

THE SPONSOR DOC

With Bruce L. Erley, APR, CFEE

Sponsor Fulfillment – Bringing Order to Chaos



Dear Sponsor Doc:

I am stressing out! My organization does five different events between Memorial Day and Labor Day and my job is to make sure all the sponsors are taken care from benefits fulfillment to onsite support and post event follow-up. There are just so many moving parts, I don't know how to keep all those balls in the air without dropping them. Any advice would be so appreciated.

- L.Z., Philadelphia, PA

Dear L.Z.:

You need to be infected with GPD... German Personality Disorder. It is the affliction many of us have who are part anal retentive, part OCD and highly value organization and productivity.

To keep so many details and deadline in place you need to make a plan and then work the plan. Here at CSG, we have three staff that do nothing but focus on the minutia of sponsor fulfillment. Their job is, in essence, to produce an effective and successful sponsor experience.

Here are some to the best practices we use to keep so many details organized and sponsors happy.

Assign a Point Person

Sponsorship fulfillment needs to be the responsibility of a specific person, whether staff or volunteer, responsible for the "care & feeding" of sponsors. Often it will not be the person who "sold" the sponsorship. During your event this needs to be an exclusive or significant part of their job. Generally, I look for a person who is customer service oriented, an organized "detail person," a good communicator, someone who will serve as the sponsor's advocate and resource person as well as be a problem solver.

Create an Internal Fulfillment Program

How will you keep track of all the rights your sponsors have been promised and their fulfillment? We have found it most effective to create a Fulfillment Matrix, a spreadsheet of information that takes everything from proposals and agreements and puts them in one place. Among the information we will track on the Fulfillment Matrix are:

- Contact info
- Sponsorship Level
- Logo/trademark benefits

- Ad & Promo benefits & deadlines
- Digital and social media rights
- Program and printed material recognition
- Onsite benefits including signage, live recognition, & exhibit space
- Hospitality benefits

Activation Planning

Understand what the sponsor wants to accomplish at your event and then help them develop an "Activation Plan." Work with them to think through what they want to do onsite that will engage your attendees. Make sure they are doing their end of the planning.

Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

You need to be sure you provide, clear, timely information to your sponsors in a manner that is easy for them to review and respond. Set clear deadlines for things they need to provide you from ad layouts to ticket orders. Then don't be surprised if they don't meet them. You can help avoid missed deadlines by sending reminders, but don't badger them.

Onsite Management

As they say, this is where the rubber meets the road. Our team is always there before the sponsor arrives. We make sure they are properly placed and ready to provide ancillary assistance they might need with their set-up. If we have done our work properly before the event, our principal role on site is to trouble shoot and resolve problems as well as quality assurance (e.g. assure sponsors banners are up, emcee has the proper recognition script, etc.)

The key to our planning and preparation is that we want to think through the sponsors' experience from beginning to

end. If we catch most problems ahead of time, we have the capability to come up with solutions. Now, as you know with events, nothing is completely predictable, but I want to be sure that if an emergency arises, it is NOT one of our making or that we should have anticipated.

As I said at the beginning of this letter, *make a plan and the work the plan.* You will find that you will sleep better at night and goodness knows, we need to keep up with that during event season. Best of Luck!

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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