

CLUB SPONSORSHIP ADVICE



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Finding additional sources of income can often be a challenging and concerning issue for many tennis clubs, and attracting sponsorship is a common approach that a number of clubs consider when seeking additional revenues. This guide provides some advice to tennis clubs who are aiming to attract a sponsor to support their club, but there are also other LTA guidance resources that may support a club in generating external revenues:

- LTA Fundraising Guidance for Tennis Clubs
- LTA Grant Funding Advice

Over £1 billion per year is invested in sport through sponsorship, particularly at the highest level of televised sport. However, there are different levels of sponsorship available, many at a local or regional level. Sponsorship is a business deal between two parties, where both parties benefit from the arrangement. If a tennis venue approaches a company for sponsorship without offering something in return, it is unlikely to be successful.

Why do Companies Sponsor Sports Clubs?

Companies sponsor sport for a number of reasons, including the following:

- Publicity
- Corporate image
- Public relations/community involvement
- Direct marketing
- Endorsement
- Target marketing
- Community development

Whilst it is important to consider what a sponsor can do for your tennis club, you should also consider how your club can help the business achieve their objectives. After all it is a two-way relationship, and the sponsor needs to feel that they are getting something productive from the relationship too.

Finding a Sponsor

Finding a sponsor can be very hard work and time-consuming. By planning carefully, you should be able to reduce the amount of work and achieve greater success. However, there are no short cuts, and you are likely to receive a number of rejections before you are able to negotiate a successful sponsorship agreement.

It makes sense to start with your members, who may have workplace contacts and who might be useful in identifying companies or individuals who may be prepared to discuss sponsorship. Your members or wider networks might be able to provide you with the contact details for the most appropriate person to speak to at a local company, and this is often the first (and hardest) challenge to overcome: who to contact at a local business? If you are able to address your correspondence (letter, email etc) to the relevant person from the outset, you stand a far greater chance of your sponsorship proposal being considered.

However, if you don't have a contact at the company, do your research to try and find the best people to contact; there is no harm sending your initial correspondence to more than one individual at the company if you are unsure who is responsible for their sponsorship, marketing and advertising activities.

“START WITH YOUR MEMBERS, WHO MAY HAVE WORKPLACE CONTACTS AND WHO MIGHT BE USEFUL IN IDENTIFYING COMPANIES”

CREATING A SPONSORSHIP PROPOSAL

It is important to spend time considering how a partnership could benefit both parties, as it will help you in creating a proposal that potentially appeals to the sponsor. Consider what you can offer the sponsor in return for their investment and the reasons why this might help the organisation achieve some of their broader goals; be creative and listing a range of carefully thought-out ideas and opportunities that the sponsor could capitalise upon within your proposal is not necessarily a negative approach and can actually help the sponsor visualise the opportunities that interests them.

Listed below are some common sponsorship offers that tennis clubs propose to commercial bodies, but this is by no means a definitive list and you may well have other opportunities that may interest local businesses:

Branding the Venue

- The sponsor's logo appears on the club sign, on banners around the courts, on fences that overlook main roads, in the clubhouse (changing rooms, bar, noticeboards etc), on floodlights.

Digital Advertising

- An advert for the sponsor appears on the club website, in club newsletters, on the club's social media channels. The club sends a bespoke email(s) advertising the sponsor to its member database.

Staging a Named Event

- The club holds an event(s) that the sponsor's name appears alongside of that is then promoted across the local community.

Club Teams

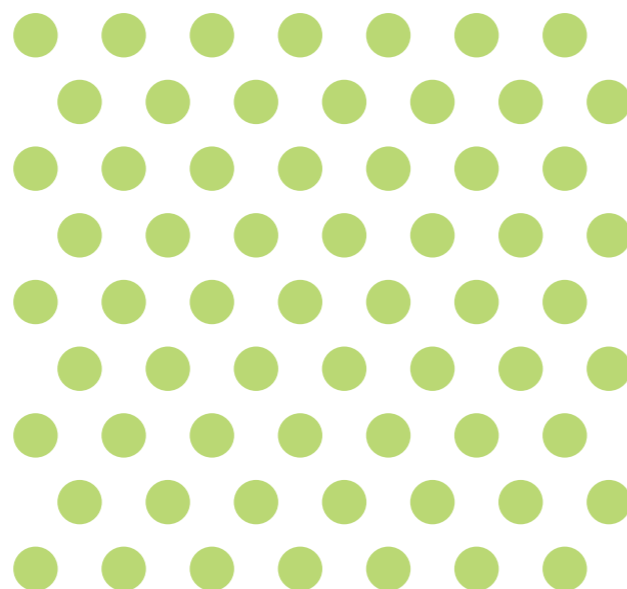
- The sponsor's logo appears on any club kit that the club teams wear for matches and any communication (to members or in local newspapers etc) regarding the team includes references to the sponsor.

The Coaching Programme

- If the club has a large and active coaching programme a sponsor may find it appealing to be named alongside all references to the coaching programme, and to have their branding appear on court during the coaching sessions.

Be quite clear what you have to offer and how this is tailored to suit the sponsor. Making the sponsor feel special, unique and that you've spent time considering how a partnership could be formed between your tennis club and their organisation to mutually benefit both parties reflects positively on your club and potentially paints a picture of why sponsoring your club could be advantageous.

When considering your sponsorship offering, also pay some consideration to the terms and conditions of the arrangement. Is this sponsor getting sole-sponsorship rights at the tennis club? Do you already have existing sponsors, and if so what have you promised and sold to them? If you are looking to have multiple sponsors be sure to clarify the extent of their sponsorship (what it covers, the length of time, the type of promotion that they will receive etc).



TOP TIPS FOR GETTING A SPONSOR

Appoint a Sponsor Coordinator

Identify someone within the tennis club to lead on this area. If a member has experience in this field then that is ideal, but failing that the club should look to select someone who can positively present the attributes of the club to commercial bodies (both verbally and through correspondence), who can empathise and understand what potential sponsors are looking for and who is patient and prepared to undertake research into the background of companies that the club is approaching.

Decide what you are seeking sponsorship for

- What can you offer a potential sponsor that might appeal?
- How much money are you seeking?
- What are you planning to use this money for (sometimes this can help appeal to a business if they feel the money is being used for a worthwhile cause)?
- Are you offering any exclusivity in the partnership (i.e. will they be the only sponsor of the club)?
- Don't forget to consider how much it might cost to deliver on the promises (e.g. if you promise to erect a number of promotional banners around the venue, make sure this doesn't actually cost more than the sponsorship you are receiving)

Draw up a shortlist of companies

- Consider your club networks and any connected business relationships associated to your members.
- Who are the large employers in the area?
- Consider smaller local businesses (e.g. restaurants, supermarkets, coffee shops etc) – you might be able to attract a couple of these at smaller sponsorship fees that amounts to the same as one big sponsor.

Write the sponsorship-seeking letter

The quality of this letter is critical and should be carefully considered. This letter needs to be short and concise and grab the interest and attention of the business quickly – get to the point. The letter needs to strike a balance between being personable and yet reflecting the professional qualities of the tennis club. The letter should be carefully presented on headed paper with the club's logo and everything that is presented to the business should present the club in the best possible light. Yet it is important that the tone of the correspondence reflects that it is a friendly, local tennis club. Make the letter specific to the business; generic letters that have clearly been sent to multiple companies will not usually appeal to potential sponsors.

“**STRIKE A BALANCE BETWEEN BEING PERSONABLE AND YET REFLECTING THE PROFESSIONAL QUALITIES OF THE TENNIS CLUB**”

Follow up each sponsorship-seeking letter with a telephone call

This can often be the step that many tennis clubs overlook – ringing up to chase a response is understandably not the most appealing of tasks! And yet, this can often be the action that prompts a business to relent and agree to meet with you to find out a little more about your tennis club and what you are proposing. In this phone call you might be able to find out if the right person in the company has received your letter, you might be able to get some initial feedback, and in some instances you may find out that they have read your letter but have been too busy to respond.

Write the sponsorship proposal

This should contain more detail as to the opportunity and partnership that you are proposing. It should be professionally presented, and whilst it has more detail it should still get the point across concisely and clearly. Including images of the tennis club can help the company better visualise the club. The section above contains information on developing your sponsorship proposal, but your proposal may wish to include the following areas:

- Brief background of the tennis club
- Outline of the future direction of the club (i.e. how the sponsorship money will help contribute to developing the club)
- The sponsorship opportunity (i.e. what it is you are offering to the sponsor)
- The potential benefit this would bring to the sponsor and the club
- Indicate the next action

Likely Outcomes:

- You receive no reply and the marketing manager is unavailable when you phone. It is worth trying again, but do not persist beyond two or three calls.
- You are invited to meet with a company representative to discuss your proposal further. Invite them to an event so they can become more familiar with your organisation.
- You may progress well down the path of negotiating a sponsorship agreement, but fall at the last hurdle. In this case, thank the company for their interest, suggest you keep in touch with one another and ask for some feedback on your proposal and the reasons for their withdrawal.
- You are successful – this results from careful planning and targeting, establishing realistic proposals and good negotiation. Arrange a meeting as soon as possible with your potential sponsor. The meeting should be planned and you should go to it fully prepared so that you make clear:-
 - What your club can offer the potential sponsor
 - What benefits they will get from sponsoring your club
 - How much sponsorship you require from them
 - The terms of the sponsorship.

Working Together

- Once a sponsor has invested in your project, it is essential that it runs smoothly and delivers high quality experiences to participants and spectators. Keep the sponsor involved and interested in the project, as this will maintain their attention and demonstrate to them the value of their investment.
- Work closely with your sponsor at all times

- Have a clear procedure for reporting news to the sponsor
- Look for ways to increase the newsworthiness of the event by creating interesting photocalls or background features
- Give the sponsor's logos prime position at any event and in all supporting material.

The Sponsorship Agreement

- Lengthy, detailed contracts may not always be necessary, but sponsorship is business and it is in your interest to protect yourself and your club as much as possible in case something goes wrong. At the very least, there should be an exchange of letters between the appropriate people from each organisation, stating what each will do and how each will benefit. The best approach is a simple agreement signed by both parties.

Keeping the Sponsor

- Once you have found a sponsor, you want to keep them. Delivering the goods is essential; keeping to your agreement and delivering the benefits you promised in your sponsorship proposal will lead to a successful partnership. However, there are some special touches you can add that may make the difference between just a good business relationship and a growing interest in your organisation:
- Keep the sponsor informed of your progress (share any good news stories, press coverage etc)
- Be sure to invite representatives of the sponsor to appropriate events at the club
- Be sure to offer any further opportunities to your existing sponsor first
- Discuss renewal of your agreement well in advance. If you have other sponsorship agreements, make sure the sponsors complement, rather than compete with, one another.

