



A Common Sense Guide to PR/Sponsorship and event promotions/marketing

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Many books have been written about these topics...



... but you don't really need a book or a course
to learn the basics

Practical experience is in some ways more important



- I learnt these skills through “on the job” experience while organising activities as a uni student
- This “encouraging industry support and participation” aspect was part why the GOLD group was recognised with the RAB GOLD Achievement award

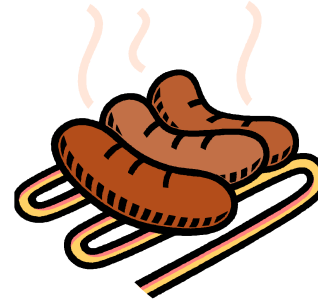
Hopefully sharing some insights I gained along the way is enough to get you started!

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Sponsorship can take different forms – “in-kind” and monetary

- **In-kind:**

- Goods, e.g. food, drinks
- Services, e.g. photocopying
- Discount, e.g. discount to you (committee), discount to members



- **Monetary**



- Of course \$\$\$\$ is better, but “in-kind” is just as important, and perhaps easier to get in some cases
- In fact the catch-cry of someone who showed me to ropes to getting sponsorship for a student club is “Never pay for something if you can help it”

Rule #1: Think about what you have to offer

- While you are relying on the goodness of people's hearts, it is still important to create "value" and offer them something in return, e.g.: some charities have actually sent a sheet of personalised address labels with their sponsorship request.
- So what can you offer?
 - "Good corporate citizen" image for helping out
 - Differential "status" of sponsorship
(bronze, silver, gold, platinum if you wish – the more they sponsor the more they get)
 - General publicity
(their logo on posters, emails)
 - Opportunity to present/promote their company in front of students
(if applicable, e.g. networking forum)
 - Other ways to access students
(e.g. send out job ad on their behalf)
 - Certificates of appreciation don't cost too much to print!



Rule #2: Establish rapport and gain trust

- Keep your eyes open: normal networking “soft-selling” is always more effective than cold-calling
 - Daniel Goleman (author of *Emotional Intelligence*) mentioned a study in the book where the “star performers” among all the engineers in a large company were found to be more effective and efficient not because they were smarter, but **because they establish a network of experts who can help them before they even need them**
- But if you have to cold-call, there are tricks to establish rapport:
 - Use small talk
 - Ask open questions – let people talk about themselves (e.g. can you tell me more about what XYZ Co does?)
 - Showing interest usually leaves a positive impression
 - Also gives you valuable info on what they would want that you potentially could offer, e.g. they are in desperate need of a good story for the “community” section of their annual report
- Act and look professional – literally, **you need to convince them to trust you with their money!**



Rule #3: Walk the Walk, Talk the talk

- Understand how typical workplaces operate, the pecking order, who calls the shots etc. - get to the right people
- Addressing a letter to a person/name is always better than to a position. (Do some research. Call up and ask the receptionist)
- Generic faxes and “info@” emails are less likely to get you very far compared to ones with an actual recipient identified
- Consider printing SB business cards
- Send emails using ieee.org alias
- “Buzz words” and persuasive writing (more on this later)
- Keep yourself updated on news and current affairs, know what’s the current focus/priority of the company you’re approaching



Rule #4 A door is closed now doesn't mean it'll be forever

- Companies may choose not to sponsor/participate for various reasons other than a lack of faith in your activities:
 - no budget for now
 - not recruiting
 - missed application time frame (larger corporates often have their own sponsorship application programs, with their own forms and deadlines)
- It is good practice to treat the effort not as wasted but as general PR
 - keep them in the loop
 - let them know the good things you do
- Try again
 - in a different form (e.g. in-kind)
 - next year



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I intend to focus less on the mechanics of event promotions but more on how to plan it...

- You probably know the drill more than me about the event promotion mechanics:
 - Pre-lecture talks (e.g. which ones are the best ones that most in the year group go to)
 - Email
 - Website
 - Posters
 - Fliers
 - Newsletters
 - Don't forget to think about cross-promotions with other clubs...



Design of promotional materials

- Think about what students typically want out of the events you hold and what can you offer
- But don't over-exaggerate your promises, e.g. "opportunity to mingle with employers" as opposed to "we'll help you find a job"
- Be succinct
- Be attention-grabbing (e.g. use colours and pictures!)
- Use active voice (this urges the reader to do something!)
- Use positive words
- Persuasive soft-selling writing (more on that later)
- If you have the luxury of time:
 - leave it for a few days before proof-reading again
 - get others to proof-read for you and word-smith it with you!



Ticket pricing “bag of tricks”

- Differentiate between members and non-members in pricing. Hopefully over the course of the year, members would've made their money back from savings in attending your activities
- Group discount or buy 10 get one free (this provides incentives for ticket-selling “agents”)
- Often ticket sales tend to increase massively the day before the event (especially for social events, people tend to take their time making up their mind).
→ Early bird discount



Start promoting with enough lead time before the event

- Leave enough lead time before the actual event to start promoting/marketing it
- For small events, ideally 2 weeks to a month
- For large events, ideally a ‘teaser’ 2 months or more before with the finalised details promoted again at least a month before
- Trade-off: but if you promote too far advance, you’re risking the “out of sight, out of mind” syndrome
- If necessary, send email reminders



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There are two common elements for success between sponsorship and events promotion

1. Figure out what they want

- Open communications
- Remember to collect feedback afterwards
(whether formal survey or informal verbal comments)

2. Soft-sell what you have to offer

- More than just stating the “bare facts”
(which engineers have a tendency to do)
- Persuasive writing -
Ok, finally we’re getting to this very important point...

Persuasive writing 101 – consider how your audience like to gather data and how they prefer to make decisions



Detail-oriented

- approach things rationally
- dislike emotional terms and vague language
- needs lots of detail and facts, formulae, procedures
- suggested words to use: experience, factual, proven, principles

Pragmatic

- results-oriented
- may be impatient with lengthy or detailed material
- use executive summary, 'bottom line', bullet point style writing
- suggested words to use: planned, completed, mission, objective, return on investment, competitive advantage



Orientation towards **thought/ logic**

Consensus-oriented

- sincerely wants to understand and to feel certain that everyone involved in a decision is comfortable.
- open to you as a writer and to the message you are conveying.
- sensitive, may pick up inconsistencies between your message and your intent.
- suggested words to use: consensus, flexible, adaptable, reliable, dependable



Visionary

- rely on instinct and intuition
- rise to excitement and challenge
- easily bored
- tend to jump over technical detail and facts to get to the action
- suggested words to use: hunches, possible, innovative, ingenious, creative



Orientation towards **emotion**

← Orientation towards **passive reflection**

→ Orientation towards **action**

P.S. Consider IEEE Foundation as a potential sponsor for special projects

- I met the president of IEEE Foundation at Region 10 AGM last month, who told me that:
 - They get donations from donors
 - They're always on the lookout for new ideas for special projects to sponsor. They're open to "outside the box" ideas too
 - e.g. David Lim and myself are thinking of working with UWA's robot soccer team to apply for Foundation sponsorship:
 - ▶ Enter a competition organised by Hong Kong's GOLD group
 - ▶ Operational funding of community outreach education program (roadshow to schools)
- So, think about it...
<http://www.ieee.org/organizations/foundation/index.html>

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Brainstorming case study/discussion

- Say you're thinking about a few different potential sponsors, how would you approach them?
 - A small consulting engineering firm
 - ▶ Small companies – use more personal approach
 - Bank West
 - ▶ A bank may not be a what you typically think of as potential sponsor, but they do employ a large IT team in WA
 - Wesfarmers
 - ▶ They have specific sponsorship programs and guidelines
 - Digilife
 - ▶ Maybe aim for discount or product as door prize rather than \$

The end

Thank you.

Any questions?