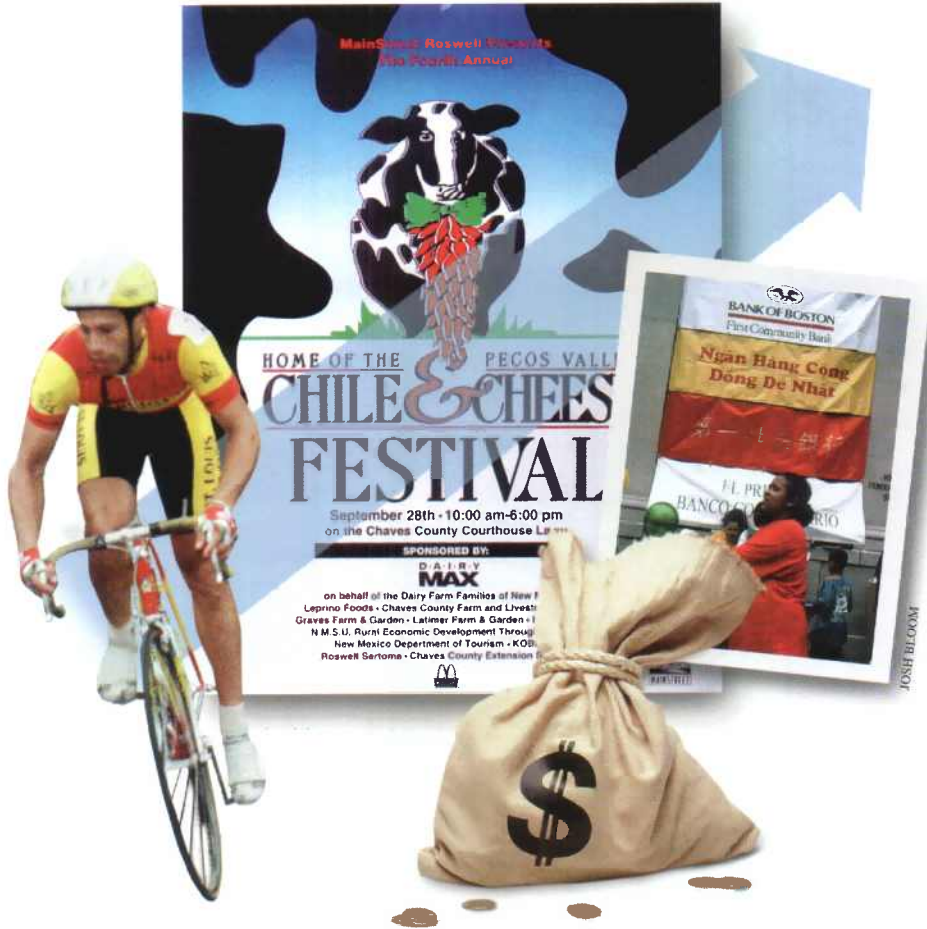


# MainStreetNews

THE MONTHLY PERIODICAL of THE NATIONAL MAIN STREET CENTER



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## How to Sell More Sponsorships

Sylvia Allen

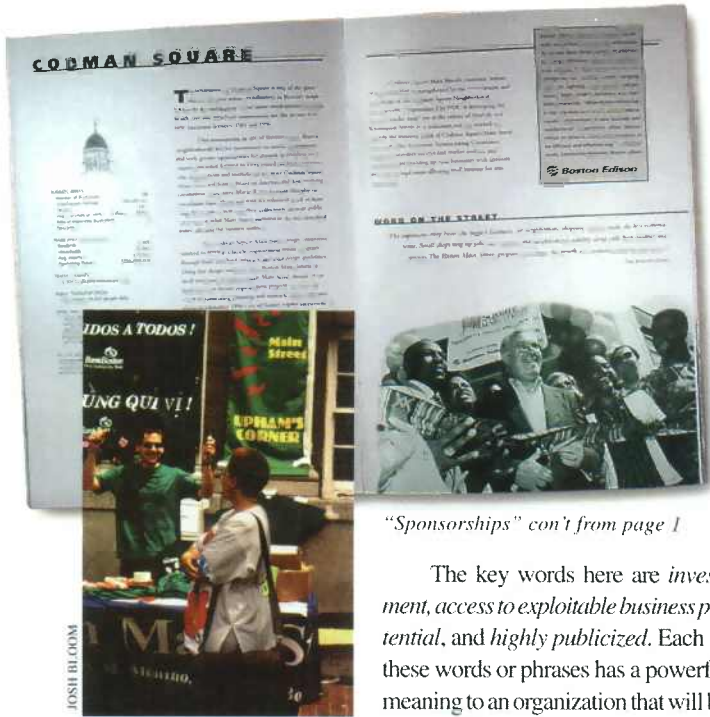
**Sponsorships are not "money for nothing." You are offering publicity and access to a specific audience so your partnership with a sponsor should reflect parallel goals.**

Sponsorship is no longer a linear relationship as it was in the 1960s and '70s, when a corporation gladly gave money in exchange for tickets to a performance or banner exposure. And no longer are charitable "donations" made in large sums. Today's sponsor is highly sophisticated and recognizes that sponsorship of sports, community events, arts, and entertainment is just another media component of his/her marketing mix. As a result, sponsorships must have a variety of compo-

nents, including media, cross-marketing opportunities, partnership recommendations, and event extensions to get the greatest return on investment.

First, a definition of sponsorship—and this is thanks to John Barr, formerly the sponsorship guru for Eastman Kodak in Rochester, N.Y.: "An investment in cash and/or in kind, in return for access to exploitable business potential associated with a highly publicized event or entity."

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"Sponsorships" don't from page 1

Established in 1995 as the first citywide Main Street program in the United States, Boston Main Streets has pioneered a unique sponsorship concept to provide participating neighborhoods with additional funding and resources. Each of the Main Street districts is paired up with a Corporate Buddy. Not only do these "buddies" provide money for their Main Street partners; they are also expected to serve on the local Main Street board and to provide access to company resources to help the commercial district on the road to self-sufficiency. Among the corporations partnering with the 15 Boston Main Streets communities are BankBoston, Star Market, Boston Edison, and Gillette Company.

The key words here are *investment*, *access to exploitable business potential*, and *highly publicized*. Each of these words or phrases has a powerful meaning to an organization that will be involved in sponsorship.

First, let's look at *investment*. This implies a payback, value received or ROI (Return on Investment). When selling sponsorships, it is important to demonstrate that the value of the sponsorship will be greater than the value of time and money invested.

Second is *access to exploitable business potential*. What opportunities does your event offer a business or corporation? How can the business take advantage of the relationship and exploit (a positive word!) it? Possibilities include enhancing the business's existing advertising campaign; offering hospitality to the trade, its employees, or its customers; or one of a variety of other benefits that can lead to increased business.

Third, and last, is *highly publicized*. You must be able to offer great exposure to your sponsors through your media partners and extensive public relations and promotional activities.

Before we discuss the steps to sponsorship success, it is important to know where sponsors are investing their money and how much they are spending. According to IEG, in 1998, nearly seven billion dollars will be spent on sponsorship fees alone. Of that money, approximately 65 percent will go to sports; 10 percent each on entertainment/tours, fairs/festivals, and

causes, with the balance of 5 percent going to the arts. Considering the diversity of sponsorship offerings in many Main Street communities, you can begin to see that the opportunities for selling sponsorships are plentiful.

### Getting Started

How do you get started selling sponsorships? The following is a quick overview of the process, after which we'll take an in-depth look at 12 steps to sponsorship success:

- Take an inventory of your property—what do you have to sell?
- Solicit and secure media sponsors through barter by making them sponsors of the event.
- Incorporate media components into the sponsorships offerings.
- Develop a one-page "sell" fact sheet.
- Determine the various levels of participation that you will make available, based on the inventory. These are often assembled into "packages" that are sent to potential sponsors.
- Solicit sponsorships by
  - Researching your sponsors through annual reports, on-line data searches, etc.;

- Calling and pre-qualifying at the highest level;
- Sending a one-page fax sheet;
- Following up with a call to set up an appointment;
- Meeting with prospective sponsors to determine levels of commitment;
- Working with sponsors to integrate your sponsorship opportunity into their current marketing efforts;
- Getting a commitment and signing a contract;
- Getting an initial down payment;
- Working with sponsors on participation;
- Attending the event and managing the sponsorship;
- Sending a post-event report; and
- Following up to obtain renewal for next year.

Sounds simple doesn't it! After you've done it for a while, it will become simple—and fun. If you follow some simple rules before, during, and after your sponsorship sales, you will enjoy much better results. The following section provides a more in-depth look at how to sell sponsorships.

### Top 20 Sponsors for Any Event

Sometimes it's hard to know where to start when soliciting sponsorships. To help you get started, here's a list of the top 20 potential sponsors you can approach for almost any event:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Local electronics retailer   | 11. Network marketing companies (Amway, Nu Skin, Mary Kay, etc.) |
| 2. Local beer bottler   | 12. Craftspeople   |
| 3. Local soft drink bottler   | 13. Antique dealers  |
| 4. Local banks (The Community Reinvestment Act requires banks to "give back" to the community.) | 14. Fresh produce dealers (mini-farmer's markets)                |
| 5. Local restaurant association   | 15. Local radio  |
| 6. Local retailers' association   | 16. Local cable  |
| 7. Car dealers  | 17. Local newspapers   |
| 8. Automobile dealers   | 18. Food vendors   |
| 9. Long-distance carriers   | 19. T-shirt vendors  |
| 10. Mobile telephone companies  | 20. Flea market vendors  |

H A P P Y S E L L I N G !

## Twelve Steps to Success

Before making an effort to sell sponsorships, take the time to thoroughly examine what you have to offer and to understand the potential sponsors for your activities. Use of that background, combined with a polished presentation and detail-oriented follow up, will make all the difference in the success of your sponsorship campaign. Here are a dozen steps to help ensure success in each of the three phases of sponsorship sales:

### Before You Sell

**1. Know your property and what you can sell.** Before you approach your first prospective sponsors, ask yourself some basic questions. Who is your audience? What benefits can you offer a sponsor? What are your objectives? Do you have your media partnerships in place? Be sure you know all the benefits available as an incentive for the sponsor to participate. Can you offer banners? Posters? Flyers? Bill inserts? On-site booth space for sampling or product sale? Have you included media in your offerings? Are there opportunities for trade, customer, or employee hospitality?

Where is your event being held? What are the restrictions on that location/facility? One overzealous sponsorship novice offered a new sponsor its choice of banner locations at an event. The facility where the event was being held, however, did not permit banners in some of the locations the sponsor chose. The result: an unhappy sponsor, an embarrassed salesperson, and a lost opportunity for the following year.

**2. Target sponsors with similar goals and audiences.** Your prospects will generally be more receptive if you can show that your sponsorship opportunity offers exposure to the people they

are trying to reach or for a cause that they support. It would be inappropriate, for instance, to target a tobacco company if your organization is involved in working with health concerns. That same opportunity may be perfect, however, for an athletic shoe manufacturer, health food store, or another company that promotes personal well-being. Take the time to learn about your sponsor's business and you will be more likely to get an appointment to demonstrate how the company's investment will have a positive business payback.

**3. Offer more than the value of the sponsorship.** After you evaluate what you have to sell, examine all the opportunities of exposure for the sponsor and assign a realistic value to each.

For instance, if you are advertising a facility or an event, offer your sponsor a logo or a mention in your ad. Then, determine what it would have cost the sponsor to get its message to the people reached by those ads. From those values, put together a sponsorship offering that reflects 150 to 200 percent of the value of the sponsorship.

Remember that sponsorships are not "money for nothing." All successful sponsorships are win-win situations. Your partnership with a sponsor should reflect parallel goals and audiences as well as a strong potential for reaching both.

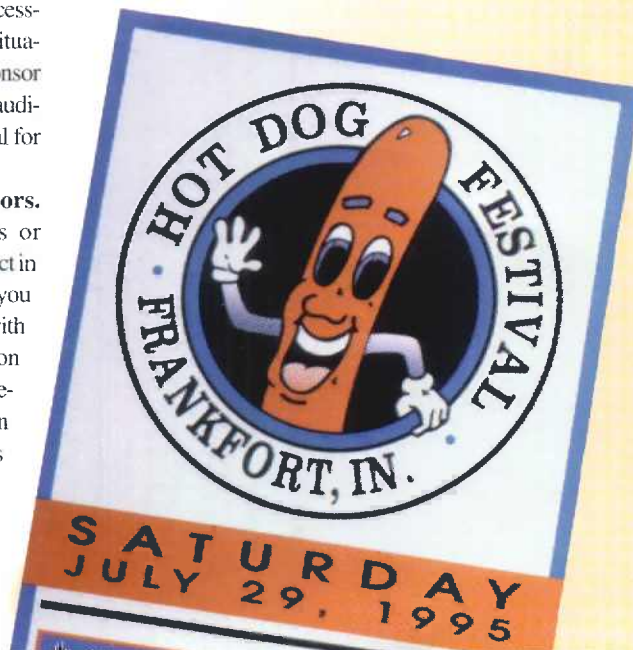
**4. Pre-qualify your sponsors.** Don't rely on outdated lists or "hunches" to determine the contact in each target company. Make sure you don't waste your time speaking with someone who is not the decision maker. Not all companies have specific sponsorship departments; in many businesses, sponsorships

## The Frankfort Fighting Hot Dogs

The opportunities for selling sponsorships are only as limited as your imagination. Take Frankfort, Ind., for example, a town with a great sense of pride and an even greater sense of humor. The local high

school, with tongue firmly planted in cheek, dubbed its sports teams the Frankfort Fighting Hot Dogs. Taking advantage of the community spirit gener-

ated by the Fighting Hot Dogs, Main Street organizers put together a downtown festival that played on the "hot dog" theme. The one-day festival included an obstacle course for dogs, a Wiener Classic basketball tournament, a four-mile Bun Run, a Dog Days of Summer merchants' sale, a Puppy Park full of kids' activities, entertainment from the bands Dog Talk and Frank and the Furters.... and loads of national sponsors! Frankfort's ingenuity and willingness to poke fun at itself brought Pepsi, Frito-Lay, and the Oscar Meyer Wienermobile and its Talent Search Contest to town as sponsors for the event. The result: statewide media coverage, 15,000 visitors, and the start of an annual festival that celebrates a community's pride and resourcefulness.



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# The Role of the Main Street Executive Director

The executive director of a Main Street program is the central coordinator of the organization's activities. The director oversees the program's daily operations, provides the hands-on involvement critical to success, and serves as liaison for all the committees, ensuring that activities in all four points are synchronized. Like a shopping mall manager, the director initiates and coordinates a wide range of projects, from supervising promotional activities to assembling market information. Most important, though, is the director's role as a full-time advocate for the downtown and as an authority and single source for information, resources, and activities related to the revitalization initiative.

As is true of the board's responsibilities, the director's duties evolve as the program's goals and opportunities change, but two characteristics remain constant: the director is a full-time coordinator whose only focus is the downtown or commercial district.

## The Director's Broad Tasks

The tasks of a Main Street director are many, but limitations should be set on what the components of the position are. In broad terms, the following are the tasks of the Main Street director:

- **Develop downtown strategies based on the Main Street Approach with the board of directors.** Identify and use the community's human and economic resources, partners and interest groups that are directly or indirectly involved with the commercial district. *Assist* the board of directors and committees in developing a work plan based on program goals and objectives and the Main Street Four Point Approach, then *assist* the board and committees in implementing that plan.
- **Coordinate activities of the Main Street committees.** Ensure that communication between committees is constant, and *assist* committees with implementation of work plan activities.

- **Manage the administration of the Main Street organization.** This responsibility includes purchasing, record keeping, budgeting, and personnel supervision. Preparing reports to state and national programs, and assisting in reports to funding agencies.

- **Develop and conduct ongoing public awareness and education programs** designed to create appreciation and awareness of the downtown district and its architecture, and to foster awareness and understanding of the Main Street program's goals and objectives.

- **Assess and develop capacity of downtown businesses, institutions and groups to carry out joint improvement activities,** such as uniform store hours, good business practices, promotional events, advertising campaigns, parking management, and business recruitment. Provide advice and information about successful downtown management. Encourage development of a cooperative climate between downtown interests and local public officials.

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MAIN STREET 101

- **Help build strong, productive working relationships with and between partners**, such as local and state public agencies, chambers of commerce, merchants associations, schools, local nonprofits, civic groups, the media and others.

- **Develop and maintain systems to track the progress of the Main Street program.** To prove the economic and intangible success of the initiative, meticulous records must be kept on rental rates, dollars invested by building owners and the city, and the number of jobs and businesses created. Photographic documentation of all physical changes downtown is essential as well.

### The Director and Volunteers

Full-time program management is essential to a successful revitalization program. Keep in mind, however, that the director cannot — and should not — take the place of volunteers in the organization. Main Street programs rely on the mobilization of an army of volunteers from all parts of the community. Thus, the director's major role is to expand and develop volunteer capacity and ensure that committee activity is moving smoothly. The director should serve as a facilitator, coordinating people and resources, to help volunteers work efficiently and productively.

*By Amanda B. West, with material from The Board Members Handbook*

JAMES L. BALLARD

## The Director's Skills

Skills — as opposed to *qualifications*, such as experience and education — are the intangible assets of a director. They can be acquired from past experiences, or may simply be the individual's natural talents. Past educational and job experiences are important to the performance of a director, but the following skills are tools the director will use everyday:

- **Self-Initiative** — being able to work in independent situations. Directing a Main Street organization can be a self-starter's dream, but in some cases, the director may be left hanging to make decisions or initiate activity if the board is lax or focusing on other activities. The director must be capable of and comfortable working independently.

- **Diplomacy** — being able to work well with a wide variety of people and situations. Directors will always have to deal with cranky business owners, territorial chambers, pompous mayors, pessimistic bankers, absentee landlords, and clueless volunteers, even in the best, most successful Main Street programs. These are the players in the field of downtown revitalization, so diplomacy and careful long-term relationship building will always be necessary.

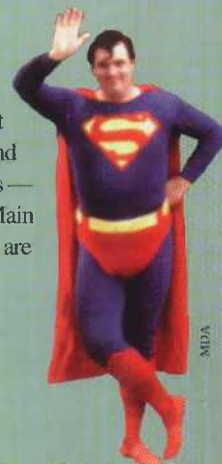
- **Communication** — being skilled in verbal and written communication. As a central figurehead for the Main Street program, directors will be approached by everyone for information and answers. Developing relationships with individuals is the key to success. Presentations to groups are essential to disseminate information and clear up misconceptions about program goals. Writing proposals, newsletter articles, press releases, and annual reports are equally vital. Fortunately, communication skills can be learned, developed, and improved upon through formal and informal training and practice.

- **Flexibility** — being able to adapt to different situations. This is one of the most important skills a director needs: he or she may be blowing up balloons for an event in the morning and meeting with a banker about an incentive program in the afternoon. Schedules and project goals have a tendency to shift, so going with the flow will cause a lot less stress and a lot more productivity if the director can respond to changing situations. Dealing with a huge variety of tasks and situations is a hallmark of being a Main Street director, so inflexible persons who dislike change need not apply.

- **Organization** — being able to coordinate many projects and people. Going hand-in-hand with flexibility, organization is paramount. That doesn't mean your desk has to be clean, but juggling multiple projects, deadlines, people, and activities means you've got to keep on top of things, and keep tasks moving along in order to accomplish goals. Remember, the director's job is not to do all the activities in a work plan, but make sure they get done.

- **Confidence** — being able to "stick to your guns." The director must be capable of moving forward in thought, word, and deed without hesitating or seeking to be liked by everyone. Main Street directors will face many situations in which they may be in the minority: while presenting new ideas, for example, approaching naysayers, or working on an unpopular project. Although the director's activities should always have the backing of the board, uncomfortable situations will arise and the director must be able to deal with them.

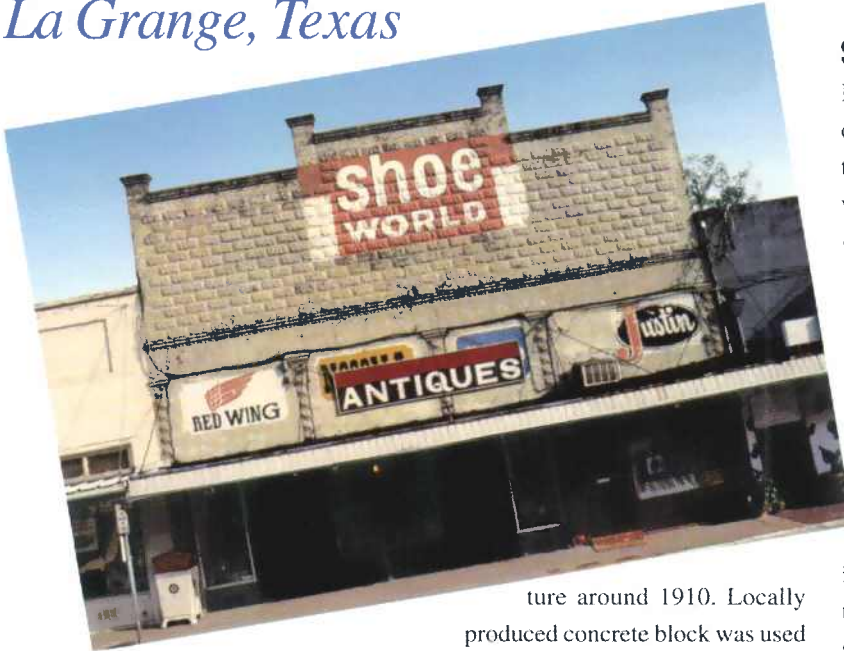
- **Being Superman or Wonder Woman** — Not really, of course, but Main Street directors sometimes feel they should be wearing a big "S" on their chests. Many boards will openly expect the director to wear it as part of the job, and, at times, he or she may have to. The pressure to be everything to everyone and complete every task oneself will be great and will come from many directions — from the board, from business owners, and from the public. The successful Main Street director will resist the temptation, and delegate — that's what volunteers are there for. Remember, one gains power by actually giving it away.



MIDA

# La Grange, Texas

## La Grange, Texas



### Building Profile

The Gage Building is located at 227 W. Travis in downtown La Grange, Tex. A town of 3,900 people, La Grange has been a Main Street town since 1996. Owned by Cliff and Susan Gage, the Gage Building now houses a branch of the Edward Jones financial services firm and The Book Nook.

### Building History

Built in 1885, the Gage Building was originally home to the Lange Saddlery Company. The wooden building was torn down and replaced by a concrete block struc-

ture around 1910. Locally produced concrete block was used in Texas around the turn of the century to simulate stone. The new building housed a furniture and hardware store. In the 1940s, the facade was “modernized” by changing the display windows to create an inset entrance and a small office to one side of the building front. In recent years, the retail half of the building housed a number of businesses, including a shoe store and an antiques shop.

### Date of Rehabilitation

September 1996 to January 1997

### Cost of Rehabilitation

\$100,000

### Scope of Rehabilitation

In 1996, Susan and Cliff Gage purchased the building with the intention of rehabbing it to house an Edward Jones office. The Gages decided to eliminate the remodeled display windows and office and restore the front of the building to its original design. Acting on the advice of the Texas Main Street architect, the new owners reconstructed the original concrete block columns, rebuilt the transom windows to let light inside, and restored the storefront to the original wood and glass design. After looking at several color schemes proposed by the state architect, the Gages decided to retain the original flat canopy instead of replacing it with an awning that would hide the transom windows.

On the interior, Texas Main Street recommended that the owners divide the building in half to create room for another business since they did not need all the space for the Edward Jones office. The Gages restored the pressed-metal ceiling, salvaged the wooden floor, and restored the plaster walls. Main Street La Grange was able to recruit a new business for the additional space. Today, the Gage Building houses The Book Nook, a coffee bar and book store, as well as the Edward Jones office.

