

Making the Most of Your Sponsorship Investment

Sponsoring education can be a very profitable venture if you're prepared to use your time and dollars wisely. Like anything else in life, success requires careful planning and precise practice. So what are some of the things you can do to improve your Return on Investment (ROI)? The following tips should serve as an outline for you to follow.

- Personalize your presentation materials. With today's technology, there is no reason to not personalize everything you distribute to the specific individuals receiving them. The more personal the packet of materials, the higher the likelihood that the recipient reading it will hold on to it.
- Develop your script. Most sponsors are given three minutes to make a personal presentation to the audience. Make the most of these minutes by carefully planning and rehearsing what you are going to say. Some companies have professional video presentations that concisely and accurately outline their services and objectives. If your company doesn't have such a vehicle, don't worry. You can be just as effective by delivering a professional presentation yourself.
- Don't try to speak off-the-cuff. Unless you're a seasoned veteran professional speaker, rarely does this work. Remember, you have a very limited amount of time, so make the most of it. No one wants to experience rambling.
- Prepare an outline of things you want to share with the audience. Tell them who you are, what you do, and how you can help them in their businesses. Don't try to sell. Simply outline the benefits of what you are offering, and make it specific to them. Forget the old "Hey, we're here to help you" and "We've been in the business for 40 years" scripts. No one cares. What they do care about is how you can help them with their daily business challenges. Bullet points and cue cards are great props to keep you focused on your presentation.
- Keep it short, and keep it simple. The audience did not pay a registration fee to hear a speech and a long, drawn-out presentation. Be precise and to the point.
- If you're uncomfortable speaking publicly, select someone from your company who is comfortable. Just because you know your products and services inside and out doesn't mean you're good at presenting them publicly. Remember, you only have one chance to make a great impression with each audience.
- Dress professionally no matter what the venue. You're the expert, so make sure you look and act the part. Even though the audience may act and dress casually, it's virtually impossible for you to be too professional.
- Have some form of registration for all attendees. Not "fish bowl" registrations; real registrations. Develop a brief form that asks for pertinent contact information and a few qualifying questions. You may want to offer an incentive for completing the form, i.e. free drawing, etc.
- Arrive early and be prepared to stay late if possible. All presentation materials and displays should be in place before the audience arrives.
- Be sure to turn all cell phones and pagers off. Nothing is more irritating!
- Follow-up after the meeting with all participants. Thank them for their attendance and ask for their business. Remember: you're there to market yourself and your products, so do it; then do it again.
- Remember to thank the HBA staff and leadership for allowing you and your company to participate in this important event. No one ever tires of being thanked and appreciated.

By Beverly Koehn, GMB, CGA, MIRM, Beverly Koehn & Associates, San Antonio, TX

