

A low-angle, rear-view shot of several runners participating in a marathon. The runners are in motion, with their legs and feet visible. One runner in the center-right wears a white singlet with a purple bib that reads 'Katie' and '6780'. The scene is brightly lit by sunlight, creating long, dark shadows on the asphalt road. The overall tone is energetic and focused.

Eventbrite™

| Britepaper

Endurance Event Sponsorships Guide

Your 6-step guide to getting and keeping great sponsors for your event

Introduction

Finding sponsors for your event can be a real challenge. Not only does your event need to stand out from the increasingly crowded market of endurance events, you also have to prove to your sponsors that their investment will be well worth it. To find ideal partners and win their support, you'll need to understand the demographics and interests of your participants and evaluate all of your assets to create meaningful sponsorship opportunities that help your sponsors achieve their goals.

It takes creativity and time to come up with a unique and valuable sponsorship opportunity for potential partners. But it's well worth the energy upfront, because once their sponsorship is over, they're much more likely to sign on for future events when you can show them the value they received.



1. Know your audience.

Before approaching sponsors for your event, be sure that you understand the people your event is likely to draw in. This information is critical to present to potential sponsors that will evaluate whether or not your event can help them reach their own target audience and unique marketing goals. The more you know about your participants the better.

Specifically, you'll want to know:

- Age, gender, and family status
- Education level and employment
- Average household income and spending habits
- Lifestyle and behavior
- Product and brand preferences

Think beyond your participants. Consider the number of other people your event will draw, such as spectators, vendors, and volunteers. You'll want to have this information available for sponsors who may be interested in gaining broader exposure to the local community, or looking to introduce their product or services to vendors and businesses involved with your event.

Gather basic info on your participants. You can start collecting information about your participants during the registration process. Online registration services like Eventbrite give you the flexibility to select from a standard set of questions or create your own to include in the registration form. Keep in mind that adding too many questions during the registration process can create a cumbersome experience for your registrants, so you should limit questions to important topics that will help you provide a better event experience.

Go deeper with surveys. One of the best ways to gather detailed information about your participants is through a survey. Free online survey tools, such as SurveyMonkey, let you create and send surveys to your participants after your event. With Eventbrite's SurveyMonkey integration, event organizers simply need to create survey questions, easily pull in event participants from their Eventbrite account, hit send, and wait for responses to pour in.

Listen in via social channels. Social platforms like Facebook and Twitter offer social analytics and tools to see the demographics, locations, and interests of your followers. You can also read on social forums and get a deeper understanding about who your fans are, and what they care about.

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2. Evaluate all of your event's assets to help tailor your opportunities and meet sponsor goals.

Fewer sponsors these days are looking for simple logo placement on your podium or t-shirt. From your participant's email addresses to your event's PR and brand value, knowing which assets matter to your sponsors and understanding their market value is key in creating and pricing your various sponsorship opportunities.

For many companies, there's no substitute for live events that provide them with the opportunity to have participants and spectators experience their product directly. At endurance events, many sports beverage, clothing, and equipment sponsors look to have participants try out their products before, during, or after the event to gain greater brand awareness, and even make a sale.

Be thoughtful about exclusivity. Thinking about all of your event's assets, can you offer exclusive rights to a category, such as water stations, energy snacks or post-race beer? According to IEG's 2014 Sponsorship Decision-Makers survey, 3 out of 5 survey respondents felt that it was important to be the only company within its product or service category associated with the event as a sponsor. This means that sponsors are interested and willing to pay more for exclusivity, although it may reduce the total number of sponsorship opportunities you can secure.

Consider low-cost sponsorship activations. Many sponsors are looking for benefits that are easy to activate. The ability to email registered participants to promote their products and services were considered valuable to 1 out of 4 sponsorship decision-makers in the IEG survey, as well as complimentary tickets and hospitality. You can offer your sponsors access to a VIP Area or local celebrities to help them entertain business prospects and leave a positive impression on their invited guests.

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Expand offerings with online solutions. Digital services, like Virtual Event Bags, provide a turnkey solution for race directors to connect sponsors with their participants by delivering the sponsor's message and deals via an online goody bag. This is a win-win for both the event and sponsor by eliminating the need to pack, store, and distribute a physical bag to participants at the event. When integrated with an online registration solution like Eventbrite, they can also start their sponsorship activation prior to the event and continue after the event.

Come up with bold ideas. As companies become more selective about the events they sponsor, they're attracted to creative, "out of the box" ideas. These sponsorship opportunities not only give brands greater exposure, but can also enhance the participant's experience, leaving a more lasting impression. By leveraging the event's location or proximity to a popular attraction, you can also create a list of unique activities that your attendees will want to participate in and companies may want to sponsor.



Here are a few examples of experiential sponsorship ideas for companies:

- Musicians and bands positioned at strategic points along the course to entertain race participants, sponsored by a radio station or local businesses.
- Pre-race buzz haircuts and refresher stations for participants stocked with face wipes, dry shampoo, and beauty products, sponsored by a hair care or beauty care company.
- Post-race shower areas at a mud run sponsored by a soap company.
- Pace car or off-road vehicle to navigate rougher terrains with a chance for a lucky spectator to ride in the car, sponsored by an automobile company.

- Photo and video booths to record and send messages to friends, sponsored by a technology or mobile company.
- Free boat rides to watch the event and activities at beach access points for participants and spectators, sponsored by a local tour company.

3. Find the right sponsorship fit, and put together the perfect pitch.

Whether you're organizing a new event or one that you've held dozens of times before, it's never too early to identify potential sponsors and begin laying the groundwork. As a start, you'll want to create a list of 20-25 companies to approach. Here's how to get going:

- Make a list of sponsors that have worked with you in the past or who have sponsored events similar to yours. Check to see if those sponsors have competitors.
- Consider businesses directly related to your event. For example, local bike shops or national bike-related brands might be interested in sponsoring your bike race.
- Consider small and large local businesses, as well as national companies with local branches and presence.
- Be on the look out for new businesses that have grand openings planned or are spending money on local advertising campaigns.
- If your event is raising money for charity, think of businesses that already support your cause.
- Consider the products or services you'd recommend to your friends.
- Take a look at your registrant list to see what companies they work for. People who participate in your events may be more likely to sponsor it, too.

It doesn't hurt to get the word out about your event at every opportunity, including local organization meetings, community events, and anywhere else you can think of. Start a Facebook page for your event and use social media to spread the word. You want to make sure that when you approach potential sponsors, they've heard of your event.

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Familiarize yourself with their business. Even though you believe that your race and a sponsor are a great fit, you can't assume that your event is automatically a perfect opportunity for them. Before you meet with potential sponsors, do your homework. Take a look at their company website, LinkedIn profile, social media accounts, and conduct Google searches to gain an understanding of their audience and new initiatives. Find out what sponsorships they've done before and if any of those events are similar to yours, and think about how you can bring more value to them through sponsoring your event.

Ask questions and listen up. During your first meeting or call with a potential sponsor, you'll want to make sure that you understand their most pressing marketing goals and objectives. Also ask about their past experiences in sponsoring events like yours to be aware of what worked and did not work for them.

Leave a paper trail. For each of your sponsors, collect a paper trail of the exposure you've created for them leading up to the event. Most likely your sponsor will have a good memory of the event itself, but the support you gave their brand in the months before the show may not be top of mind. Take screenshots of Facebook posts that mention sponsors and fan responses. Save press releases or articles that include your partners. Include the best of these examples in your post-event recap.

Articulate your vision. Every sponsor needs to understand your vision—and how they fit in. Be able to concisely convey your concept, and how it's different from other endurance events. If this is an event you've held in the past, explain what's different this year. Even if your potential sponsor is familiar with your event, nothing can replace hearing this vision straight from the makers.

Back up your idea with data. Based on the information you've gathered about their prior experiences and marketing objectives, you'll want to show potential sponsors how your event can uniquely help them meet their goals. Always come prepared to a sponsorship meeting armed with information about your event, relevant demographic and lifestyle data about your event participants, and even a list of creative sponsorship ideas to discuss in detail if time permits.

Follow up like a consultant. You'll want to follow up your meeting with a more formal proposal with various sponsorship options at various price levels. Be sure to take a consultative approach with your sponsorship packages, and pull in a variety of opportunities that will help drive the sponsor's marketing and business objectives. If you know a company doesn't have the staff or resources to activate their sponsorship, finding ways to ease that challenge by providing staff to distribute products or creative services as needed will go a long way toward getting sponsor commitment.



Brite Tip: Create a beautiful package with imagery.

You may have your pitch down to 30 seconds, but remember, a picture is worth a thousand words. If you are seeking sponsorship for an event you've held before, or are holding again soon, it's a great idea to hire a professional photographer to capture the magic.

Produce this print collateral for sponsors to hold in their hands as you share the ethos of your event. If you haven't held your event before, you can collect inspirational images online to create a moodboard, so sponsors understand the concept you're creating. Don't just tell them your vision—show them.



4. Show your commitment to your sponsor's success with a dedicated support team.

Once you've secured your sponsors, it's time to focus on delivering a great sponsorship experience. You want to make sure your sponsors are so pleased with their visibility and your management of the event that they'll want to participate again next time. While planning and setting up your event, details can change quite rapidly. To be sure that your sponsors are kept up to date before the event, appoint a sponsor advocate on your team to regularly check in with them. This advocate can act as the sponsor's main point of contact in your organization, keep them updated, and quickly resolve any issues that might arise.

During the event, assign additional on-site staff to ensure that everything runs smoothly. If your sports drink sponsor needs vehicle access to the finish area to unload 200 cases of beverages, you'll want someone right there who can make that happen. Planning ahead with the team you've dedicated to your sponsors can also relieve you from the additional stress of keeping your sponsors happy as you're dealing with other issues that may arise during your event.

5. Help sponsors understand the value of their sponsorship to keep them coming back.

After the event is over, you need to demonstrate to sponsors the value you've delivered to their marketing goals so that they'll want to be a part of your next event. Don't wait too long after your event to meet with your sponsors to recap their objectives and showcase the value your event has provided.

The most commonly used metrics to evaluate event sponsorships are return on investment (ROI) and return on objectives (ROO). According to the 2013 ANA/IEG Sponsorship & Event Marketing Measurement Survey, 70% of respondent looked at the amount of media exposure that was generated and social media buzz to calculate their ROI & ROO for their sponsorship. In addition, they measured shifts in brand awareness and attitudes resulting from the sponsorship.

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However, nearly half of marketers reportedly didn't have a standardized way to measure their sponsorship. Here are ways you can help quantify the value of sponsoring your event:

Track online and social activity. Measure everything you can to help sponsors understand the potential reach their participation has given them, including number of visits, downloads, likes, and sharing activity. If your event has its own Facebook page, encourage attendees to comment on their experience, including their interaction with your sponsors' products. Share these snippets of meaningful attendee experiences during your debrief meetings.

Measure brand awareness and perception. Ask your participants about their event experience, and be sure to include questions that will elicit responses about your sponsors. Summarize the results for your sponsors, including the demographics of who attended your event, their location, and how they felt about your sponsor's product or service.

Be sure to keep count. If your sponsor's goal was to hand out 500 energy bars, make sure you keep close track of how many were distributed. If your sponsor hosted 720 attendees in their VIP area, bring the statistics. If their goal was to collect email addresses or get people to sign up for their newsletter, include those numbers into your recap.

Capture photos and videos. There's nothing more powerful than visually showing how your participants interacted with your sponsors' brands. Assign a team during the event to take photos and videos, and edit the best visuals together for a presentation at your sponsors' debriefs.



6. Bring fresh ideas to the table to help your sponsor achieve their future goals.

Even though your event has offered a great marketing opportunity for sponsors, and you have clearly demonstrated the value that their sponsorship has provided, you can't assume that even a very happy sponsor will automatically sign up again.

Set up regular check-ins with sponsors after the event to learn about their new marketing initiatives. Ask them how your event might create even more value next time. The key is to continue developing opportunities that are both exciting and targeted to their marketing goals, just like your very first sponsorship pitch.

At the end of the day, it's far more difficult to find a new sponsor for your event than to keep a current sponsor on board.

About Eventbrite

Eventbrite provides a simple, streamlined registration platform to help endurance event organizers and race directors set-up, promote, and sell out their events. Event organizers can reach a broader audience of athletes, volunteers and fans, and make smarter decisions along the way with social marketing tools, personalized event discovery, and access to real-time data, all in one place. Eventbrite is one of the fastest-growing registration services with over 10,000 endurance events and more than \$2.5 billion in sales.

To find out more, go to www.eventbrite.com/endurance

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