

WHAT DOES YOUR CRYSTAL BALL TELL YOU?

Dear Sponsor Doc:

I'm really struggling to predict what sponsorship sales will look like in 2022. Are we going into a third year of struggling to secure partners or will things begin to "return to normal" whatever that means? Given your years of experience, can you share what you are seeing in your crystal ball?

LL – Seattle, WA

Dear L.L.:

Let me preface my thoughts with this...as I looked back at my predictions over the past two years, I would say that I have been correct a little more than 50% of the time. It seems every time I make a forecast, something changes in the marketplace whether it's a Delta variant surge, renewed health restrictions or just a change in client confidence.

As I sit here today, there are new considerations to factor into your 2022 planning.

- Supply chain disruptions are impacting many consumer brands from automotive to aviation. If they don't have products to sell, they are less likely to spend dollars on marketing.
- Workforce struggles are impacting promotional agencies' ability to return to mobile marketing tours. If they can't put together event teams, they can't get back on the road.
- Continuing corporate hesitancy and ongoing moratoriums on staff returns to offices and public engagement. If they can't activate or host clients, they are not likely to sponsor.

In the world of events 2020 was the lost year, and 2021 was the year of experimentation and cautious reemergence. But I am an optimist and hopeful that, assuming a continuing improvement in public health, 2022 will be a year of genuine recovery.

All the events and festivals with which we were involved this year DID take place and frankly the public response was overwhelmingly positive. In fact, *I believe it is the excitement and energy of our attendees which I believe will drive companies back to event marketing and sponsorship.* Brands will see that festivals and special events provide an engaged and appreciative audience that will be receptive to their messaging.

Our approach to sponsor prospects will underscore the genuine opportunities they will encounter at our events...that 2022 will be a renaissance in experiential marketing before an audience that is eager to consume.

We will be working to rebuild sponsorship revenue for our events to reach or exceed 2019 benchmarks. As it is a new world, here are some of the tactics we are using:

1. Early renewal efforts will all 2020 sponsors. Express your appreciation for sticking with you and give them the first bite at the 2022 apple.

2. Reengage all those sponsors you lost during the pandemic with the message that your audience is back and ready to engage. They may not have the ability to return at the same level, so provide options.
3. Take a clean slate look at your historic prospect list. Much has changed in the marketplace during the past two years and "no's" from the past may be far more open to opportunities in 2022. You certainly will not know unless you ask.
4. Start NOW! While traditional planning and budgeting cycles were disrupted over the past couple years, we are hearing from our long-term partners that they are returning to a traditional fiscal planning calendar which means many budgets will be set before the end of this year.
5. Have some solutions in mind for staffing support (with volunteers) or passive engagement activations if they are concerned about being able to have an event team in place.

I hope these insights are helpful and that you are able to return to some level of normalcy in your sponsorship efforts. Work to keep yourself ahead of the curve and stay positive.

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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