

THE SPONSOR DOC

With Bruce L. Erley, APR, CFEE

Obamacare Spells Good RX for Sponsor Seekers



Dear Sponsor Doc:

Are there any new business categories that I should be pursuing for sponsorship? I'm running out of ideas! - E.B. Hartford, CT

Dear E.B.

Trying to identify the new active sponsor category is always on the mind of those in our line of business. I try to keep an eye on which business sectors are actively advertising in traditional media outlets or online. Since last October, there has been a clear "player" that has exploded in the marketplace...Health Insurance companies that are members of national or state health insurance exchanges created by the Affordable Care Act a.k.a "Obamacare."

I'm not a very big supporter of the ACA for a number of reasons, but it has energized healthcare marketing as insurance companies jockey to get the 30 million new customers created by this legislation to sign up with them on the exchanges.

Prior to Obamacare, the majority of consumers were getting their healthcare insurance through their employers. Consequently, many healthcare insurance providers were marketing to the business decision-makers in a B2B effort. It was a tough sell to have them see the value of going directly to the consumer. The healthcare exchanges have changed all that.

Now healthcare insurers are aggressively pursuing "exchange eligibles," those people who now find themselves compelled by the ACA to buy insurance for themselves or their families. They may be the "young invincibles" between 21-38 who never bothered, but now are subject to a tax penalty if they don't get insurance. They may be the millions that were once covered by their small business employers, but who find themselves

without group coverage. They may be families who qualify for subsidies making insurance affordable for the first time.

For those of us selling sponsorship it creates an opportunity to pitch event marketing to healthcare insurers so that they can stand out to this new consumer market. Here are some tips you can use to make the case for sponsorship.

1. Develop your prospect list by going onto your state's healthcare exchange to see which companies are listed as insurance options. They are the companies that will be the most active.
2. Be mindful for who is attending your event. Those which attract a young audience are of particular interest to insurance companies as they are the most "profitable" to insure.
3. Events that attract the health-conscious (runs, cycling, triathlons, etc.) or areas of your festival that promote wellness (culinary demos, farmers markets, etc.) are going to be of particular interest to health insurers.
4. Events that fall during healthcare "open enrollment" periods (October 1 – March 31) have the best chance for attracting these types of sponsors as this is when they are really ramping up their marketing.
5. Pitch activations that help them generate leads. These can be onsite, online or via social media platforms.

Hopefully, you will find success with this new market at your next festival or special events. Let me know how it goes for you.

Do you have questions of your own for The Sponsor Doc? Send them to bruce@sponsordoc.com and I'll contact you to discuss your specific situation. Then we'll publish the findings in this column.

With more than three decades in sponsorship sales and consultation, **Bruce L. Erley** is the President and CEO of the Creative Strategies Group, a full-service sponsorship and event marketing agency based in Denver, Colorado he founded in 1995. Accredited in Public Relations (APR) by the Public Relations Society of America and a Certified Festival & Events Executive (CFEE) by the International Festivals and Events Association, Erley is a highly-regarded speaker on event marketing and sponsorship having spoken on the topic around the world in such places as Dubai, Vienna, Beijing, Toronto and New York.

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