



Sponsorship

A Guide for Clubs
and Societies

Aberdeen University Students' Association
2008

A Guide to Sponsorship for your Club or Society

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Overview

This guide will provide you with some helpful tips to get you started on your mission to raise funds and support your club or society goals throughout the year.

Many sports clubs and societies would cease to exist without additional funding or resources on top of what is already provided by the Students' Association. We want to ensure the longevity of our clubs and societies and in order to do so; we want to advise you as to how to work towards a successful financial future by securing sponsorship.

This booklet, combined with some common sense, will give you advice on sponsorship and how to go about obtaining it. This guide is a broad outline and you should take the liberty to be creative in your proposals. If you need additional sponsorship support, there is a member of the Students' Association staff who may be able to work with you more closely to help you achieve your goal.

The Difference Between Fundraising and Sponsorship

Firstly, it is important to note that there is a difference between fundraising and sponsorship. Both are effective means of raising needed funds and should be considered important resources for your clubs during the year.

Fundraising is the act or process of raising funds for a specific cause, charity, project or club. There are a variety of methods to fundraise including events, lottery grant aid, and asking for donations.

Sponsorship is a business transaction between your club or society and a company that finance a project or an event carried out by your group. This partnership should be considered as a business transaction as the partnership generally benefits both parties in the agreement.

Before you start looking for sponsorship, there are a few important steps to take to prepare your case, make a proposal and start asking companies for sponsorship.

Prepare your Case

Remember the 6 p's

Proper Preparation and Planning Prevents Poor Performance

In the case of obtaining sponsorship some advance planning and preparation is certainly key to your success. This will help you approach companies in a professional, well organized manner and help you put your best foot forward when you start building corporate relationships.

Before you approach any potential sponsors you should clearly define the needs of your society or sports club. To help you define your need and create an overall SMART sponsorship objective, ask yourselves the following questions:

- What resource do you need for your team or group to progress?
- Why do we require sponsorship?
- Are we looking for money, resources, equipment, venue hire or all of the above?
- Is it funding, and if so how much?
- Is it training and if so, what type?

Make sure you lay out your objective quite clearly and make it a SMART objective!

Specific - Objectives should specify what you want to achieve

Measurable - Can you measure whether you are meeting the objectives or not?

Achievable - Are the objectives you set, achievable and attainable?

Realistic - Can you realistically achieve your objectives?

Time - Can you achieve your objective in a timely manner?

Be honest and upfront about what you need from the company as well as what you are prepared to do in return for them (i.e. names on programmes or signage etc). Your sponsors will want to know exactly what's happening with their money.

Don't sell yourself short

Because the nature of sponsorship is a business transaction, companies want to know that they will get a return on investment for providing you with their resource.

When selling yourself to a company, you want to make sure you're being accurate. Under selling yourself would be doing yourself an injustice and may lead to an unsuccessful bid for sponsorship. However, over selling yourself would be considered lying or making false claims which could not only lead to a negative response, but also to giving you a bad reputation.

Here are a few statistics to consider for your proposals and possibly include in your pitch to companies!

- Aberdeen is home to about 30,000 students and approximately 14,000 (almost half!) of those students go to Aberdeen University
- Students in Scotland have an individual average expenditure of over £6000 per year according to a report to the Scottish Executive
- You are a member of the student community. According to a recent AUSA Survey of the Aberdeen University student community, 74% of students indicated they are in a society, 54% indicated they were in a sports club and 11% indicated they were on an AUSA Committee
- Aberdeen University Students' Association (AUSA) is a registered Scottish Charity Number SC037971

More specific features about your club that you can talk about are

- How many members do you have?
- How many hits to your website do you get?
- How many games or competitions have you won?
- How far do you travel for your competitions?
- What past achievements have been made by your team?

What are you going to ask for?

Ask for what you need based on your objective and be careful not to over or under sell yourselves.

Don't ask a company to purchase £3000 worth of kit and supplies just because you're a great team and they should want to be your sponsor for the sake of it.

On the other hand, make sure you don't bend over backwards for a company that's only going to provide food for you on one occasion yet expects you to hold multiple events at their venue, wants their logos on everything and wants you to send out e-mails and do flyering on their behalf.

Remember, sponsorship is a promotional business tool for companies to tap into the student market and raise their profile while making valuable connections to students. Sponsorship partnerships can be a great tool for both you and the companies that sponsor you so look at your sponsorship objective and 'ask' accordingly.

With your objective, selling points and asking request defined you're ready to begin identifying who you're going to approach!

Who are you going to approach?

With your committee, put together a list of your past supporters and any company who may have a personal connection to one of your members. This should be the list you start working from and to whom you should tailor your proposals.

When researching external companies not directly known to the group try and look for companies that may have a vested interest in your specialized area. The more closely you can associate the company with the activities and people in your group, the higher your chance for sponsorship.

If you want to spread yourself even further than that, think of everyone who may recognize or see your club/society including University Staff, non-students and external companies who may like to be more closely associated with the students at the University of Aberdeen.

If you are looking for a global company to sponsor you, do some research and see if there is a branch or office which is located in Aberdeen.

Once you've got this list together, take a final look and make sure the companies listed are a good fit for this business opportunity. For example, without a personal connection there may be little use in approaching a financial company to sponsor the Harry Potter society where as a costume shop or theatre venue would be more appropriate!

Researching the companies you plan on approaching

The more you know about who you're approaching, the better! If you have a good grip on the goals and business targets of the company, you can tailor your proposal accordingly and see where you fit into helping them achieve their goals. You should understand their products and how they relate to the student market.

Don't let unrelated companies intimidate you as it may be worth approaching them! For example, if you are the Tennis Club you can choose a company that's in the competitive oil market and align yourselves with them in 2 ways. Firstly, Tennis is a competitive sport and both you, and the company know how hard it is to get ahead in a competitive market. Secondly, a lot of members in the Tennis Club are in 4th year and will be looking to get a career the following year. The company is looking for good people and the members of the Tennis Club are ideal candidates because they value hard work and perseverance in a competitive market, just like the company you are approaching.

Finally, one other helpful hint is try and research when the companies you're going to approach, plan their budgets. It is useful to ask companies around that time as it will be easier for them to budget you into their future plans.

Top Tip: Be reasonable and realistic. Don't ask a small company for a large amount of cash, they will most likely say no.

What do you have to offer sponsors?

It's important to tell companies exactly what benefits you can offer them. Try and give potential sponsors both qualitative and quantitative benefits. For example, instead of saying that 1000 students will see their logo you can say, '1000 students will recognize that you are supporting our society and clubs and are endorsed by a student group which will raise your profile with the Aberdeen student community'.

Some other ideas of what you have to offer companies are:

- Positive exposure to students
- Co-branding of publicity (use their logo on your promotions)
- Distributing their publicity and sending out e-mails to your e-mail list
- Website links from your site to theirs
- A presence at events that you run
- Presentations to students as organized by your club
- Help them collect data or feedback regarding their brands or products
- Organising events at their venue and publicising them to all students
- Being a regular customer at their venue

If possible, prepare a marketing plan as to what you expect to do in terms of club promotions. This way the potential sponsor has an idea of exactly what they may receive for example:

- Use your 2 free adverts in the Gaudie to advertise your sporting event and the adverts will be co-branded with your logo! The Gaudie has a print run of 4000 copies weekly, is distributed all over campus and to student hotspots around the city centre and is now full colour!
- Use your logo on the back of our society's ball tickets. 400 people attend the ball every year and the ticket is the keepsake from the event
- Brand a sleeve of your team hoodie with your logo. There are over 50 members in the society who will be purchasing one
- Your website gets over 500 hits per week with people checking your game stats and you will put their logo and link on your website and identify them as your sponsor
- Brand all other team or society promotions with their company logo and will work closely with the sponsor to make sure all brand identity guidelines are followed and the co-promotion work is mutually beneficial to both parties

Your Plan of Attack

Now that you have a clear objective in mind, know who you're going to approach and why they would be a good fit with your society or sports club, you can start writing your sponsorship proposal, prepare your approach and plan how you are going to make your official 'ask'.

The Sponsorship Proposal

Your proposal should emphasize the benefits of sponsorship to the company. If you word your proposal in a way that the company identifies you as a worthy cause but also as a nice fit with their business goals, then you've done a great job with your initial preparation and you're most of the way to achieving your goal.

Sponsorship Proposal includes

- Your past successes. For example, an annual report or favourable press cuttings from the Gaudie or local newspapers
- Your future objectives. What you need and what you are going to do
- Why the company should sponsor you and what they can expect in return
- How you fit in with their business objectives and how both you and the companies business objectives will be achieved
- How the money will be spent - presented like a shopping list so the company knows their money will be spent wisely
- Your marketing plan
- Contact information

Top Tip: You can and should change your proposal for every company you approach. Make it unique for each company as they are all unique and will have different corporate visions.

The Approach

Before you consider making any kind of an approach, don't forget the 6 p's!

There are a few ways which you can approach companies. Generally the most effective way to begin this process is with a phone call. You can often call the companies receptionist and tell them the reason for your call and ask for the name of the person that is most appropriate to speak to. Once you are sure you're speaking to the right person (which is key to the success of your proposal!) ask them how they would best like to receive your proposal.

If the person you initially make contact with doesn't know who to ask for, here is a list of people at the company you could try and should probably do so in this order:

1. Marketing Director - most often is the person who controls the sponsorship budgets
2. Corporate Affairs or Community Relations Department
3. General Manager or CEO - The size of the company will be a good indication if you should ask for this person. If it's a large corporation, don't bother but if it's a local small company then you'll have a better chance of getting in touch

Finally, you should also keep a record of all correspondence between yourself and the company. This will avoid confusion in the future and help you remember what has already been discussed or said between the two parties.

Top Tip: Write down the name of the person you are put through to because you don't want to get it wrong when you get this individual on the phone!

The Ask

Phone:

When you're speaking to the correct individual on the phone, they may ask for an outline on the phone right then and there. If so, be prepared and have all your research in front of you. Decide what you're going to say before you dial.

This method is great as it can leave a lasting impression. It will give you a chance to discuss your proposal with the company and also give you a chance to listen to your sponsor's initial response to the proposal. This is also a great opportunity to verbally express the need of your club or society. If there is an initial interest from the company, try to progress the phone call and schedule a face to face meeting where you can go over the project in more detail and can show the company your information, proposal and pictures etc.

Top Tip: Anticipate any problems or questions that a potential sponsor may ask you. That way if the hard questions do come up you're ready for them and not thrown off guard!

There is an example phone call in the appendix A.

By Letter:

One of the con's of sending an unsolicited letter is that they are easily dismissed, hence the reason for starting off the relationship with a phone call!

If the sponsor asks you to send them the information by letter you will want to include a print out of your sponsorship proposal and marketing plan but also a brief cover letter with an introduction. Address the letter to the correct person and use their name on the covering letter so they know you haven't sent the letter out to 100's of companies. Be professional with this approach and don't send a hand written letter.

When writing your letter, make sure you:

- Personalise the letter. A generic letter will probably go straight into the bin
- Outline the nature of your cause and what the business has to gain by supporting it
- Link the company objectives to your objective and define how you can come together to support one another
- Show how the company can genuinely add value to your cause.

Your letter will be the first thing that your new contact reads and is key to the success of your proposal. Be brief and informative in your letter and remember that further information can always be given at a further face to face meeting.

If this is how the potential sponsor asks to receive the information, give them a follow up phone call 4 or 5 days after mailing the letter to confirm that they have received it. Use this as your opportunity to continue the discussion on the phone or to set up a face to face meeting.

There is a sample cover letter in the appendix B.

Top Tip: Don't forget to keep your letter personal but brief! Companies receive 10's of letters each day so make sure yours is to the point but includes a personal touch

E-mail:

Generally after the initial phone call with your target, you will be asked to send an e-mail with the details of the proposal. This tends to be the most commonly used format of correspondence these days and is great because your message is delivered instantly!

Similar to writing a letter, use the body of the e-mail as a brief introduction and set the right tone for the proposal. Emails will generally be shorter than a letter but still set the same tone. Use that opportunity to tell your contact that you will follow up with them after they have had time to look at your proposal. Include the rest of your information to the e-mail as attachments but make sure to use common viewing packages to avoid any unease for viewing your proposal.

There is a sample e-mail in the appendix C.

Face to Face:

This meeting may happen in one of two ways:

1. The sponsor has asked you to come in and talk to them as opposed to a letter or an e-mail, or following receipt for your letter or e-mail
2. You have walked into the company's headquarters and are looking for an impromptu meeting

If the company asks to see you, set up an appropriate time and date when you can meet with them and won't be rushed. Make sure you also consider how valuable your potential sponsors time is so don't take up a full afternoon.

In both cases, you should dress professionally and go prepared! If possible, in addition to the research you have already done on the company, do some research on the individual you are about to meet. Stay calm and take advantage of the fact that a face to face interview can be quite flexible. Listen to what your potential sponsor says and respond accordingly with what you have to offer. A face to face meeting could be scary for some people but if you've done enough research and preparation you should breeze through.

Top Tip: Make eye contact because it builds trust!

Dealing with a "No"

At some point during the process of finding a sponsor you will surely have to deal with some rejection. Don't let this get you down and don't stop looking. Go back to the original list you drew up with your committee and take a look at the second and third companies you felt were appropriate to approach.

If you get a "no" don't feel bad about asking for a reason as to why you have been unsuccessful. Be polite and ask for general feedback regarding your proposal or approach and they may have some helpful hints that will help you with the next company you decide to ask.

Sometimes the perfect company just isn't in a position to sponsor you that year due to business reasons or lack of resources. The important thing is to maintain the relationship for next year as you may find you don't have to look very far to get sponsored in the future.

Closing the Deal

Great news! You've been successful and you've had a company agree to sponsor you for the next academic year! What now?

You need to speak to them regarding payment and raising an invoice. If it is financial support that you have asked for, make sure you get all payment and cheques upfront before the activity takes place or before you start branding all of your publicity with their logo.

Talk to the VP Sport or Societies and Student Activities, and ask them what the best way to raise an invoice is. It is also mandatory to tell them about your sponsor and what you've agreed to and have them make a note of it. This is an important step in closing the deal because the more records the Sabbatical Officers have, the more pivotal a role that may be able to help when your team is looking for sponsors in years ahead. If no one keeps an accurate record, you may lose out on an opportunity for sponsorship for future academic years.

Writing a Contract

A contract may seem too formal for the type of sponsorship activity you are doing but don't forget that the nature of sponsorship is a business transaction so a contract is an important part of the deal. A contract will protect you, will also protect your sponsor and will outline what activity will be happening on both sides of the partnership to avoid any confusion.

Some things your sponsorship contract should include are:

- Title for your sponsored event or Club/Society name
- Relevant dates (start/finish) or relevant event dates
- Financial terms including amount, payment date and VAT inclusions/exclusions
- What you have agreed to do for the sponsorship
- What the company has agreed to do for the sponsorship
- A line for signatures and dates from both you and the sponsor

When printing off a contract, print off two copies of it. Get both fully signed and give one to your sponsor. Make a photocopy of your contract and give it to either the VP Societies or Sports for safe keeping. Retain your copy in your groups documents and refer back to it often to make sure both parties are adhering to the agreements!

There is an example of the contract in Appendix D.

Maintaining the Relationship

Maintaining the relationship with your sponsor is perhaps one of the most valuable things you can do as it's in your best interest to make this a long term relationship. Imagine having to do all this work to get sponsorship every year??? The best way for you to secure your groups future is by treating them well and working with their changing business goals.

Here are a few tips which will help you stay on friendly terms:

- First and foremost is thanking them! After you've finalized the contract call them or e-mail them to say thanks and that you're looking forward to working together
- Closer to the end of the academic year, send them a more formal thank you card which includes a review of the years successes and your interest in working together again next year
- Invite your sponsor to come along to your events, tournaments, performances etc
- Tell them how their money has been spent throughout the year and keep them informed of your successes
- Mention them in any additional press coverage you may have received
- Provide them with all examples of where you were adhering to your end of the deal for example your ball tickets, programmes, or branded adverts and posters. Don't forget, sponsorship is a business transaction and the company wants to know they received good exposure which is value for money.
- Ask if they would like to arrange a mid-contract meeting to conduct a formal feedback meeting. Use this opportunity to see if your sponsor is happy and how to keep them happy!
- Don't lie!! A bad reputation gets around and you're club will certainly suffer. Make sure you stay honest and only enter into an agreement where both parties are satisfied with the contract

Top Tip: Don't forget that there are lots of clubs and societies out there competing for sponsorship. It's in your best interest to make your sponsor happy and work with them on making the partnership a success!

Appendix A) Example Phone Call

Initial Phone Call

Student - Good morning, my name is Jane Doe and I'm phoning from the Aberdeen University Students' Association on behalf of the Women's Football Team. We are contacting local football suppliers to see if they are interested in working with our team on a sponsorship deal for the upcoming year and I was wondering if you can tell me who the most appropriate contact at FootballWorld is to speak to?

Secretary - That would probably be John, he is our marketing manager. Should I connect you to him?

Student - Yes please, thank you for your help.

(Connect to John and introduce yourself the same way as you did when speaking to the receptionist)

John - Thank you for thinking of us when considering your sponsorship for next year. What can I do for you?

Student - I'm wondering if you would be willing to consider our sponsorship proposal. We think it would be a really beneficial partnership because we can help you promote your new store in Aberdeen and would love to work with you in the next academic year. What is the best way for me to talk to you about what we can offer you?

John - What would I get from this sponsorship?

Student - We have 30 people on each of our three teams. That means that we are well represented in every level of football within the British Womens football league. All of our members wear kit which will carry your logo. Additionally we have branded casual clothing that's worn outside of games and would be exposed to many more students and the general public demonstrating your local support for the sport. Finally, we will put your logo on all promotional material which is given out during Freshers Week, refreshers fayre and before all of our promotional events through the year. We have a few more things which are included in our sponsorship proposal and if I can e-mail that over you can give it some further thought and perhaps show it to members of your marketing team?

John - You can e-mail me all the information and I'll have a look at it when I get chance. My e-mail address is john@footballworld.co.uk

Student - That sounds great. I'll send over an e-mail and follow up with you in a few days to see if you have any questions or would like to set up a meeting for some time next week. Thank you for your consideration.

Appendix B) Example Letter

Mr. John Doe
Big Business
Union Street
Aberdeen
AB22 2AB

January 1, 2222

Dear Mr. Doe,

I am pleased to send you this sponsorship proposal for the highly anticipated Sports and Societies **Big Event** day which will take place on the Aberdeen University Campus on Friday, April 1, 2222.

My fellow committee member, Jane Doe, with whom I am co-organizing this event, had mentioned that this is something you are possibly interested in sponsoring as you are looking to re-launch your new student friendly product and the day of our event would be an ideal opportunity to do so.

The sponsorship for this event costs £5,000. We expect this event to have 2000-2500 students in attendance from a variety of our Societies and Sports Clubs. We have already had a number of interested students sign up to volunteer and the event planning is well under way.

The event will be advertised throughout campus via:

- Our student newspaper, the Gaudie and Aberdeen Student Radio (ASR)
- AUSA Website
- Posters and flyers distributed all over campus

If you are to sponsor this event, you can be assured that you will be highlighted as our exclusive sponsor on all promotional activity. We are confident that the local press will attend to cover the events of the day. Your stall on the event grounds will bring you face to face with the event attendees and is sure to be a great promotional tool for your product launch.

We would like to set up a meeting to further discuss the proposal and the benefits of sponsoring this annual event. I will give you a call within 1 week to set up a meeting time which is suitable for you.

We have included our sponsorship proposal and marketing plan with this letter for your review and consideration.

I look forward to speaking with you,

Event Planner
AUSA
P: 01224 555555
E: event.planner@abdn.ac.uk

Appendix C) Example E-Mail

Subject: Achieve you Student Potential

Good Afternoon John,

I am contacting you from the Aberdeen University Students' Association, Event Planning Committee, in regards to our end of year ball which is coming up in June of this year. This event is a formal affair with the capacity to entertain 500 students. This ball sells out every year and this year will be no exception.

I am writing to enquire whether your Highland Dress Company would be interested in sponsoring this prestigious event as many of our attendees will be hiring formal wear for the event and the marketing would be highly beneficial for your company.

I have attached the sponsorship proposal as an attachment to this e-mail for your review and consideration. I will follow up with you next week to discuss any initial questions or comments you may have.

I hope this event sounds like something you might like to sponsor as we would love to have you on board.

Kind regards,

Jane Doe
Event Planner
AUSA
P: 01224 555555
E: event.planner@abdn.ac.uk

Appendix D) Example Contract

Sponsorship Agreement

This agreement is made on the (Date) between (Club/Society name) and (Company Name)

The agreement

This is an agreement which covers the sponsorship for the (Club/Society name) and promotion of (Company Name).

Term

This agreement is in effect from (start date) until (end date). This contract will be reviewed each academic year. At the end of the aforementioned sponsorship period a new contract and agreement may be negotiated.

The (Society/Club) agrees to:

- 1.1 Display the (Company Name) Logo on the Club webpage and "Facebook" page, linking directly to the Company's careers page, (insert address of the website)
- 1.2 To distribute promotional materials (poster's, flyers & emails) to Club members detailing company information and upcoming events when required
- 1.3 Provide information on (Company Name] on the Club's webpage - This will include information on upcoming events, deadlines and any other information provided by (Company Name)
- 1.4 Announce details of (Company Name] events and application deadlines during club meetings
- 1.5 To display (Company Name) logos or slogans prominently on the Club website and on Club clothing
- 1.6 To display (Company Name) logos or slogans on all Club emails and promotions including the [insert names of club/ society events)

The (Company) agrees to:

- 2.1 Sponsor the Club, paying the sum of (insert amount) plus VAT upon acceptance of the agreement. (insert amount) to be paid in one instalment on (insert date)
- 2.2 Provide prizes for (club/society) events such as the Fresher's Fair Raffle or other promotional events throughout the duration of the contract to a maximum of 5 events
- 2.3 Supply details regarding internship and graduate application deadlines
- 2.4 Supply electronic templates of the Company's logo if required
- 2.5 Supply information in the form of text for the Club's webpage

SIGNED BY

For and on behalf of
(Club/Society Name)

_____ Date _____

SIGNED BY

For and on behalf of
(Company Name)

_____ Date _____