an increase in sales; however, they also indicated how much of an increase can one expect at the local level versus the national level. Companies at the national level are involved in sport sponsorships for one reason – to make money.

Suggestions for Athletic Directors and Coaches

The following are simple suggestions that high school athletic directors and coaches should consider. They are:

At the Local Level

It is recommended that community goodwill, drive product in the market, local visibility, media coverage, and media time be the focus when writing and implementing a sponsorship proposal (i.e., individual sport programs). Note table 2 – local level.

At the State Level

It is recommended that company's image, profit motive, broadcast visibility, media coverage, and media time be the focus when writing and implementing a sponsorship proposal (i.e., state championship competitions). Note table 2 – national level.

Special Consideration

High school athletic directors and coaches are also encouraged to discuss with decision-makers how each criterion item can be achieved during the sponsorship. Decision-makers know and understand his/her respective company better than anyone else. The reasons in one company might be slightly different in another. Therefore, helping companies achieve each criterion item is up to your (and decision-makers) discretion.

Influence of Media Coverage

Introduction

In the previous article titled, "Sponsoring Interscholastic Sports: Decision Criteria Most Important to Companies" local visibility and broadcast visibility ranked third for local and national companies respectively. Media coverage and media time were ranked fourth and fifth respectively for both local and national companies. Due to the importance company exposure has in sponsoring interscholastic sports, the next question needs to be answered: Which type of media coverage (television, radio, newspaper) do decision-makers prefer when sponsoring high school athletic programs? The previous article suggest that television coverage would have the most influence for companies sponsoring interscholastic sports at the national level, whereas, radio and / or newspaper coverage would have the most influence when sponsoring interscholastic sports at the local level. Decision-makers were simply asked to rank each media type on a scale from 'very strong influence' to 'no influence at all.'

The Influence of Media Coverage

The table below indicates the amount of influence television, radio, and newspaper coverage has in sponsoring high school athletic programs at both the local and national level:

TABLE
Influence of Media Coverage

Coverage	Local Level	National Level
Television	Very Little Influence	Considerable Influence
Radio	Some Influence	Some Influence
Newspaper	Some Influence	Some Influence

As suggested in the previous article, radio and newspaper coverage are preferred over television coverage when sponsoring interscholastic sports at the local level. A decision-maker indicated during an interview that local televised programs do not receive the attention as other programs. Companies do however receive more coverage on the radio and in the newspaper. When sponsoring interscholastic sports at the national level, companies prefer all three media

avenues; however, decision-makers indicated that television coverage has more influence than radio and newspaper coverage. Television coverage has the ability to reach more people.

Suggestions for Athletic Directors and Coaches

It is recommended that high school athletic directors and coaches first contact representatives at the television, radio, and newspaper offices to discuss up-coming interscholastic sporting events. The purpose of contacting these media offices is to receive approval from representatives that the events will be covered. After receiving approval, the following are simple suggestions that high school athletic directors and coaches should consider. They are:

At the Local Level

It is recommended that radio and newspaper coverage be the main focus when offering media coverage to companies through a sponsorship opportunity (i.e., individual sport programs). To a lesser degree, television coverage should also be offered. Decision-makers rated television coverage as having 'very little influence' rather than 'no influence at all.' Note table – local level.

At the State Level

It is recommended that television coverage be the main focus when offering media coverage to companies through a sponsorship opportunity (i.e., state championship competitions). To a lesser degree, radio and newspaper coverage should also be offered. Both radio and newspaper coverage were rated as having some influence by decision-makers. Note table – national level.

Information Preferred in a Proposal

Introduction

Over the last seven years, I have read copies of sponsorship proposals that were sent to companies asking for financial support of interscholastic sporting events. Some proposals were short (1 – 3 pages in length), while other proposals were lengthy (10 or more pages). Whether short or long another question becomes relevant: What information do decision-makers prefer to see in a high school athletic sponsorship proposal during the evaluation process? Decision-makers that were interviewed indicated that they typically do not read a sponsorship proposal from cover-to-cover when they first receive it. Rather, they skim through the proposal first looking for pertinent information.

Information Preferred in a Sponsorship Proposal

After interviewing decision-makers at the local and national level, it was interesting to hear that decision-makers at both levels typically want to see the same information in a proposal. The table below indicates information decision-makers prefer to see in a high school athletic sponsorship proposal for both local and national sponsored events:

TABLE
Information Preferred in a Sponsorship Proposal

Rank	Local Level	National Level
1	Demographics	Demographics
2	Benefits	Fan Attendance
3	Cost	Cost
4	Media Coverage	Benefits
5	Fan Attendance	Media Coverage
6	Value Added Promotions	Product Usage at Event
7	Product Usage at Event	Value Added Promotions

For this table to have meaning, need to first look at how decision-makers view each of these important pieces of a sponsorship proposal. In alphabetical order:

Benefits: Decision-makers want to know the benefits the company will receive by becoming a sponsor. As well, decision-makers want to know how the sponsorship can benefit the organization in need.

Cost: Decision-makers want to know how much money (or in-kind donation) the company will need to give to become a sponsor. Also, an explanation how the money will be spent.

Demographics: Decision-makers will consider the age groups, gender, and socio-economic status of patrons attending the sponsored event. In other words, does the event demographics match the company's target market.

Fan Attendance: Decision-makers want to know how many people (an approximation) will attend the sponsored event. As well, decision-makers want to know (an estimate) spectators who will watch (television), hear about (radio), or read about (newspaper) the sponsored event.

Media Coverage: Decision-makers want to know whether media coverage is being offered as an incentive (television, radio, newspaper).

Product Usage: Decision-makers want to know if the company will be allowed to provide product samples, and / or sell product during the sponsored event.

Value Added Promotions: Decision-makers will consider whether sponsoring the high school athletic event will help promote the company and / or its products / services.

Decision-makers did not indicate whether they would prefer to read a short proposal versus a long proposal. However, they did indicate that the more information the better, because then the proposal left little for speculation.

Although all pieces of information listed above are important to decision-makers to include in a high school athletic sponsorship proposal, I would like to bring attention to "fan attendance." **Point-in-Thought**: I remember a video I watch just recently, and the speaker indicated that if very few people actually attend a sponsored event, then it never happened.

Suggestions for Athletic Directors and Coaches

The following are simple suggestions (important pieces) that high school athletic directors and coaches should include in a sponsorship proposal at both the local level (i.e., individual sport programs) and state level (i.e., state championship competitions). They are:

- Include as much information in the sponsorship proposal as necessary; however, be clear, concise, and to the point.
- Include all the benefits the company may receive, and the benefits the athletic program may receive from the sponsored event.
- Include the cost (including in-kind donation if applicable), and an explanation how the money will be spent.
- Include (an estimate) the age groups, gender, and socio-economic status of all patrons attending the sponsored event.
- Include (an estimate) all spectators who will watch (television), hear (radio), or read (newspaper) about the sponsored event.
- Include all media coverage (television, radio, newspaper) the company will receive by sponsoring the athletic event. Remember: companies sponsoring interscholastic sporting events at the local level prefer radio and newspaper coverage, whereas, at the state level television coverage is perhaps the preferred media.
- Include how the company can provide (if applicable) product samples, and / or even sell their products during the sponsored event.
- Include how the sponsorship can help promote the company and its products / services.

Factors That Control the Decision to Sponsor

Introduction

In my experience discussing sponsorships with athletic directors and coaches, it seems that about every ten companies that are approached only one may consider becoming a sponsor. Once a company does become a sponsor, then athletic directors and coaches need to do what they can to maintain that partnership. This will be covered in the next article. For this article the following question will be answered: What factors control a company's decision to sponsor interscholastic sport programs? Being aware of those control factors, high school athletic directors and coaches could then tactfully address these factors.

Factors That Control the Decision to Sponsor

Decision-makers were asked to rank several items that might prevent their company in sponsoring a high school athletic program. It was interesting to see that the same control factors were relevant for both local and national levels. The table below indicates those control factors that might prevent companies in sponsoring high school athletic events at both local and national level:

TABLE
Decision Control Factors

Rank	Local Level	National Level
1	Budget Constraints	Budget Constraints
2	Number of People Reached	Number of People Reached
3	Community Relations	Time
4	Time	Product Exclusivity
5	Loyalties	Loyalties
6	Product Exclusivity	Sponsor Conflicts

For this table to have meaning, need to first look at how decision-makers view each of these control factors. In alphabetical order:

Budget Constraints: Companies typically set a specific amount of money (5 – 10 percent of the annual budget) each year in support of charities, donations, and sponsorships within their communities.

Community Relations: Decision-makers will determine whether the sponsorship opportunity can become a public relations tool – to achieve goodwill.

Loyalties: Some companies are committed to sponsoring sporting events in their communities, whereas, other companies will focus their attention on supporting community events, merchandising, and non-sport sponsorships.

Number of People Reached: Decision-makers will determine whether the sponsorship opportunity will reach a large number of people.

Product Exclusivity: Companies are likely to pay a higher premium to receive exclusivity with a sponsored event. Companies may also seek exclusivity to prevent their competition from entering into the sponsored agreement.

Sponsor Conflicts: Pending on where companies place their attention of support (i.e., sport sponsorships, community events, merchandising, non-sport sponsorships). If companies do support sport sponsorships, companies may not wish to enter into an agreement if their competition is already a signed sponsor. As well, the type of sport sponsorship; interscholastic versus intercollegiate.

Time: Refers to contract length, and the amount of media coverage (time and space allotted) that will be received during the sponsored event.

Suggestions for Athletic Directors and Coaches

The following are simple suggestions that high school athletic directors and coaches should consider when approaching companies for financial support of their athletic program at both the local level (i.e., individual sport programs) and state level (i.e., state championship competitions). They are:

- Determine where companies place their focus in supporting organizations (i.e., sport sponsorships, community events, merchandising, non-sport sponsorships). Those companies you approach that have not sponsored your athletic program in

the past, this is your doorway to create an attractive opportunity and start building a partnership.

- Be aware that companies typically set a specific amount of money to support organizations in their communities. As well, be prepared that this money may have already been given in support of programs.
- Indicate (an estimate) to decision-makers the number of people you believe will be reached (patrons and spectators) during the sponsored event.
- Indicate to decision-makers that by sponsoring your high school athletic program would be a great opportunity to build "goodwill" for the company.
- Be sure to indicate the length of the contract, and the amount of media coverage (time and space allotted) the company will receive.
- Determine whether the company is seeking exclusivity during the sponsored event. **Take Special Care**: Depending on the type of sporting event, the company, your relationship with that company, and the amount of money the company is incline to give, I would encourage high school athletic directors and coaches to deter from this control factor when possible. You may lose companies in sponsoring your program by granting exclusivity to a selected few.
- Determine whether decision-makers want to use the sponsorship as a method to prevent their competition from also entering into the agreement.

Measuring the Effectiveness of a Sponsorship Arrangement

Introduction

One of the biggest complaints received from decision-makers while interviewing them, was that they felt that athletic directors and coaches did not show enough appreciation for the company's sponsorship support. Once the sponsored event was over, decision-makers typically did not hear from the athletic director or coach until next year when they walked through the door asking for more money. Decision-makers indicated that it would be nice if athletic directors and coaches could come by their office from time-to-time and just say hello, rather than just ask for money. This leads us to our final question in this series of articles: How do companies measure the effectiveness of a sponsorship arrangement?

Effective Measures

Decision-makers were simply asked what form of appreciation they would prefer to receive from high school athletic directors and coaches after the sponsored event was over. The table below indicates the types of appreciation decision-makers sought at both the local and national levels:

TABLE
Effective Measures Sought by Decision-Makers

Local Level	National Level
Thank You of Appreciation	Media Exposure vs Dollars Spent
Feedback from School	5 to 1 Payback
Feedback from Fans	Sales
Feedback from Community	Feedback from Field Reps
Feedback from Employees	Feedback from Store Reps
Tracking of Sales	On-site Feel
Surveys	

For this table to have meaning, need to first look at how decision-makers view each of these effective measures. In alphabetical order:

- Feedback: Decision-makers prefer to receive a written report. The report should include feedback (positives and negatives) from the school, fans, community, employees, field reps, store reps, etc.
- 5 to 1 Payback: Companies at the national level expect to receive $5 for every $1 dollar given towards the sponsorship.
- Media Exposure vs Dollars Spent: Decision-makers will evaluate whether the media exposure (time and space allotted) the company received during the sponsored event was comparable to the money given for the sponsored event. **Note**: The amount of media exposure the company will receive should have been included in the sponsorship proposal.
- On-site Feel: Decision-makers attending the sponsored event will generally receive positive and / or negative feelings how their company is being portrayed.
- Surveys: Companies may conduct a survey to receive feedback regarding the sponsored event. Schools, fans, community, and / or employees could be asked to participate in the survey.
- Thank You of Appreciation: Decision-makers indicated that they would like to receive a thank you letter upon the completion of the sponsorship agreement. An appreciation dinner was also favored by decision-makers.
- Tracking of Sales: Companies will track the number of coupons used by patrons if promoted during a sponsored event.

Securing the Partnership

The following are simple suggestions that high school athletic directors and coaches should consider upon the completion of a sponsorship agreement at both the local level (i.e., individual sport programs) and the state level (i.e., state championship competitions). They are:

- Send a thank you letter to all companies (decision-makers) that sponsored your sporting event.

- It is recommended that you provide a recognition dinner for all companies that sponsored your athletic program during the year. As well, if within your budget, you can present a plaque to all companies (the representatives) in attendance.
- Have a written report that will be presented to all companies (decision-makers) that sponsored your sporting event.
- The written report should include feedback (positives and negatives) from the school, fans, community, employees, and company representatives associated with the sponsored event.
- Include in the written report any information regarding the tracking of sales the company might have completed after the sponsored event. You will need to seek this information from a company representative who maintains the sales records for the company.
- Include in the written report any information the company might have collected through surveys. You will need to seek this information from a company representative who collects survey data.
- Stop by from time-to-time to say hi to decision-makers, and/or offer an invitation to lunch. Decision-makers also indicated that they like to meet student-athletes, to visit with the people their sponsorship is benefiting.

Benefits of Participating in Interscholastic Sports

According to the NFSHSA Handbook (2001), "The voice of interscholastic activities, is committed to the belief that interscholastic activities are basic to sound educational principles of secondary education." The Handbook also indicates that activity programs teaches values and achievements that are not found in the classroom, but rather provides a foundation for a participant's physical, psychological and emotional growth outside the classroom.

In an effort to determine whether interscholastic activities do teach values and achievements that are congruent to educational principles, the NFSHSA collected information from numerous sources. Information came from studies conducted by the Phi Delta/Gallop Poll, Carnegie Corporation, Search Institute, Hardiness Research, Women's Sports Foundation, Indiana University, and State High School Associations. As a result, the NFSHSA produced a report titled, "The Case for High School Activities." The report did not indicate how the sources collected their data, or instruments used. However, I do believe this information does have merit, and perhaps substantiates why companies sponsor high school athletic programs.

The NFSHSA report focuses on three premises: (a) activity programs support the educational mission of schools, (b) students learn valuable lessons, and (c) activity programs initiates life achievements. Within these premises, numerous benefits were mentioned. They were:

Activity Programs Support the Educational Mission of Schools.

Students who participated in activity programs tend to have higher grade-point averages, better attendance records, lower dropout rates, and fewer discipline problems than non-participants.

Participants Learn Valuable Lessons.

Students who participated in activity programs learned valuable lessons such as teamwork, sportsmanship, winning and losing, hard work, and self-discipline. It was noted that lessons such as these help produce responsible and productive individuals, and that the public expects schools to produce young adults with these qualities.

Activity Programs Initiates Life Achievements.

Students who participated in activity programs tend to succeed in college, and accomplish successful careers.

Perhaps this is why decision-makers indicated that their primary objective in sponsoring high school athletic programs was to support education. Decision-makers may consider high school athletic programs as a foundation for student-athletes physical, psychological, and emotional growth outside the classroom.

Bringing Everything Together

I would like to provide practical programmatic recommendations for high school athletic administrators and coaches in pursuing corporate sponsorships as an alternative source of income for their programs.

Phase 1 – Interact With Companies and Contact Decision-Makers.

It is recommended that high school athletic administrators and coaches begin interacting with companies in their local community to become aware of their mission and target markets. Also, determine the decision-makers that are involved in high school athletic sponsorship opportunities.

Phase 2 – Discuss Benefits and Sponsorship Objectives.

Once decision-makers have been contacted directly, it is recommended that athletic administrators and coaches discuss with decision-makers the benefits of providing athletic programs for student-athletes; physical, psychological, and emotional growth outside the classroom. It is also recommended that athletic administrators discuss sponsorship objectives and how the high school athletic sponsorship can meet those objectives.

Phase 3 – Writing the Sponsorship Proposal.

Decision-makers will evaluate proposals on primary, secondary and additional decision criterion in granting a high school sponsorship agreement. It is recommended that high school sponsorship proposals represent the benefits, objectives, and decision criteria in such a way that is attractive to decision-makers. In other words, sponsorship proposals should be written in a format that sells the athletic program, and allows decision-makers to see how the sponsorship is beneficial to the company and the high school athletic program.

Phase 4 – Submit Sponsorship Proposal.

After the proposal has been presented to the company, it is recommended that high school athletic administrators and coaches be particularly attentive to the evaluation process and information shared by decision-makers. There may be other variables that decision-makers consider that were not detected in my studies. If this is the case, athletic directors and coaches should have pinpointed these variables in phase 2. It is recommended that high school athletic

administrators check with decision-makers frequently, yet tactfully, and provide additional information as needed. This additional information may be the deciding factor in granting or rejecting a high school sponsorship proposal.

Phase 5 – Be Aware of Control Factors.

Companies will receive numerous sponsorship proposals annually from organizations within their respective communities. Since this is the inevitable, it is recommended that high school athletic administrators and coaches address control factors in such a way that promotes advantages to the company in sponsoring their athletic program.

Phase 6 – Measuring the Effectiveness of the Sponsorship

In order to determine whether the sponsorship was a good investment for the company and the athletic program, decision-makers will seek feedback. Therefore, it is recommended that high school athletic administrators and coaches provide a written report that entails feedback from the school, fans, community, and employees. The report should also include, if applicable, tracking of sales and data from surveys. It is also recommended that high school athletic administrators and coaches host an appreciation banquet for all companies that sponsored their athletic program during the athletic school year.

Model for Seeking Sponsorships from Small Companies at the Local Level

Phase 1

Interact with Companies in the Community
- Become Aware of Their Mission and Target Markets
- Become Aware of Their Advertising and Promotion Vehicles

Contact Decision-Makers Directly
- Owner
- President
- Supervisor
- Manager
- Assistant Manager

Phase 2

Discuss Benefits of Athletic Participation
- Academics
- Learned Values
- Achievements

Discuss Sponsorship Objectives
- Support Education
- Sponsorship Goodwill
- Personal Enjoyment
- Public Image
- Provide Scholarships
- Company's Exposure
- Increase Business Objectives
- Enhance Prestige
- Community Goodwill
- Image Enhancement
- Increase Sales
- Favorable Media
- Employee Goodwill
- Increase Brand Awareness

Phase 3

Writing the Sponsorship Proposal
- Indicate Benefits of Athletic Participation
- Indicate Company's Sponsorship Objectives
- Indicate Company's Sponsorship Decision Criteria

Primary Decision Criteria
- Demographics
- Benefits
- Cost
- Media Coverage
- Fan Attendance
- Value Added Promotions
- Product Usage at Event

Secondary Decision Criteria
- Community Goodwill
- Quality of the Sponsorship
- Company's Exposure
- Reaching Target Market
- Competition Between Competitors
- Status in the Community
- Drive Product in Market
- Local Visibility
- Return on Investment
- Media Time

Additional Decision Criteria
- Current Relationship With School
- Enhance Support to School
- Enhance Community Support
- Connection btw Company /Group
- Benefits to Athletes
- Lifetime Sport Activities
- Help Student-Athletes

Continue

Phase 4 →

Submit Sponsorship Proposal

- Be Attentive to the Evaluation Process
  - Initial Contact Stage
  - Involvement Stage
  - Evaluation Stage
  - Clarification Stage
  - Decision Stage
  - Follow-up Stage
- Be Attentive to Decision-Makers With Considerable Influence
  - Owner
  - President
  - Supervisor
- Be Attentive to Decision-Makers That Make Final Decision
  - Owner
  - President
- Check With Decision-Makers Frequently, yet Tactfully
- Provide Additional Information as Needed

Phase 5 →

Be Aware of Control Factors

- Budget Constraints
- Number of People Reached
- Community Relations
- Time
- Loyalties
- Product Exclusivity

Phase 6 →

Measuring the Effectiveness of the Sponsorship

- Thank You of Appreciation
- Feedback from School
- Feedback from Fans
- Feedback from Community
- Feedback from Employees
- Tracking of Sales
- Surveys

Model for Seeking Sponsorships from Large Companies at the Local Level

Phase 1

Interact with Companies in the Community
- Become Aware of Their Mission and Target Markets
- Become Aware of Their Advertising & Promotional Vehicles

Contact Decision-Makers Directly
- CEO
- President
- Vice President
- Chairman
- Owner
- Board of Directors
- Marketing Director
- Advertising Director
- Manager / Assistant

Phase 2

Discuss Benefits of Athletic Participation
- Academics
- Learned Values
- Achievements

Discuss Sponsorship Objectives
- Support Education
- Sponsorship Goodwill
- Personal Enjoyment
- Public Image
- Provide Scholarships
- Company's Exposure
- Increase Business Objectives
- Enhance Prestige
- Community Goodwill
- Image Enhancement
- Increase Sales
- Favorable Media
- Employee Goodwill
- Increase Brand Awareness

Phase 3

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- Indicate Company's Sponsorship Objectives
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- Demographics
- Benefits
- Cost
- Media Coverage
- Fan Attendance
- Value Added Promotions
- Product Usage at Event

Secondary Decision Criteria
- Community Goodwill
- Quality of the Sponsorship
- Company's Exposure
- Reaching Target Market
- Competition Between Competitors
- Status in the Community
- Drive Product in Market
- Local Visibility
- Return on Investment
- Media Time

Additional Decision Criteria
- Current Relationship With School
- Benefits to Athletes
- Benefits to School
- Employees/Athletes Related
- Athletes Economic Status
- Enhance Partnerships
- Representative Involvement

Continue

Phase 4 →

Submit Sponsorship Proposal

- Be Attentive to the Evaluation Process
  - Initial Contact Stage
  - Involvement Stage
  - Evaluation Stage
  - Clarification Stage
  - Decision Stage
  - Follow-up Stage
- Be Attentive to Decision-Makers With Considerable Influence
  - Owner
  - President
  - Vice President
  - Supervisor
  - Marketing Director
  - Advertising Director
- Be Attentive to Decision-Makers That Make Final Decision
  - Owner
  - President
- Check With Decision-Makers Frequently, yet Tactfully
- Provide Additional Information as Needed

Phase 5 →

Be Aware of Control Factors

- Budget Constraints
- Number of People Reached
- Community Relations
- Time
- Loyalties
- Product Exclusivity

Phase 6 →

Measuring the Effectiveness of the Sponsorship

- Thank You of Appreciation
- Feedback from School
- Feedback from Fans
- Feedback from Community
- Feedback from Employees
- Tracking of Sales
- Surveys

Closing Remarks

I hope you enjoyed reading this manual as I had writing it. As well, I hope you find this manual to be practical and useful in your pursuit of sponsorships from companies you approach. Perhaps you can let me know how your pursuit is coming along.

A former athletic director at Bemidji High School in Minnesota pointed out to me that within the next five to ten years, school districts may be in a position that they can no longer afford to allocate funds for high school athletics.[2] Hum…….., a manual such as this one should be in the office of every high school athletic director and coach.

Feel free to contact me at (218) 755-2083, or by writing to Bemidji State University, 1500 Birchmont Drive NE, 224 Physical Education Complex – Box 29, Bemidji, Minnesota 56601-2699, or e-mail: eforsyth@bemidjistate.edu.

[2] Jim Mergens, Retired