



Fundraising Resources

Recruiting Sponsorships

Sponsorships and underwriting are different labels for basically the same thing: funding donated for the support of a project, program, event, initiative, or activity. Generally speaking, foundations are identified as underwriters and corporations as sponsors. Especially in the case of a special event, the bottom line is that sponsorships, if handled correctly, can make your special event profitable.

There are several things to keep in mind when seeking sponsorships.

- Those corporations or businesses with whom you share some commonality are your best prospects.
- For instance, a company who employs a large corp of engineers is a likely candidate, particularly if they are ASME members.
- Sponsorship money often comes through the marketing department of a corporation.
- Consider the major vendors to your organization.
- To create the best relationship, find some connection between the corporation and ASME. Always bear in mind that corporations need a reason to become your benefactor. Make it clear what is in it for them.

Corporations always seek opportunities that give them something substantial in return: ideals related to their own bottom line, increased visibility, market expansion, educational opportunities or other perks for their employees, or other tangible benefits. Make it clear just how YOU can help THEM.

1. **Identify your sponsorship opportunity**, which might be an event such as a full-day seminar, a project to bring engineers into high schools to promote mechanical engineering, a special event (gala, auction, 10K, etc.), or a series of classes for engineers applying for PE status. A project such as a student contest could also be a consideration. Think out of the box. How will this help the greater good? What is the contribution to society? There may be other areas exclusive to your community that would lend themselves to sponsors as well.
2. **Develop your proposal.** Include a full description of the event or activity. Be clear about who will be involved and who will benefit from the event, i.e. the organization, the community, the school, etc. Also give a complete and clear explanation of how the sponsor will benefit from the relationship. In the event that you have the potential for multiple sponsors you might want to establish sponsorship levels.

Present your proposal in a professional manner. Use a presentation folder and include in it a case statement (a statement of need) about the event, a complete description of the event and how many attendees or participants you expect, who will benefit from the activity, a budget, and a complete explanation of how the sponsor will benefit. Will the corporate name appear in advertisements? Will there be a presence for the sponsor at the event, as in a banner, mention in the program, etc.? Can the sponsor have a table or representative at the event? If a ticketed event, will the sponsor be given any free tickets? Use caution about how much you are offering to the sponsor that may actually cost you money, defeating the purpose of even having a sponsor.

3. **Identify your prospects.** Make a list of all the potential corporate sponsors. Narrow the field down to the single best prospect, and have a few backups if you are unable to get your first choice, or who might come in at a lower level. You may want to have a tiered plan where you have a major sponsor, then other sponsors at decreasing levels. Then identify those in your organization who might be able to make contacts on your behalf. If you have no one to make contact, call the company and ask for the community affairs office. If they don't have one they will suggest someone else you can talk with to ask if they would entertain your proposal.
4. **Prepare a professional looking packet for your prospect.** Include descriptive information about the event, from beginning to end, including the goal of the event, who will benefit from it, and a budget. Create levels of sponsorship to attract multiple sponsors. For example:
 - a. **Platinum Level \$25,000**
 - b. **Gold Level \$10,000**
 - c. **Silver Level \$5,000**

Your major sponsor is critical. The prestige that a highly placed corporate sponsor lends to your event can convince others to support you as well. You will need to create decreasing levels of sponsor benefits such as banner placement or other signage, mention in all promotional materials, free admissions, etc. Your highest level may, for example, get free tickets in addition to center banner placement and top placement in the event program, whereas lower levels get decreased levels of benefits.

Also include in your packet complete information about ASME and about your sector or unit, a list of board members and key volunteers, any other relevant information to help them know about you, and your business card. Give a clear demonstration about how ASME enables engineers to contribute to a better world for all.

5. **Allow plenty of time for this process.** While it is important to approach only one prospect in the beginning as your major sponsor, if that appeal is not successful you will need time to seek out alternatives. Also, if you are going to have several sponsorship levels, you will need time once the major sponsor is in place to recruit the lower levels.

Don't get discouraged! Recent statistics reveal that only about 5% of money given is from corporations. But they DO give! Be persistent, have a long list of prospects, and make a solid case for why your organization brings them the best opportunity!

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