



YES, SPONSOR SALES

IS HARD

Dear Sponsor Doc:

I've just received yet another decline on one of my sponsorship proposals that I was pretty sure was going to be a yes. Recently it seems, I have been through a rash of rejections and I'm questioning my ability.

I know intellectually that sales are a two-sided process and that I shouldn't take "no's" personally, but emotionally, I have to admit, I am feeling a bit defeated. I guess I'm looking for some perspective and a bit of encouragement.

M.E. Denver, CO

Dear M.E.

I get it! Sales is hard. Unlike most other jobs in our industry, our effort to land sponsors for our events is entirely speculative. We simply do not control both sides of the sales decision.

We can find the perfect prospect...Do our homework and come up with an ideal brand connection...Develop killer activations...Craft a proposal that is persuasive and compelling...Make a presentation that should receive a standing ovation...And still get rejected!

Recently, I had a dozen SOLID proposals in play for the same event. I assumed that out of twelve pitches, at least three or four would break my way. Nope! Not a one was approved. Complete rejection. I hadn't gotten that many "no's" since Junior Prom.

I was upset, angry, doubting my ability and in general feeling like a failure. But my wife provided me with some perspective. She reminded me that this was an exception to my general success with selling sponsors. She asked some great questions about the declines I received and helped me be a bit more introspective. Here are a few of my thoughts. Perhaps they will help you as well.

- When you get a decline, make a thoughtful review of why it was not accepted. Was it something you couldn't control, (e.g. no budget, change in marketing tactics, etc.) or was it due to some shortfall in your effort, (too late, off target, didn't make a compelling case.) If it was due to your shortfall, then what can you change is your sales approach to correct your deficiencies.
- Be resilient! Good sales people have grit! Grit is defined as courage and resolve; strength of character. This is an essential characteristic for anyone in sales. When you get knocked down...get back-up.
- Get going again. Don't stew or stay paralyzed in doubt. Get more leads out there. Review old leads and try those again. Ask current sponsors for referrals.

- Keep some perspective. Look at your entire body of work, not just the most recent shortcomings. Take stock in your successes and celebrate them. Use that good energy as motivation.

So, M.E., you are not alone in this experience. I have four decades experience in selling sponsorship and I hit these ruts as well. I hope these suggestions help you keep your doubts in check and provide the encouragement to keep moving forward. Here's to the next big sale!

The Sponsor Doc

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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