BEST PRACTICES

ADVANCEMENTS IN COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN PROPERTIES AND SPONSORS

Rightsholders can add value by keeping sponsors updated on new developments on a consistent basis.

Just like a long-lasting marriage, a successful property/sponsor relationship often boils down to one common denominator: communication.

From sharing information on new assets to offering real-time results, properties can add value by keeping sponsors updated on new developments on a consistent and transparent basis.

Below, three ways properties are keeping the lines of communication open.

Communication Mapping
The San Francisco 49ers create a “Concierge Calendar” each year to maximize sponsor communication and networking opportunities.

The calendar contains two buckets: sponsor communication (monthly updates, mid-season recaps, end-of-season performance reports, etc.) and events (home games, away games, foundation events, etc.).

“We look at the calendar from top to bottom to determine where our touchpoints will be in terms of outreach communication and events,” said Brent Schoeb, San Francisco 49ers vice president of corporate partnerships.

The 49ers scout events that can be used for client hospitality as well as networking opportunities with team ownership and management. That ranges from VIP dinners in Levi’s Stadium to hospitality events at the U.S. Women’s Open Golf Championship at the CordeValle Golf Club in San Martin, Calif.

“It’s about building relationships with our partners and giving facetime to our ownership group and executives. It makes our partners feel like part of the 49ers family.”

SPONSOR SUMMIT AGENDA ITEMS

Property Information
• Executive briefing
• Updates/plans for upcoming year

Activation/Cross-promotion Discussion
• Case studies/best practices
• Group sharing of individual partner opportunities

Formal Networking
• Structured meetings/conversations

Informal Socializing
• Team building activitie
Real-time Reporting
Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment has replaced lengthy post-season recaps with real-time updates throughout the year.

The owner of the NBA Toronto Raptors, NHL Toronto Maple Leafs and other pro sports teams uses the updates to share results of on-site activation programs.

“By the time we did end-of-season reports we were headed into planning for the following season. There’s not much of a break between seasons, so we started real-time reporting,” said Patsy Coyle, MLSE director of global partnerships.

The updates include social media analytics, purchase information and other metrics tailored to the objectives of each activation program. MLSE provides the updates to sponsors who run large integrated activation programs; most conduct roughly three to four such programs each season.

MLSE continues to use post-season reports, but has replaced 200-page books with shorter documents that include attendance numbers, broadcast statistics, social media exposure and other information.

Other properties take a different approach to real-time reporting.

Brett Gorrell, Festivals Inc. vice president of marketing & sponsorship, goes out of his way to keep sponsors apprised of the status of their partnerships. That includes updates on move-ins and sharing suggestions on how to deal with inclement weather.

“Most sponsors are not onsite for the whole move in. I’ll take photos and send texts--It makes them feel better about how things are progressing.”

Partner Summits
While it may be a long-used practice, properties cannot deny the power of sponsor summits as a communication platform.

In short, properties can use summits to accomplish the following:
- Keep sponsors apprised of property news
- Inform sponsors of added-value benefits
- Share activation and measurement ideas
- Open dialogue on sponsor cross-promotions
- Facilitate property-to-property business opportunities
- Immerse sponsors in property culture

Coyle points to MLSE’s sponsor summit as a key sponsor servicing platform. The company next month will host sponsors from across all of its properties (as well as prospects) at its annual summit at the Air Canada Centre.

MLSE uses the event to share best practices across sports, arts and culture (the company serves as the exclusive sales agency for Live Nation Canada). MLSE switches up the content each year with programming ranging from partner marketing awards to presentations by outside marketing experts (an expert on millennial marketing will serve as a keynote speaker at the 2016 summit).

Best practices play a key role in the summit, both within and outside the MLSE organization.

“It’s not just about us. We take best practices from sports, arts and culture. We want to discuss who is doing it best.” said Coyle.
Sources
Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment, Tel: 416/815-5400
San Francisco 49ers, Tel: 408/562-4949
Festivals Inc., Tel: 425/295-3262
BEST PRACTICES: SPONSOR SUMMITS

Sponsor summits can go a long way in keeping sponsors up to date on new developments, business-building opportunities and other value-added benefits.

Below, ten tips on making the most out of summits.

Set Expectations

- Prep participants
- Have them submit discussion points/promotional inventory in advance

Sponsor summits should not be a boondoggle. Properties should educate partners about the goal of the meeting in advance—to gain a better understanding of the property, develop activation strategies and scout business-building opportunities with cosponsors and other stakeholders.

Share Case Studies

- Identify two or three sponsors to share case studies
- Strike a balance between different types of sponsors

Sponsors want to learn what has worked and what hasn’t. Properties should highlight those that have seen success—and the steps they took to get there.

Organize Partner Promotional Inventory

- Detail assets available for joint promotions
- Specify requirements for use
- Include timelines/deadlines

Sponsors should share the types of companies they are interested in working with, as well as the kind of inventory they can share. Airlines, for example, can often share tickets for cross-promotions.

Promote Attendance By Sponsor Agencies

- Advertising, promotion, PR or sponsorship
- Typically responsible for conceiving/executing activation

Properties should invite all stakeholders to the summit—including those responsible for executing activation programs.
Keep Timeframe Manageable/Control Pace
- Be respectful of sponsors’ time
- No longer than 1.5 days
- Ensure presenters/sessions stay on time

Sponsors are busy—summits should be no longer than 1.5 days. Half-day summits are adequate for smaller properties.

Schedule Separately From Other Events
- Requires everyone’s full attention
- Needs to be held well in advance of event

Many activation programs can take up to a year to fully develop and execute. As a result, summits should be held separately from other events to give sponsors enough time to fully implement the programs.

Allow For Business-To-Business Sales Discussion
- Cosponsors are potential customers for each other
- Facilitate meetings between partners re: sales opportunities

Properties should facilitate business-building opportunities among B2C companies as well as B2B companies. That can be accomplished through breakout sessions or stand-alone summits for B2B companies.

Invite Moderator/Speakers
- Provide insight into relevant topics
- Help facilitate conversation

Outside speakers and moderators can provide insight into relevant topics and keep conversations on track.

Host Stakeholder Panels
- Stakeholders can provide insight into what works
- Information can be used to develop activation programs

Fans and attendees can provide valuable insight in connecting with a property’s audience—information that can be used to develop activation programs.

Host Partner Marketing Awards
- Highlight best practices
- Encourage sponsor activation

A growing number of properties are using partner marketing awards to highlight best practices and encourage sponsor activation.
Restaurants and food top the list of the most active sponsors of Major League Soccer.

The restaurant chain is the most active non-endemic sponsor of Major League Soccer in terms of number of deals, according to IEG research. Fifty-two percent of properties with a sponsor in the restaurant category report a partnership with the company.

Anheuser-Busch InBev and AdvoCare are the second most active sponsors (48 percent) with Heineken in third (43 percent).

The food category is the most active category sponsoring MLS. Food companies are 5.8 times more likely to sponsor MLS than the average of all sponsors, according to the research. Quick-service restaurants, medical, insurance and autos round out the top five most active categories.

One-hundred percent of MLS properties report a partnership with Adidas.
MOST ACTIVE CATEGORIES SPONSORING MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER

Food companies are 5.8 times more likely to sponsor MLS than the average of all sponsors.

MOST ACTIVE CATEGORIES WITH MLS SHIRT DEALS

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IEG is part of ESP Properties, a WPP company. As a commercial and creative advisor for rightsholders, ESP Properties helps organizations unlock greater value from their audiences and brand partnerships.

Our consulting team assesses and advises how to grow the value of rightsholders’ commercial programs. We do this through a full range of services across data, digital and content development to better understand audiences and create more relevant ways to engage with them. This provides brand partners with new ways to connect with communities of fans and followers, growing the potential value of commercial partnerships.

Our sales team provides partnership strategy and sales representation to the world’s most active sponsors, within and beyond the WPP network of brand clients. Through WPP we have extensive contacts and deep insights into what it takes to create successful partnerships.

For more information about IEG and the sponsorship industry, please visit www.sponsorship.com, www.espglobal.com, or call +1 312 944 1727.