



THE ANNUAL
SPONSORSHIP REFERENCE

BY ELEVENT

THE 2017-2018 SPONSORSHIP GUIDEBOOK

RELEVANT
SPONSORSHIP
CONFERENCE

SPONSORSHIP
TRENDS

TOP
SPONSORSHIPS



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MARKETING CONFERENCE.*

Sponsorship marketing is changing. Get up to speed during two days of learning with the industry's chief agitators. Find inspiration in an environment that inspires innovation. Experience talks, tête-à-têtes and workshops designed to give you control of disruptive ideas and new digital tools. Help us build something better.

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INTRODUCTION

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ARE WE EVEN DOING SPONSORSHIPS ANYMORE?

A lot of us in the industry have valuable experience and expertise, and it is more obvious than ever that, labels aside, influencer marketing, product placement, branded content, cause marketing/cause sponsorships, co-branding and licensing all fall within the same realm.

The lines between these tools have become more and more blurred.

And yet, it's still human nature to categorize, compartmentalize and create silos.

We become hyper-specialized in our little boxes: product placement, content, e-sports, brand ambassadors, community involvement, philanthropy, cause marketing, event marketing, and now especially: influencers.

The sports folks don't talk to the music folks. There's a specific agency dedicated to sponsorships in motorsports. There's a new agency a day built around influencer marketing or focused on Millennials.

But what binds all these components together is simple: two or more brands, and all the behind-the-scenes people who support them, coming together. These partnerships require the same skills and knowledge to achieve success and our expertise gets under-utilized when we see hyper-segmentation.

My second point is... have you seen a lot of sponsorship awards out in the world lately?

We are better than this.

We need to work harder to prove that sponsorship is an effective medium and not a gimmick. The industry is praising unique activation instead of all the strategy and expertise required to craft an effective sponsorship program, which can achieve so much more than just surface looks.

OUR VISION FOR THE SPONSORSHIP INDUSTRY

Our approach to a wide range of partnerships with clients is to design long-term platforms that are intricately linked to corporate and communication objectives. We create built-in measurements to equip sponsorship professionals to sell internally (and manage up). Activations are not piecemeal individual tactics, but instead support the overall sponsorship message and positioning, and they take advantage of multiple communication channels to increase the reach and effectiveness of the partnership. It's what we call 3D activation.

All types of partnerships will be served by this approach, and more effective as a result. In the long run, our vision is for sponsorship to step away from the fringe. To have fewer doubters and more true believers.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Georges-Étienne Bernier | David Bourget | François Carrillat
Jean Couvrette | Flavie Desgagné-Éthier | Jay Hébert | Mitchell Gudgeon | Bonnie Hillman
Daniel Juillet | Lucie Lamoureux | Samantha Phelan | Erik de Pokomandy
Jonathan Prunier | Audrey Przybysz | Hubert Richard
François Royer-Mireault | Marija Zivkovic

THE SPONSORSHIP GUIDEBOOK

You'll find examples of 3D activations in our Top Sponsorships section, which highlights beautifully crafted programs, big and small. We cover digital activation, which is still a huge challenge for many. We take a look at bridging the gap between the academic world and the industry with our Science of Sponsorship series, all of which (and more) you can enjoy on our blog. And speaking of the blog, we also selected three of our most popular articles for you to read here. Plus, our own event, the Relevent Sponsorship Conference, aims to tackle many of the sponsorship challenges we face and discuss in these pages. We invite you to Montréal to attend this unique event, and you can check out the article on the Conference for a little taste of the Montréal-rich experience we have in store for you. Last but not least, delve into industry trends from our editorial desk for a look at current phenomena that will affect or impact our industry.

The Relevent magazine and eponymous sponsorship conference in Montréal are now global in their reach, and we have all of you to thank for that. Keep sending us your thoughts and comments.

Happy reading!

FRANCIS DUMAIS
Editor of Relevent and Co-founder of Elevent





RELEVANT SPONSORSHIP CONFERENCE

NOT YOUR AVERAGE CONFERENCE, NOT YOUR AVERAGE CITY



In any given year, Montréal draws visitors from all over the world to partake in its inimitable mix of energy and laid-back bonhomie. From a deep-rooted love affair with food and drink that elevates the most basic fare to epicurean delight, to an ever-present beat of self-expression that weaves through the local arts, music, theatre and design scenes, the city thrums with a steady rhythm of pleasure and creativity. A City of Saints that pays equal reverence to the cult of amusement, Montréal houses a thousand diversions under one cultural roof, and the welcome mat is always out.

That's any given year, and this is no ordinary year. In 2017, the city is celebrating its 375th birthday, and the rest of the world is invited to the party. In a town that pays high tribute to the art of enjoyment and the science of celebration, it's a party you simply won't want to miss.

And the milestones don't stop at the 375th anniversary. This year, Montréalers are also celebrating Canada's 150 years as a nation; a look back at 50 years since hosting the 1967 World's Fair, Expo67; the 50th anniversary of the richly-celebrated Canadian Grand Prix, and much more.

Given this year's much-anticipated program and electric atmosphere, the 2017 edition of the Relevant Sponsorship Marketing Conference promises to be unforgettable. The Relevant Conference is as unique as the city that hosts it, with a truly original mix of fun, function and future-facing exploration. Unlike the standard conference template, this two-day event is a lively collection of talks, workshops and in-depth interviews

that value active exchanges over passive information-gathering. Sponsorship experts, industry leaders and creative visionaries from all walks come together to share, learn and inspire one another. There's a magic kind of alchemy that occurs when so many engaged, motivated individuals gather in one place—this year, you can experience that magic both at the conference and in the city itself.

THE VENUE

There are few venues more perfectly suited to hosting the Relevant Conference than the Auberge Saint-Gabriel in Old Montréal, so this year's attendees can once again look forward to the exceptional service and treatment that is their expertise. Originally built in 1688 by a French soldier, the Auberge (meaning “inn” or “lodge” in French) is recognized as North America's original inn, and was the first of its kind to receive a liquor license in 1754. Over the following centuries, the building reflected various signs of the times in Quebec culture, housing the press that printed famed eighteenth-century Quebec newspaper *Le Patriote* at one point, and hosting a fur trading post where the cellar nightclub now exists at another.

At the turn of the century, the Auberge was restored to its original role, and today is thriving as an elegant and inviting restaurant, a true Montréal go-to for locally sourced and exquisitely executed Quebec-inspired cuisine. Under the culinary guidance of Swedish-born executive chef Ola Claesson, the menu is a mouth-watering tribute to both tradition and innovation,



with classic local flavours mixing easily with judicious Thai touches. In a word, the food is a treat, whether you're a local returning to savour a favourite dish or a visitor happy to taste some of Montréal's finest.

The Auberge owes much of its present-day success to the artful stewardship of co-owners Marc Bolay, Québécois performer Garou, and Cirque du Soleil cofounder Guy Laliberté. When looking at the year of events and celebrations ahead, Bolay mentioned that the trio is “excited to see Montréal coming to life in such great style,” hoping everyone who passes through will “enjoy everything this great city has to offer.”

Stylish, warm, welcoming: that the venue shares so much in common with the city itself makes it once again the perfect arena for this year's Relevant Conference.

THE SCENE

From the International Jazz Festival to Just for Laughs and Igloofest, Montréal essentially offers a year-long festival of festivals. Locals mix with visitors to enjoy an all-season whirlwind of events, with literally something for everyone, or everything for anyone, depending on how ambitious you are.

A growing favourite is MURAL, a festival that transforms Saint-Laurent Boulevard into an open-air showcase of urban art in all forms. Street artists, muralists, musicians and performers from around the world come together to turn the streets of

Montréal into a living canvas, complete with block parties, food, drink and the kind of revelry that Montréal does so well. For the 2017 edition, “the festival is featuring about 20 artists and more than 80 creative works,” says Davi Tohinou, director of communication and digital PR for MURAL.

The festival literally paints the town, with artwork appearing from the Quartier des Spectacles, Montréal's entertainment district, to the Mile-End neighbourhood and beyond. The festival energy feeds off the creation and appreciation that flows between artists and attendees. People come from far and wide to admire art in action, stopping by to shop at the MURAL Art Fair (FAM) at nearby Bonsecours Market on Saint-Paul Street.

Conference visitors have plenty to look forward to in November, too—Tohinou suggests checking out the awe-inspiring photorealist style of Swiss muralist Onur, whose mural will be featured on René-Lévesque Street, not far from the Auberge Saint-Gabriel. Better yet, take a guided tour of all the artworks: “This year, we're expanding. Guided tours were available in previous years, but only during the festival itself. For 2017 we've created partnerships with tour guides for the whole year,” explains Tohinou. It's a great way to see the city and experience Montréal's broad appetite for art.



THE SOUND

No visit to Montréal would be complete without a sample of the city's renowned indie music scene, and the Relevant Conference is more than happy to oblige. Every year the entertainment line-up includes live music, such as the riveting performances by Montréal's own electro-pop duo Milk and Bone in 2015 and alt-pop duo Heart Streets that was enjoyed last year. For this edition, the conference will once again draw from the well of homegrown talent, putting together a program that includes performances by Elliot Maginot and more.

With so many attractions, both at the 2017 Relevant Sponsorship Conference and in the city at large, it's the perfect year to make Montréal a must-see destination. Not to be missed, never to be forgotten: we're ready to celebrate the past, rejoice in the present and influence the future. And you're invited.

For more information and to book your place today, come see us at relevantconference.com

Programmation
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Québec

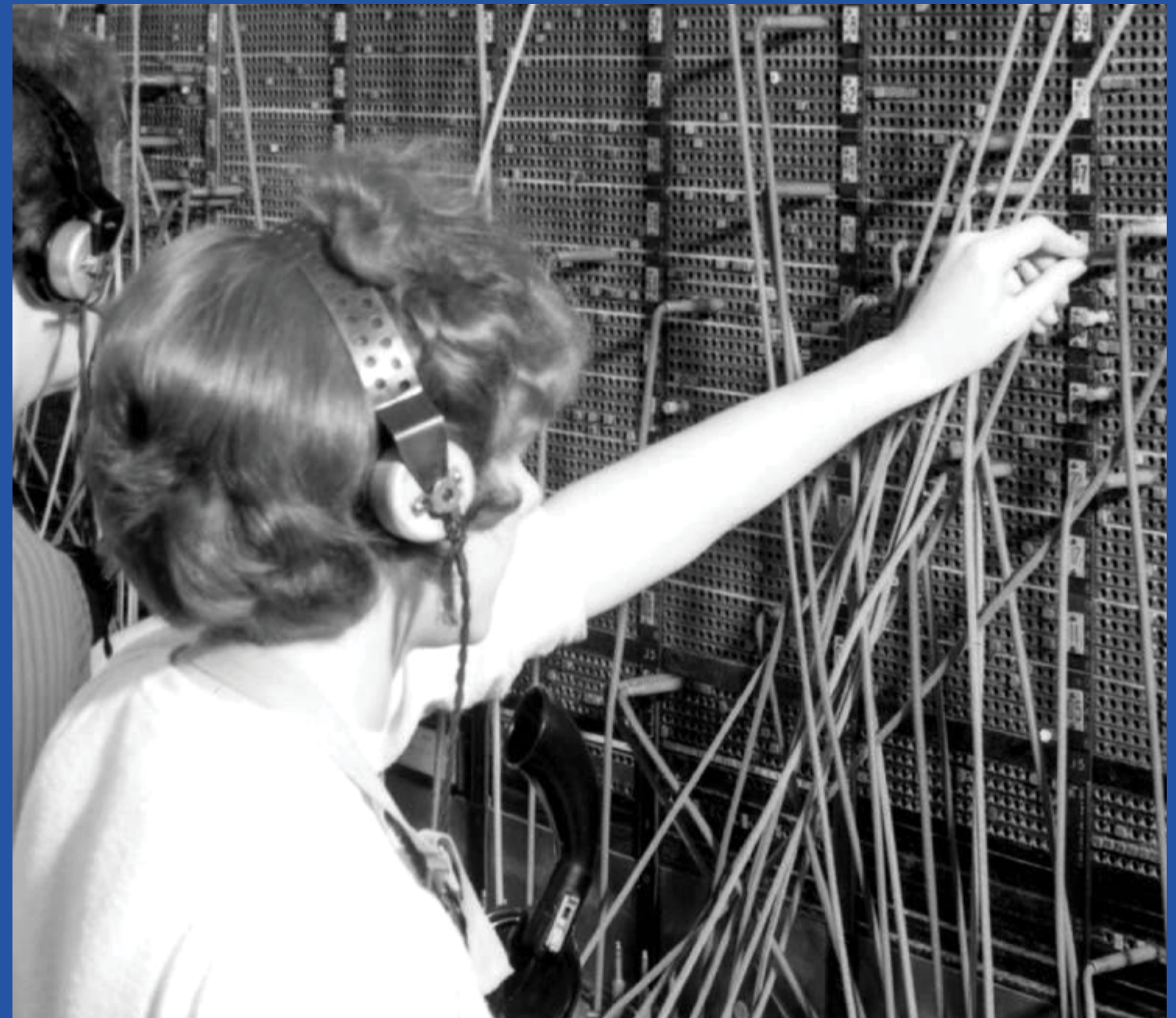
Montréal

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créatifs

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Ecosystems

8 - 18
novembre
2017





SPONSORSHIP TRENDS

FASHIONS COME AND GO, BUT THERE ARE ALWAYS SOME TRENDS THAT RUN DEEP AND TEND TO STICK. HERE ARE NINE OF THEM (YES, NINE AND NOT TEN!) FROM OUR EDITORIAL DESK THAT ARE INFLUENCING OUR INDUSTRY, FROM MEASUREMENT ISSUES TO TECH CHANGES TO BROADER ADVERTISING TRENDS THAT AFFECT HOW WE PLAN AND EXECUTE SPONSORSHIPS.

01 THE MEASUREMENT CHALLENGE

Sixty-eight percent of marketing professionals agree that there is added pressure on marketers to demonstrate return on investment (Adobe, 2016). The digital revolution and its influence on measurement has definitely played a role in this trend. Everything is now measurable in real time, and budgets are slowly migrating from more traditional forms of communication towards digital. In addition, the new marketing professionals entering the market are digital natives who have come of age in a digital-first environment, further enhancing this paradigm shift.

Regardless of the added pressure to show return, sponsorship measurement suffers from a lack of focus. Everyone may be talking about it, but very few are actually doing it. Some 72% of sponsors spend less than 1% of their sponsorship budgets on research (IEG 2010), and only 3.7% of sponsorship budgets (based on a 10-year average) is spent on evaluation (CSLS 2016).

The measurement problem in sponsorship is complex, as no specific metrics have been established. As Kevin Roberts, Global CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi, famously said: “Sponsorship is talking about the wrong stuff and some of the stories are juvenile. It’s trying to compete with traditional media with the old-fashioned metrics, and it’s going to lose.”

Even if it is essential, measurement can’t be all about media equivalencies. A similar problem of advertising effectiveness was raised in the sixties. At that time, the American Marketing Association came together and established relevant metrics to measure advertising spends.

The International Event Group (IEG) was the first agency to come up with a specific measurement method back in 1992, with media equivalencies and the addition of an intangible multiplier. But according to the latest research by CSLS (2016),

“a common theme among respondents was a doubt that current evaluation tactics were effective or reliable—it keeps people up at night.”

We are working to address this issue by building new metrics for better decision-making tools to empower sponsorship professionals beyond media value. These new intangible measurements are based on science: we took a good look at the last 20 years of academic research on sponsorships and got to work. But there are other issues that need to be addressed with regards to measurement, as certain outdated industry practices continue to hurt us all.

First, there is the widespread over-evaluation of assets and “audience fraud”. While some properties may benefit from boosting their numbers in the short run, it will come back to haunt them down the road. We have seen properties get caught red-handed when RFID technology replaced traditional ticketing and brands got their hands on the real numbers. Let’s just say that it’s not pretty, folks.

Overinflated media plans are also a common practice. Please. A logo the size of an apple at the bottom of a mega display isn’t worth a thing for a sponsor.

The lack of clear objectives, the use of vanity metrics to measure success, insufficient resources devoted to measurement, and deficiencies in sponsorship expertise (see “The expertise problem”) are other elements affecting the industry.

As a result, sponsorship is not taken as seriously as it should be and is too often perceived as a nice-to-have or a simple tactical tool. That puts budgets at risk, as sponsorships become peripheral to the marcom strategy, and don’t deliver according to their full potential.

REGARDLESS OF THE ADDED PRESSURE TO SHOW RETURN, SPONSORSHIP MEASUREMENT SUFFERS FROM A LACK OF FOCUS. EVERYONE MAY BE TALKING ABOUT IT, BUT VERY FEW ARE ACTUALLY DOING IT.



Are we looking at this problem the wrong way? Our inability to solve the measurement issue as an industry may be, in part, due to top management’s understanding of marketing in general. Besides sales, how are marketing pros rated for their performance? When asked, only 40% of marketers agreed that their company’s marketing was effective and 44% felt that it had an influence on the overall business strategy. The funniest (or saddest) stat from that research is that 19% agree with the following statement: “My marketing colleagues don’t really know what they’re doing” (Adobe, 2016). A sobering thought.

SOURCES

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CSLS (2016). *10th Annual Canadian Sponsorship Landscape Study*

02 BRAND ACTIVISM



Given the current political climate, cause sponsorships are definitely a trending topic this year. Partnerships with causes and non-profit organizations don't represent a major part of the sponsorship sector, but they are growing. North American spending on cause sponsorship is expected to reach \$2.06 billion this year, up from \$2 billion in 2016 (IEG), accounting for almost 9% of all sponsorship spending. There is also momentum in the category as 56% of Canadian companies replaced their philanthropic budgets by sponsorships (Imagine Canada).

Regardless of the relatively low numbers, cause sponsorship is of great interest, as corporate social responsibility has become an indispensable tool for brands looking to set themselves apart from the competition. Furthermore, budgets traditionally allocated to pure philanthropy and donations are being repurposed to align with marketing communications, achieving greater results for brands.

Why this shift? Today's consumers expect companies to do their part in the issues that are important to them, and to contribute to the collective wellbeing. Partnering with a cause has become an effective way for companies to get involved socially and earn the approval of consumers.

With the current socio-political context, there has been a tendency for brands to go beyond corporate social responsibility and become major players in the activism sphere—some with more success than others. Whereas some brands choose not to engage politically for fear of offending or alienating their consumers, others have made the calculation that taking a stand is more powerful in the long run.

Though some brands have tried to create their own movement in the past, most were met with limited success. One example is the Pepsi Refresh Project launched in 2010. Instead of investing money in a Super Bowl ad, Pepsi took 20 million dollars of its marketing budget to award grants to individuals and non-profits for ideas with a positive impact on their community. Pepsi sales sunk, and two years later the initiative was dropped to reinvest in a Super bowl ad that featured superstar Elton John. More recently, Pepsi made a huge misstep while trying to play on the social movement and its codes. Its now infamous commercial starring Kendall Jenner was quickly pulled, but not before sparking outrage and being ridiculed online.

SO HOW CAN A BRAND GET IT RIGHT?

One brand that does particularly well is Nike. It uses its platform as one of the biggest sports brands in the world to send a message of equality.

The platform “encourages people to take the fairness and respect they see in sport and translate them off the field.” And Nike makes great use of its many brand ambassadors to support this. Nike has also announced plans to donate \$5 million in 2017 to “numerous organizations that advance equality in communities across the U.S.”

In other cases, when not backed by concrete actions and authentic partnerships, taking a stand as a brand can backfire. Audi serves as a good example of this. The car manufacturer launched a new ad on the theme of gender equality during the 2016 Super Bowl. But when the media took a look at Audi's own track record in promoting women to leadership roles, it found that Audi had no women on its six-person executive team. Its board is made up of only 16% women, which is below the already low average of the corporate boards of Fortune 500 firms.

What can we learn from these examples? From a communications standpoint, cause advertising can be a little tricky. First, companies must have a legitimate background, like involvement in grassroots initiatives, donations or their own corporate track record, if they want to be seen as credible. Then they have to be skilful in how they communicate their efforts. It goes without saying that humble bragging is a definite no-no.

RELEVANCE

Relevance is an important concept in sponsorship performance, and it applies to cause partnerships even more. In fact, it has been widely proven that relevance between the sponsoring company and a property can lead to better recall, higher consumer appreciation of the brand and an increase in purchase intention. The harshest judges also happen to be the consumers most sought after by companies: young people, educated people and people with higher incomes. If we look at millennial attitudes towards the philanthropic initiatives of brands, 91% respond with increased trust, 89% would be more loyal and 89% would be more likely to buy the brands' products or services (2013 Cone Communications Social Impact Study). In Canada specifically, 68% of millennials think brands should get involved.

EQUALITY HAS NO BOUNDARIES.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Finally, in looking at the examples above, we noted their degree of success or failure. Measuring positive social outcomes is a real challenge with cause sponsorship and cause marketing. Consumers are weary of bland initiatives labeled as pink or greenwashing. There is a real need to show how the dollars are actually invested.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Cause sponsorship is an interesting and accessible tool that enables companies to get involved in corporate social responsibility without having to create a platform on their own. They can partner with experts of specific issues and provide support for a long-term platform as opposed to a one-off public relations stunt.

There is no shortage of issues that companies can help solve. In fact, we need more companies that have a purpose at their very core (see next trend). But any company that has a solid vision and buy-in from upper management can get on board and make a difference.

SOURCES

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Strategy Online (2015). “A Third of Canadian Millennials Find Brands Annoying”

03 PURPOSE SPONSORSHIP

As part of the last edition of the Relevent Sponsorship Conference, Max Lenderman—author of Brand New World and founder of the purpose-led agency, School—presented “How the World is Moving from Cause to Purpose Sponsorship.” His talk really summed up the differences between cause and purpose.

Eighty-nine per cent of American consumers would switch brands if a different brand of a similar price and quality supported a good cause (2013 Cone Communications Social Impact Study). This reveals an undeniable connection between people’s value systems and a brand’s value system. On top of this, the world is currently moving from cause to purpose sponsorship. Having a purpose behind a brand is nothing short of a transformative shift, on par with what digital did for brands back in the mid 90s. Why? Because people look to brands to show them what to care about in daily life—and a purpose is the most effective way to demonstrate that.

Afdhel Aziz, author of Good Is the New Cool: Market Like You Give a Damn, as part of the IEG conference, also touched on this issue. A seasoned marketer, Aziz went through a professional crisis about the meaningfulness of a job whose ultimate goal was to drive sales through advertising. This led to some deep introspection, the writing of a book and the development of a principle called the new fifth ‘P’ in Marketing. The letter represents Purpose: why do we exist as a company and what problems are we trying to solve in people’s lives? The topic is relevant to sponsorship because brands often need to pair up with a star or a non-profit to get their message across and put change in motion.



CAUSE VS. PURPOSE

Rule of thumb: A cause stands up against something, and a purpose stands for something.

CAUSE EXAMPLES

- To eradicate poverty, to fight against cancer, to end global warming
- Is often borrowed equity : Put a pink ribbon on your packaging
- Is often reactionary : Something has happened and now we have to do something about it
- Has limited creative potential : There’s not a lot you can do with a pink ribbon

PURPOSE EXAMPLES

- To be more sustainable, to get people out in nature more, to get rid of all the toxins in our water
- Is often owned equity : We don’t need to borrow a cause in order to talk about human rights or women’s rights (better to own than borrow)
- Is often proactive
- Has huge creative potential



89% OF AMERICAN CONSUMERS WOULD SWITCH BRANDS IF A DIFFERENT BRAND OF A SIMILAR PRICE AND QUALITY SUPPORTED A GOOD

ACTING WITH PURPOSE

A Havas study outlined that people wouldn’t care if 74% of brands disappeared (Havas, 2017). This is because they’re A) failing to deliver a memorable experience to their consumers and B) failing when it comes to acting with purpose. On the flip side, if brands start acting with purpose and telling stories that resonate, opportunities abound.

Example of companies doing this: Toms Shoes, Whole Foods, Tesla, Airbnb, Virgin Air and Dove.

What do they have in common? They see an unmet consumer need and they try to make the experience better by adopting a specific purpose that consumers can get behind.

GOOD EXAMPLES IN A SPONSORSHIP CONTEXT

UBER AND GOODWILL
The brand mission of the ultimate disrupter brand, Uber, is “Finding the way: creating possibilities for riders, drivers and cities.” When the brand partnered with Goodwill for a simple initiative, it was perfectly in line with its core mission: donors could request a pickup through the Uber app for their donations to be delivered directly to their local Goodwill, at no cost.

SPORT CLUB DO RECIFE – IMMORTAL FANS
Another effective example of purpose sponsorship: the partnership between a Brazilian soccer team and the government promoting a public health initiative. Fans live and breathe for their soccer team, so they built a campaign based on this insight, with the objective of increasing the number of organ donors in the country. By donating their organs to another fan after their death, fans lived on to support their team. The results were overwhelming: 51,000 cards were signed and the waiting list for a heart transplant went down to zero.

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04 THE PROMO TRAP

Many brands still limit their sponsorship programs to promotional or tactical activations. They focus solely on the experiential side of things instead of having a program that uses many channels and dedicated messages to communicate the associations between the brands.

Don't get us wrong. Experiential tactics serve a purpose and can be a lot of fun. But investing in an effective overall sponsorship program is another beast entirely. It requires more thinking, more planning and more money. It must be devised to support the overall brand or corporate strategy and have what we call "3D" activation programs that take full advantage of the sponsorship medium by activating every communication channel possible: public relations, advertising, digital, content, point of sales, etc. To tell the difference between a tactic and a strategy: A tactic is something you use once ("I am calling a friend to get me a meeting with customer X") while a strategy is something you use repeatedly ("Always get a warm referral build your customer base").

A sponsorship program that is tactical in nature has no long-term vision, goal or strategic alignment. Success is measured solely by the reach and number of interactions. Sound familiar? If so, a word of advice: put your money elsewhere.

Sponsorship programs that take full advantage of all the possibilities that sponsorship can offer as a communication tool have these characteristics: they have set objectives that are not served as well (or not at all) by other communication channels, there is a long-term focus, and there are sufficient human resources and money to support the partnership. There has to be either a natural or "made up" fit between the two brands and, finally, the program has to be aligned with corporate, brand or marketing objectives.

One particularly well crafted program using a 3D approach is the partnership with Jeff Bridges and Square Space (2016-17 Sponsorship Guidebook). To demonstrate the capabilities of the Square Space platform, a content management system that allows users to create a nice looking transactional website in just a few steps, Jeff created a real sleeping tape. The whole process was documented and lived on various platforms. Consumers could buy the tape or listen to it online. All proceeds went to No Kids Hungry, a US non-profit with which Bridges has had ties for many years. The whole initiative was also pushed by traditional advertising, with a very subtle brand presence. Though not a long-term initiative, it is a good example of a very broad activation program.

You should not use sponsorship when it is not linked to a broader communication strategy and if other communications tools are better to convey your message. Sponsorship is effective in the long run, with sufficient resources involved and a clear set of objectives to attain, objectives that are not easily tackled with other communication tools.



05 TECHNOLOGY CHANGING THE REVENUE LANDSCAPE

Rights holders have built empires selling broadcasting rights, tickets and sponsorships, with some held by private interests driven by a strong vision, like Ecclestone and Formula 1 or the France family and NASCAR. Changes in media are affecting these structures, both in terms of consumption habits and technologies used for display, which challenge the established revenue and sponsorship models.

MEDIA CONSUMPTION HABITS

While live events have been a relative safe haven with regards to media consumption, a strong current is taking hold as people decide to go cable-free and turn to other sources of content. The number of cable TV subscribers in the United States dropped from 44.5 million homes in 2010 to 37.8 million in 2015. This trend is particularly true for younger generations: only 46% of 18- to 36-year-old consumers subscribe to selected pay TV services in the US, versus 63% of those 68 years old and up. Besides, younger generations show much more enthusiasm for new sources of content such as Netflix: In 2015, 65% of 16- to 24-year-old Internet users in the United States used Netflix versus 24% of 55- to 64-year-olds. Furthermore, with the growth of sports-related content now available on various platforms, there is more audience fragmentation. Why is this relevant to sponsorship? Well, TV rights are the foundation of many sports leagues and organizations.

Here's how it works: The governing body or league sells the broadcast rights, and the money gets redistributed to teams. The broadcast also boosts the value of sponsorships being sold either at the league or the team level, because of the size of the audiences and the high level of impressions. Live events themselves may generate revenue by the sales of tickets, hospitality and concession revenues, but the broadcast is the real deal. For example, the Union of European Football Associations gets 429 million euros from tickets and hospitality



and 3.185 billion euros for broadcasting rights. As for North America, ticket sales represented 29% of the MLB's total revenue (2016), a little over 25% of the NBA's (2015/16) and only 16.5% of the NFL's (2015).

So TV broadcast matters. A lot. Plus, the fact that audiences are not simply turning on their TV sets to watch a live broadcast means that it's harder for sponsors to reach the same audiences with a single channel. It requires more adapted rights, and, quite possibly, higher production and activation costs.

While fans will not all cut the cord in the near future, some up-and-coming properties are approaching content distribution with different models. Here are some of the trends that are emerging:

PAY AS YOU GO

Grand Prix Motorcycle Racing (Moto GP), the premier class of motorcycle road racing, held since 1949, provides races directly to fans through their own website where users can either purchase passes for an entire season or pay to watch individual races.

FREE LIVE STREAM

Social media has jumped headfirst into live content and most platforms have integrated that offer, from Facebook Live to Twitter to Snapchat to YouTube. These channels represent a great opportunity to go directly to the digital audiences and craft original or exclusive content without using a major media partner.

Furthermore, leagues see in such platforms a way to rejuvenate their audiences, reach new global audiences and create a more meaningful connection between the sport and the fans.

Some leagues jumped on the bandwagon early: The IPL, the most attended cricket league in the world, was the first sporting event to be broadcast live on YouTube back in 2010. MLB was the first US sport to live stream on Facebook in the pre-season of 2011 and are now in talks to broadcast full games. The NFL and Snapchat inked a multi-year agreement to be featured in the Discover section of the app, as well as with Twitter, for the entire stream of Thursday Night Football throughout the season. Finally, the MLS will stream 22 live soccer matches on Facebook.

Other leagues are leveraging social networks without specific agreements, like NASCAR, which uses various platforms to bring fans closer to the action. The NBA recently broadcast its

first game on Facebook live, but as a paid service available only to subscribers of the League Pass in India. Their goal is to reach a global audience and increase their international reach. Live broadcast on social networks is also an interesting option for smaller leagues looking to increase their reach, as is the case for the IFL on YouTube and others.

This trend also influenced the development of new media. Hotstar was initially created to support the streaming of the 2015 Cricket World Cup. The new platform took off instantly and developed into a more complete content provider (offering movies, TV shows, live cricket, etc.). It even hosted the live coverage of the 2015 Academy Awards.

E-SPORTS

After decades of being on the fringe, this sport now reaches major audiences. Tournaments are available for free on the Amazon-owned Twitch platform, often referred to as the ESPN of live gaming, with the help of either advertising or premium accounts.

Twitch is the go-to video streaming service for the community as well as for all major tournaments, but it is facing growing competition from YouTube. While e-sports tournaments were available for free on multiple platforms, YouTube secured exclusivity deals with the two major Counter Strike leagues, pulling the rug out from under Twitch's feet, which now has to play catch-up. YouTube's live platform is also quite strong in terms of UX and performance.

THESE CHANGES IN THE MEDIA CONSUMPTION LANDSCAPE HAVE AND WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE A DIRECT IMPACT ON SPONSORSHIP REVENUES AND SPONSORS' REACH

OUT-OF-HOME ADVERTISING IS CHANGING

Other technological advances are having a massive impact on the revenue landscape of sports organizations. One of the oldest advertising formats—out-of-home billboards—is undergoing major transformations: new display technology paired with other advances and use of meta-data are transforming the industry in a dramatic fashion. There has been a rapid democratization of high-quality, low-cost screens, which has made them ubiquitous in stadiums and during events. While the in-stadium digital visibility has increased the assets available for sponsors, the most disruptive innovation is coming in the form of augmented reality and new virtual assets placed on top of static visibility.

While it may seem trivial, this transformation could have a huge impact on revenue. Generally speaking, virtual assets are owned by the leagues and are visible only during the broadcast. But now, in certain contexts, they are being added to or superimposed on existing visibility in the stadium, which is usually owned by teams. If this practice becomes widespread, it could dramatically affect the value of sponsorship assets and prove catastrophic for some. But it is unlikely that a decision will be made without sign-in from the majority of the teams and a revenue redistribution scheme. For now, such visibility has been tested at the latest World Cup of Hockey and virtual signage is broadly used by the FI and the NHL.

These changes in the media consumption landscape have and will continue to have a direct impact on sponsorship revenues and sponsors' reach. Properties will need to start crafting contracts that deliver on impressions, regardless of the platform used, to ensure that their partners are getting sufficient value for their investment.

While these trends will continue to affect our industry, it is relatively safe to say that live sports and live events still attract major audiences and deliver a huge value for partners.

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06 NEW AMBUSH MARKETING

One of the most popular articles on the Eleven sponsorship blog is a piece called, “Top 10 sponsorship ambushes.” This always makes us wonder: how is ambush marketing still a thing? Many of the examples in that article are dated, with the most blatant cases of ambush marketing perpetrated by Nike in the 90’s (though they remain the bad boys of sponsorship to this day).

This inspired us to take a deeper look at ambush marketing and how it has evolved over the years. Part of the public interest in this kind of tactic lies in the ingeniousness of the ambushers, and the David-versus-Goliath aspect where we can’t help but root for the underdog. Plus, the ability to goad the rights holders into overreacting, which gives more publicity to the stunt than it would have received in the first place, is often nothing short of brilliant.

Ambush marketing in its most traditional form has usually involved media buying, like Nike’s takeover of adjacent buildings during the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, or on-site tactics courtesy of promotional agents. But now, unsurprisingly, it’s migrating from the physical to the digital space.

Indeed, many of the latest examples of ambush marketing are online initiatives. They may not be quite as impressive or imposing, but they’re still damaging for rights holders and for the actual sponsor, and they’re a tad harder to nip in the bud.

Ambush marketing is done more and more through content. This isn’t a new phenomenon: Nike has released its fair share of ads and online videos during UEFA EURO and the FIFA World Cup, using the players they endorse and echoing the imagery and the codes used by actual sponsors (in this case, Adidas). To an uninformed viewer, it can be very difficult to know who the actual sponsor is. And, does it even make a difference? At this point, Nike is successful enough in how it attaches itself to events that it ends up enjoying the benefits of an official sponsor.

Over the years, ambushers have found ways to refine their tactics. For instance, many turn to digital influencers to create content for them. These social media stars end up getting PR or media access, and produce behind-the-scenes content for brands often without having the proper rights and authorizations. This is particularly common in the music world.

THE CAVEAT WITH ALL THIS IS THAT BRANDS AREN’T THE ONLY ONES THAT HAVE GOTTEN MORE SOPHISTICATED: CONSUMERS HAVE TOO.

There are also brands that still go the classic contest route. This type of ambush marketing has always been pretty easy to flag in traditional media, but it’s harder to police on social networks. Competitive brands can do a lot of harm before official sponsors even get a whiff of what they’re up to, giving them little to no time to react.

Lastly, there’s always the second screen. You can buy media to protect your partnership during a broadcast, but there’s no preventing the audience from being on their devices during the ads and even during the main program. This is almost impossible to overcome, unless you create something that draws viewer attention elsewhere entirely, which would likely be counter-productive.

The caveat with all this is that brands aren’t the only ones that have gotten more sophisticated: consumers have too. They’re not as easily fooled, and real fans will most likely discern the freeloader from the real thing.

After pushing countries that won Olympic bids to introduce laws to protect the Olympic sponsors, the Olympic movement softened its position on ambush marketing to allow endorsers of athletes to do some advertising. This move stirred passionate debates and opened the door to legal forms of ambush prior to the Olympic Games, but it also provided athletes with much needed funding. It will be interesting to track how this change will affect ambushing in the near future.

Ambush marketing often arises when the rightful sponsor—due to a lack of resources or inspiration—fails to fully activate and own its territory. Sponsors should make sure that they have all of their bases covered before entering into a new partnership.

So, there’s no cause for alarm or despair, but there are some actions that can be taken to limit the potentially dire consequences of ambush marketing.

Property and media partner cooperation is key: make it a joint priority to close up any apparent loopholes.

If you’re a property, it’s best to review your policies regarding access to your event, especially when it comes to granting media or PR passes.

If you do invite influencers, have them review and approve your policy for content protection.

Keep your eyes open for any misuse of your brand or intellectual property online. This can be added to the community manager’s to-do list.

So, whether we like it or not, ambush marketing isn’t going away anytime soon. Though the tactics are less impactful now that they’re unfolding primarily in the digital world, it can still hurt sponsors and take a chunk out of their effectiveness and their revenue.

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07 THE EXPERTISE PROBLEM

Sponsorship is the Swiss knife of marketing communication. Great sponsorship programs usually leverage multiple activation channels (PR, digital, traditional advertising, event marketing, etc.), which requires broad knowledge. While communication professionals tend to be experts in one channel, sponsorship experts must think across multiple platforms. You need a good strategic mind, strong analytical skills and negotiation talents. And yet sponsorship is seldom taught in school, or only in passing, and a lot of people working in the industry landed there largely by accident and had to learn things on the spot.

For 11% of sponsorship professionals, expertise and human resources is the number one concern (CSLS 2016). There is a lack of skilled sponsorship pros in the industry, and that has a negative impact on multiple fronts.

For starters, research tends to show that expertise directly impacts the outcome of a sponsorship. Brands and properties that “get sponsorship” work better as partners, have a stronger relationship, higher perceived satisfaction out of the partnership and higher renewal rates. Both players also tend to work in tandem to achieve the brand objectives.

We have also witnessed a significant shift in the industry. Sponsorship expertise used to be the domain of traditional agencies, many of which opened up divisions or groups to service their clients in this “new medium” that appeared in the early 2000s. With the integrated marketing wind that was blowing in the 2010s, agencies restructured their services and many of these divisions were integrated or closed. As an indirect result, sponsorship expertise became the purview of brands and, more recently, properties. This requires in-

house training, as many new hires come from public relations firms, event marketing shops or advertising agencies. Plus, expertise is not always adequately valued and people don’t take into account the vast knowledge required to deliver a great sponsorship program.

While some brands are served by specialized sponsorship agencies, many still rely on their agency of record or their experiential agency for counsel. One issue with using experiential agencies is they only have a hammer in their hand, so they tend to see only nails. On-site experiential activation may be a great way to increase brand engagement, but there is a vast toolbox that can better serve the sponsorship medium as a whole.

Properties are providing more in-house services to sponsors, which means that they have to build more knowledgeable teams. Some finally see the need to better service their partners and have an increased likelihood of renewal and higher satisfaction rates. The most efficient properties structure their sponsorship service like an agency: a one-stop-shop that provides account management, consulting and production capabilities, increasing the overall revenue from sponsorships.

Traditional sponsorship is morphing in all kinds of ways, and the lines between different types of partnerships—brand partnerships, event marketing, content creation, endorsement, corporate social responsibility—are blurring more and more. The good news: the expertise that is relevant for sponsorship can be applied to those new communication environments as well. The challenge: the ever-evolving communication channels mean that professionals always need to stay on their toes, and stay ahead of the curve.

08 FINDING YOUR BRAND SPACE

Just a few years ago, standard, and often rigid, sponsorship structures set most sponsors on the same level. But as brands get better at crafting their own narrative, generic platforms with properties are no longer working to create goodwill. Brands need to find a clear positioning for their sponsorship portfolio as well as within each property.

In the early 2010s, the industry understood the need to contribute to the audience or fan experience. But now we need to go further than first-level relevance or a simple value-added experience. The desire to contribute to the consumer experience often led to on-site brand activation with a thin link to the overall communication strategy. Yes, giving goodies or providing a coveted service will generate positive attitudes—but then again, so would handing out cash on a street corner. What’s more, brand attribution and any lasting impact with such promotions is almost always low.

BRAND POSITIONING

The sponsorship program needs to be an extension of the overall brand marcom platform. Creating a specific activation to fit the property’s environment is key, but you shouldn’t have to reinvent the wheel. Instead, craft a clever extension of the existing brand positioning. Too often, brands create a stand-alone communication platform with a property, which then takes on a life of its own and requires constant funding and resources.

THE ROLE THAT THE BRAND PLAYS

The next step is to determine the role that the brand can play within the property. What specific role is relevant to your brand, to your communication strategy, and to the property that you’ve partnered with? How can you stand out from other sponsors? What unique element can your brand contribute?

Heineken answers these questions year after year in their attempt to be relevant in what they offer Coachella participants. In 2012 they created the first beer cold storage that you could access with your fingerprints. In 2014 they served beer infused with lemon grass, mint and chilli pepper in their exclusive World Fusion Bar, which was also a way to test these products in the American market. In 2015 the Snapchat account Heineken SnapWho provided participants with exclusive information on guest artists at the festival.

RIGHTS

Unfortunately, contractual agreements have not followed suit in adapting to this new context where brands need to find and craft their own space. Generic assets and packages no longer do the trick. Properties need to support sponsors by creating a flexible set of assets, unique sub-properties and open-ended sponsorship agreements. Communication and openness become paramount in such a context—something that is often lacking in a purely transactional relationship.

What’s more, beyond visibility, there is a lack of engagement assets offered by properties, like the possibility for brands to own a sub-property, a service, a communication campaign or an audience database. These could be paired with visibility assets to achieve both brand recognition as a sponsor and goodwill and affinity with the brand.

SOURCES

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ACTIVATION PLATFORMS

Some brands have created unique activation platforms fused to their communication objectives and are simply looking more or less to purchase an audience, like the Perrier Greenhouse activation at music festivals.

The Greenhouse is exclusive to Perrier and offers an ideal environment for consumers to immerse themselves in the brand. The program goals: to engage with new audiences, create content and facilitate product trials. The space featured Perrier-infused cocktails, air conditioning (a rare luxury at music festivals) and DJ sets.

There is a strong need for properties to create custom assets and activations that are linked to brands objectives. Though there has been progress on that front, there is still a ways to go. Working early to involve the property in the planning period, and in the crafting of both the sponsorship assets and the activation itself, is a good first step.

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AS BRANDS GET BETTER AT CRAFTING
THEIR OWN NARRATIVE, GENERIC PLATFORMS
WITH PROPERTIES ARE NO LONGER WORKING
TO CREATE GOODWILL



09
SECURITY

While we don’t want to overstate this issue, it is a sad realization that both event promoters and brands need to take new security threats into account. Promoters and local police forces have been quick to make adjustments in the wake of recent events. We saw that at South by Southwest, where police cars blocked street access near pedestrian areas, and in Europe, where giant (branded) sandbags were set up to prevent vehicles from entering crowded areas.

SECURITY:
THE “WHAT IF” SCENARIO

Massimo Tammaro, who handles enterprise risk management at Ferrari, discussed risk management in sponsorship at the last edition of the Relevant sponsorship conference.

To prevent any kind of damage—including reputational damage—you have to challenge the assumptions behind every strategy that your team has put in place. This is the “what if” scenario. To do this, you must be creative. You need to invent hypothetical scenarios and imagine every which way that a scenario might play out.

With all of the threats out there, events and venues must do all they can to improve concrete security measures, create an overall feeling of security, and avoid fuelling a sense of panic in the event that something does happen.

The main takeaway is that everyone needs to become a risk manager. If you do your job right and map out all these risks, you’ll also discover new opportunities along the way.

ENTERPRISE RISK
MANAGEMENT MEANS:

Being respectful, open-minded and ready to be challenged

Creating a safe environment for your team to share new ideas

Being proactive as opposed to reactive or preventative (it’s not about what comes “after”)

Not taking anything for granted

Not assuming that because something went well last year, it will work again this year (and vice-versa)

Playing the devil’s advocate

Challenging statements like “That will never happen,” or “We have always done it this way and it’s worked”

Being prepared for the worse case scenario but hoping and working for the best

GET RISKY
IN THE CREATIVE PROCESS

On a more positive note, we would like to end this trend forecast by talking about the importance of risk-taking as part of the creative process. When you’re organizing your event and developing the consumer experience, challenging the status quo is key. Doing something new, something that has never been done before, is always risky. But when it works, it is also incredibly rewarding. As a sponsor or as a property, don’t rest on your laurels. Surprise your audience and your consumers. If something worked in the past, great: that means that you have an opportunity to make it even better the next time around. In the music industry, a lot of smaller boutique events are creating a lot of buzz, partly because the main staple events share many of the same artists. Incumbents always run the risk of being challenged by the new up-and-comers.

2015-2016 SPONSORSHIP TRENDS UPDATE

For this third edition of our Sponsorship Guidebook, we decided to take a look at our ability to predict trends. Here is an update on our 2015 and 2016 predictions. To read the previous editions of the Sponsorship Guidebook in full, head to elevent.co to download them for free.

2015

TREND	CHANGES	STATUS
<u>DIGITAL AND TECH</u>	<p>Many brands still struggle with digital activation beyond using social networks to push content. Apps are no longer the most popular option and digital has proven costly to maintain compared to mobile sites. But the advantages of a good digital activation are undeniable: Real-time measurement, different ways to engage with fans and a longer time frame to activate. However, digital activations need to go beyond the piecemeal execution that we see so often and align with the overall strategy.</p> <p>While virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) are trending, we see a lot more value in AR, because consumers are not removed from the environment, and it can add value to the overall social experience. Pokémon Go was a great proof of concept.</p> <p>Digital gizmos are still not a substitute for sound sponsorship activation strategies and, in isolation, they remain a tactic. But there are still far too many generic and traditional activations on site. Pop-up tents and beach flags anyone?</p>	High
<u>UNCHARTED TERRITORIES</u>	<p>While we still think that there can be a lot of value for brands when swimming upstream, uncharted territories, supporting less popular properties, has not been a huge phenomenon for lesser known organizations (see Chevrolet in the Top Sponsorship section)</p> <p>What brands are doing instead is creating their own platforms where they can control everything. Great examples of this are the Chipotle Cultivate Festival or Project Pabst, both of which are extensions of the model made popular by Red Bull.</p>	Stable

TREND	CHANGES	STATUS
<u>ERA OF CO</u>	<p>While there is definitely a momentum for the shared economy, it has not caught on outside crowdfunding platforms.</p> <p>Some artists have crowdfunded their new albums and sports teams have invited fans to become “sponsors”, but this remains a fringe activity. There may be a tipping point down the road.</p> <p>The most potential comes from online gaming platforms where the audience can offer support to a player in order to receive additional or premium content.</p>	Stable
<u>HUMANISM</u>	<p>You’ll notice from this year’s trends that we hit the mark with this one. Brands with purpose are on the rise.</p> <p>Cause sponsorship still remains a very small category compared to sports sponsorship. But we have to put this number in perspective, as associating with causes is less expensive than partnering with sports teams, where brands must pay for broadcast visibility.</p>	High
<u>KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE</u>	<p>While big data is still a trending topic, most properties have not capitalized on the amount of data they are sitting on.</p> <p>We need to go deeper in our segmenting and understanding of audiences to craft tailored activations.</p> <p>Lots of properties are lagging behind, not even providing partners with basic demographics.</p>	High
<u>MARKETING ALLIANCES</u>	<p>Too few companies are putting sponsorship at the centre of their marketing strategy, where it can create the most value for a brand and slowly shape a competitive advantage in the market.</p> <p>A lot of people don’t truly understand the value of sponsorship and, yes, it needs to be measured to show return. But, another possible explanation for fewer alliances is the high turnover in upper management. It requires a lot of time and commitment to build a strong alliance.</p>	Stable
<u>SPONTANEOUS ACTIVATION</u>	<p>This has become widespread in the market as brands increasingly turn to live streaming and content creation as a way of engaging with consumers.</p> <p>Spontaneous activations require more agility and less red tape. For live events, the use of war rooms and streamlined approval processes has become popular, where the brand and the agency sit together and post things on the go.</p>	High
<u>MULTI-LEVEL SPONSORSHIPS</u>	<p>While some brands will stick with single-level partnerships, there is still a lot of value in having assets at different levels of a sport, for instance.</p> <p>Some argue that stars or individual players are more valuable than teams, but using them in conjunction with each other can help prevent competitors from entering the space and can tackle different sponsorship objectives.</p>	Stable

TREND	CHANGES	STATUS
<u>LOW RIGHTS,</u> <u>HIGH</u> <u>ACTIVATION</u>	<p>While this approach can be used in the short term, it is clearly detrimental to building a solid partnership between a property and a sponsor, where value creation needs to be balanced.</p> <p>Properties have been working hard to add value to partners with turnkey services and, in some instances, they are replacing agencies when it comes to ideation and production.</p> <p>This allows them to generate extra revenue where, in some categories, the rights fees are already maxed out.</p>	High
<u>INCREASED</u> <u>COMPETITION</u>	<p>In many organizations, sponsorship budgets are either considered a corporate communication or a branding expense, both of which tend to get cut when things get rough (or expenses needs to be reduced). We've rarely seen a major increase in sponsorship budgets for the majority of our clients, and a stable sponsorship budget sometimes means less money for activation because of the hikes in rights fees.</p> <p>That said, there is a steady flow of new entrants looking for extra revenues out of sponsorship, whether it be small events or non-profits.</p>	High

2016

TREND	CHANGES	STATUS
<u>EPHEMERAL</u> <u>CONTENT</u>	<p>With the live feature on Facebook, Twitter video, Snapchat, and now Instagram stories, ephemeral content is hotter than ever.</p> <p>As outlined in our trend on technology changing the revenue landscape, properties are taking notice and are teaming up directly with social networks to offer alternatives to traditional broadcast and remain relevant to younger demographics and emerging markets.</p>	High
<u>CONTENT</u> <u>PARTNERS</u>	<p>Digital spending is continuing to rise and brands are looking for interesting partnerships to tell their brand stories from a different angle.</p> <p>However, as influencer marketing becomes more structured, some superstars, like PewDiePie, are becoming brands in themselves, and garnering attention at events and in traditional media. The possible downside of this is that they could end up overshadowing the partnering brand.</p> <p>Finally, amounts awarded to influencers and some popular content platforms for one-offs are completely disconnected from reality and don't reflect the final outcome. There are ways to measure value and impact. Sponsorship is one of them.</p>	High

TREND	CHANGES	STATUS
<u>CO-BRANDING</u>	<p>Brands are coming together more and more to innovate, like Airbnb recently did with multiple partners.</p> <p>Brands are also teaming up for sponsorship initiatives, like in the retail environment where a retailer will enter a sponsorship and use pass-through rights for some of the brands that they sell.</p> <p>Finally, properties are getting more involved in bringing their partners together, which can foster great collaboration on co-activation programs.</p>	High
<u>FOCUS</u>	<p>Big spending brands have found their turf and they are sticking to it. That means less movement in the market. Long-lasting sponsorship programs tend to show positive returns.</p>	High
<u>RIGHTS</u> <u>CAPPING</u>	<p>A consequence of the focus trend is that competing brands are fighting less for the same properties and there are fewer bidding wars that can raise rights fees.</p> <p>Inflation and increased budgets on the property side aren't valid arguments to ask for more money from sponsors. In many sectors, the rights fees are already as high as the market can support.</p> <p>Properties are adopting a cut-and-dice approach to increase revenues: when you're down to dry and fresh pasta as a category, we say it's a red flag.</p> <p>Another more interesting avenue for properties to bring in extra revenue is to offer brands added-value services, like an in-house agency with account management, creative and production capabilities.</p>	SHigh
<u>MEASURING</u> <u>DATA</u>	<p>Sponsorship measurement is still the far west. While some parts of the globe are culturally more inclined to measure sponsorship outcomes, a structured approach is definitely lacking. You can read more on the topic in this year's measurement issue trend.</p>	High
<u>DEMOGRAPHIC</u> <u>STORM</u>	<p>There is a lot of data to support the fact that an aging demographic doesn't attend as many events. On the other side of the spectrum, younger crowds don't tune in to watch the traditional leagues on TV. In the coming years, immigration will also shape how people consume entertainment.</p>	High
<u>WHAT TO</u> <u>EXPECT</u> <u>IN 2018-2019</u>	<p>The environment is making a comeback: Local initiatives, activists and silent change</p> <p>The maturity of up-and-coming properties like e-sports</p> <p>New sponsorship categories</p> <p>New revenue models and distribution channels for big established sports properties</p> <p>An oncoming crisis as traditional properties try to bring new generations on board</p> <p>Even less traditional agency presence in sponsorships</p>	



OUR BLOG HAS QUICKLY CARVED OUT A PLACE FOR ITSELF AS A QUALITY CONTENT PROVIDER FOR READERS AROUND THE WORLD WHO ARE INTERESTED IN THE SPONSORSHIP INDUSTRY. SHARING KNOWLEDGE IS ONE OF THE Pillars OF OUR AGENCY, AND WE HOPE TO SET OURSELVES APART WITH LONGER AND MORE IN-DEPTH ARTICLES THAT DEFY THE CURRENT “SNACK-SIZED CONTENT” TREND THAT IS SO PREVALENT NOW THAT PEOPLE ARE NO LONGER READING LONG TEXTS ONLINE (OR SO THEY SAY). WE ARE HAPPY TO BUCK THIS TREND EVEN IF IT MEANS GARNERING A LITTLE CRITICISM FOR IT. ABOVE ALL, WE WANT TO ENGAGE WITH YOU. SO PLEASE DON'T HESITATE TO SHARE YOUR COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS AND OPINIONS WITH US. [INFO@ELEVENT.CO](mailto:info@elevent.co)

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WE HAVE SELECTED TWO OF THE MOST POPULAR ARTICLES FROM OUR BLOG LAST YEAR AND HAVE REPRODUCED THEM HERE IN THEIR ENTIRETY.

5 WAYS TO RECOVER FROM A SPONSORSHIP SCANDAL



SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?

When a scandal breaks, keeping quiet can seem like the most appropriate course of action for a sponsor. But there are, in fact, many different tacks a sponsor can take when the time comes to distance itself from an important property.

01 TURN THE SCANDAL INTO A BUSINESS MOVE: THE FESTINA AFFAIR

Long before Lance Armstrong, the Tour de France already had a number of scandals under its belt (hence the nickname: the Tour of Doping). The most significant scandal was the Festina Affair in 1998. For the first time in the history of cycling, an entire team was excluded from the Tour de France after their soigneur was arrested at the border with large quantities of doping products in his car. It was tough for Festina—the luxury watch brand sponsoring the team—to distance itself from the scandal when its name was peppered all over the media. The Festina team put an end to its activities in 2001, and the brand redirected its involvement in the event: it remained the official sponsor of timekeeping for the Tour de France and set up a foundation to prevent doping.

02 THE 1998 IOC SCANDAL: HOW TO BULLY YOUR WAY TO REFORM

No doubt the most important scandal to rock the Olympics erupted in 1998 when members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) were accused of taking bribes from the Salt Lake City Organizing Committee during the bidding process for the 2002 Winter Olympic Games. Afterwards, David D'Alessandro, CEO of the insurance company John Hancock, was the only sponsor to react—and he reacted strongly. He publicly criticized the committee, demanded an investigation and called on the president of the committee to resign. He removed the Olympics logo from all his communication materials and cancelled his television advertising for the Atlanta Summer Olympic Games. But he didn't stop there: he pushed for reform and transparency within the IOC and in the process became a polarized figure that some considered an attention-seeking bully.

03 A NEW CONCEPT: SUSPENSION OF SPONSORSHIP ACTIVITIES AFTER THE STERLING SCANDAL

In 2014, a scandal broke when an audio recording was released in which Donald Sterling, owner of the LA Clippers basketball team, made racist comments to his girlfriend about a photo she had taken with basketball legend Magic Johnson. Reactions were swift, with Barack Obama weighing in and several people offering to buy the team, including Magic Johnson, Oprah Winfrey and finally former Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer. Some partners reacted quickly by pulling their sponsorships (Carmax, Virgin America, Mercedes-Benz and Chumash Casino Resort) while several others like Corona, Kia, Red Bull and Samsung opted to suspend their partnership. Because suspending their sponsorship likely wasn't an option in their contract, technically they remain sponsors of the team, but at a safe distance that's far removed from the controversy. This new option will no doubt become commonplace in sponsorship jargon as it offers the best of both worlds.

04 A HIERARCHY OF REACTIONS: ONE SCANDAL AFTER ANOTHER FOR THE NFL

In 2014, the multiple cases of domestic abuse involving players of the NFL deeply tarnished the image of the league, from Ray Rice (conjugal violence) to Adrian Peterson (child abuse). Though sponsors criticized the league for not taking swift action in punishing the players, they didn't terminate their partnership. Even Cover Girl stayed on board, despite activists altering one of their ads to draw attention to the brand's inaction. Brands certainly don't want to be associated with a controversy of this magnitude, but they aren't ready to walk away from the NFL altogether. So what did Nike do? They stopped sponsoring players who were involved in the scandals, thereby distancing themselves from the violence while still remaining associated with the league and its attributes of excellence in sport.

05 THE FIFA SCANDAL: GIVING INTO FAN PRESSURE

May 27, 2015 wasn't a good day to be a FIFA sponsor, when US investigators uncovered years of corporate corruption dating back to 1991. One such scandal involved the Qatar bid to host the 2022 World Cup, which also came with damning reports of the country's treatment of migrant workers, raising deeper ethical and humans rights issues. FIFA's major sponsors—Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Budweiser and Adidas—have all expressed their concerns but none has gone any further than that, with the exception of Visa, which has threatened to end its sponsorship if the federation doesn't institute meaningful change. Social media reaction created an unprecedented crisis for sponsors, in that consumers now see the power of sponsors and demand that they pull out and end their partnership when a property is corrupt.



In weighing the consequences of a tarnished image against the benefits of a platform that offers access to millions of fans, brands also have to consider the fact that consumers are increasingly choosing brands not only for their products but for the values they support. In short, there's no easy answer when it comes to dealing with a scandal. Brands must weigh all their options—and, in the process, never lose sight of consumers or the market.

6 SPONSORSHIP STRATEGIES THAT BRANDS CAN LEVERAGE

The vast choice of sponsorships can be tempting for any company, especially if you assess each one in a vacuum. It's easy for a sponsor to feel like a kid in a candy shop when so many options abound, but the wrong choice can lead to a scattered portfolio. Such an approach can sometimes yield positive results for a sponsor, but a well-structured selection can enhance your performance tenfold. Here we've broken down the strategies successfully leveraged by major brands, and drawn a few important conclusions. Here are six sponsorship strategies worth taking note of:



01 VERTICAL INTEGRATION

Common in the sporting world, a vertical strategy is used to associate a brand with a specific market. For example, if a company sponsors a professional team within a given sport, it will also partner with a variety of amateur and recreational teams and leagues, or it will sponsor various elements associated with the professional team, such as the league, the stadium, the team and the athletes.

If well executed, this type of strategy gives the brand a seal of authenticity within the realm of a given professional sport. It also offers a lot of flexibility when it comes to activation, both with the mass market for major sponsorships and with niche markets when sponsoring local or community associations.

Being associated with a sport that a lot of people follow and play has the advantage of building a long-term competitive advantage for the brand. This approach is especially effective in sectors where there isn't much differentiation among the products and services and where establishing a unique positioning is key to the marketing strategy, as is the case in the banking, insurance, energy and telecommunications industry where competition is allowed (not a monopoly).

BMO has put its money on soccer, with a partnership that extends from the professional level right down to local teams and aims to build a strong connection with the sport. Being involved at the local level gives the brand credibility with young people, and its sponsorship of professional teams gives it the opportunity to talk to potential clients.

Tim Hortons uses a similar strategy for hockey. The brand has a presence with all the Canadian teams and with the NHL, and it supports community hockey teams through its Timbits Program, which has helped 200,000 kids aged four to eight, and has been extended to other sports beyond hockey.

Other brands have adopted the same strategy, but with even more of a focus on the different properties within a single sport. Shell and LG come to mind, whose sponsorship of the F1 extends to the track, the championship, the teams and even the drivers.

For the appropriation of a sport or a niche market to work well, a brand needs to have multiple points of contact with the target to ensure that its message is getting across effectively. The idea is to partner at a high level by sponsoring a professional team or league, and at the local level where people are in it for fun.

02 FOCUS

When it comes to personal finances, it's never wise to put all your eggs in one basket. But that precise strategy can actually pay off in certain sponsorship contexts. Rather than spreading yourself thin with multiple partnerships, a single well-activated sponsorship can enable your brand to reach its objectives without having to diversify.

A brand can justify investing in a single partnership for a variety of reasons: the lack of resources, the desire to own a platform that offers international reach and is less costly than partnering with multiple properties in individual markets, and the wish to have a single activation platform and a single message. This last point is crucial, as several points of contact and more than one message can create confusion, especially if the target is the same across the board. As a general rule, this approach also frees up more funds for the activation itself, as less need to be spent acquiring rights.

Various brands have developed sponsorship programs with this sharp of a focus. Subaru established a strong association with the car rally world with its Impreza rally car, before shifting its focus to Ironman competitions, in Canada. British American Racing did a huge clean-up of its worldwide sponsorship portfolio, opting to invest in a single platform—State Express 555 and Lucky Strike becoming sponsors of the F1—which gave them international exposure and the ability to create the brand image they desired with their target market. Qatar Airways enjoys the same kind of reach in its partnership with FC Barcelona, one of the best-known and most popular brands in the sport.

To deploy this kind of approach, a brand either needs to be a new kid on the sponsorship block or has to do a drastic overhaul of its portfolio—a process that can take many years. This approach also comes with its fair share of risk. The United States Postal Service benefitted from its partnership with its cycling team—and with Lance Armstrong—but it had to manage some seriously negative press as well.

03 UMBRELLA

An umbrella approach is when a sponsorship portfolio is composed of several heterogeneous properties that are unified by a single activation platform instead of being leveraged independently.

This approach paves the way for clear and simple messaging in the market, generates significant activation savings, and enables the brand to reach its communication objectives.

Loto-Quebec is a good example of this. With more than 100 festivals throughout the province, it leverages a unique activation platform: les Rendez-vous Loto-Québec. Instead of coming up with individual activations for each event—which would demand a lot of resources—the crown company launches an umbrella campaign that showcases its involvement in a variety of free summer events, and communicates its mission as a crown company—that of providing entertainment and reinvesting in the community.

Since 2003, The TD Bank has also deployed an umbrella approach through its TD Music platform, based on the insight that music enriches lives. Their platform extends to several music events and festivals, and covers all the big jazz festivals across the country. It also gets involved at the community level by enabling youth in under-served communities to have access to musical instruments and equipment. The program also gives clients the chance to sign up for special offers like contests, member discounts and VIP experiences.

Toyota uses a similar strategy with its sponsorships by promoting its trucks division to a primarily male target market. However, the company adapts its messaging depending on the context of the event to showcase different utilitarian aspects of its vehicles, be it for fishing, renovating or other activities.

It helps if the portfolio has some common themes that an overarching communication can unite.

04 COMMUNITY

Small-scale projects can also have a substantial impact on a brand's marketing objectives by creating strong ties with communities or sub-cultures, or by establishing a solid foundation for authentic storytelling.

A community approach is relevant when a brand comes into contact with a specific group and has a real marketing insight. Such is the case for Pabst Blue Ribbon, which has seen its popularity grow through its association with small and marginal events supported by a fringe group of influencers. After noticing a spike in sales in certain New York neighbourhoods with no marketing support to back it, brand managers realized that bike couriers were drawn to Pabst because of its low price and the underground vibe that its lack of marketing had helped create. Pabst slowly inserted itself within this sub-culture by offering free products at events frequented by this target, and then by extending its contribution through the funding of several small independent events, from rock concerts to single-speed bike races.

Ben & Jerry's also anchors its approach in the community, especially in Burlington, Vermont where it was founded. In addition to giving back at the local level through various programs, the company also uses social engagement as a tool for recruiting employees and bringing its brand philosophy to life. Their most important scholarship program, Grassroots Organizing for Social Change, donates money to small community organizations throughout the United States to help them effect social change.

An approach like this doesn't cost a lot, but it must be executed in a way that doesn't alienate its core influencers. And the connection between the company and the chosen cause must be a relevant one. The investment in activations tends to be higher than the acquisition of rights, which is fairly inexpensive given the more marginal nature of the properties.



05 CREATING A PLATFORM

When the choice of properties on the market isn't enough, a brand can decide to create its own platform and be the only brand—or one of the only brands—associated with it.

The size of the niche market can vary, but what characterizes this approach is the complete control the brand has over its image, its choice of target audience and partners (if it's deemed appropriate to have partners), the fit of the event and the revenue generated. The brand enjoys total freedom by determining its own benefits, negotiating its own broadcast deals, choosing its own media partners and protecting itself against rising sponsorship costs. In so doing, they avoid what a lot of brands often come up against when they invest in an event early on: contributing to the success of an event to the point where it becomes too costly to continue sponsoring it, essentially digging its own grave.

A lot of brands have used this approach, but Red Bull was the one that made the model of creating a platform from the ground up—and handling all the organizational and promotional aspects of the event—a truly popular one. Imperial Tobacco had used this approach in the 90s when it bought up a lot of properties and turned them into Player's-sponsored events. Molson did the same thing with its Association of Party Pros. From a social responsibility standpoint, Bell takes a similar tack with its Let's Talk program, which is a hybrid strategy that merges the umbrella approach with the creation of its own platform.

Despite the advantages of having greater control, this approach demands a significant investment, a lot of internal resources (both on the financial and the staffing front), and the ability of a brand to appeal to consumers with its program—which isn't the case for all sectors, like the banking industry.

06 CONSTELLATIONS

It's possible for brands to become omnipresent within a given market by virtue of quantity alone: the theory of bombardment. Here the idea is to maximize the points of contact with as many people as you can.

Some brands find themselves in this situation because they don't, in fact, have a strategy, or because a decentralized sponsorship approach gives their satellite or affiliated brands the opportunity to develop their own sponsorships. This approach can help a brand establish its presence in a community or assert its leadership.



Ethiad Airways, the official airline of the United Arab Emirates, has a large global sponsorship portfolio in a number of different markets. Closer to home, Desjardins is present in almost all Quebec communities, in addition to partnering with major provincial organizations. It's impossible not to be exposed to the brand, which is one of the best known in Quebec from a sponsorship standpoint, thanks to the company's model where the individual co-ops make a difference and affirm their presence in the community and head office looks after the major properties.

Not a lot of brands have the luxury of using this kind of approach, and most brands should avoid it outright because of the huge amount of resources required to pull it off.

CONCLUSION

Though the cases discussed here involve a lot of big brands, all of the strategies can, for the most part, be applied on a smaller scale. You just have to be aware of your available resources and the flexibility of your portfolio before making any significant change in your sponsorship approach.

It can be tempting to try something new, but sometimes your best bet is to maintain existing partnerships and improve on the quality of your activations.

Do you have other strategies in mind? Feel free to share them with us for our next publication.

EVALUATING BROADCAST: MYTHS AND PRECONCEPTIONS

For events that are broadcast on television—or are available for streaming on the Web—the sponsorship value for brands has more to do with the viewers seated in front of their screens than it does with the spectators sitting at the venue.

So how is the value of brand exposure in a broadcast measured? While this type of evaluation has been around for years, it is plagued by a number of myths and preconceptions. But developments in broadcasting and broadcast technologies are changing the way it is done. Let's take a closer look.

WHAT'S THE PURPOSE?

Evaluating a broadcast sponsorship helps determine the monetary value of the overall visibility generated for the brand during a televised broadcast or rebroadcast.

This analysis, which used to be relatively straightforward, now requires the factoring in of an array of new media, like webcasting and social networks, and of the wider range of ways to integrate a brand into a broadcast resulting from the extensive media creativity now available to advertisers.

IS EVALUATION REALLY NECESSARY?

Both the promoter and the sponsor have everything to gain from knowing the number of TV impressions generated for a brand, as it is an important determinant of value. In-person attendance obviously offers a far more limited potential for exposure than does the extensive coverage of a broadcast. Detailed impressions by market can also be used to see if the investment is suitable for reaching the brand's target markets and to provide a basis for comparison with the benefits of more conventional forms of advertising.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

At one time done manually, the evaluation process has now been automated thanks to a new generation of highly-accurate analytical tools. These rely on sophisticated algorithms that use the power of artificial intelligence to enable brand recognition in various contexts, including in the determination of media impressions during a broadcast.

LOCAL VERSUS INTERNATIONAL VALUE



Visibility in a global broadcast, as in the case of Formula 1 racing, for example, is calculated by the major media groups, who content themselves with making a rather rough estimate based on the average value recorded in each of the markets.

Many other large-scale events also broadcast over the Web, however, use much more precise means for measuring the size and geographic location of their audience.

IS ALL VISIBILITY CREATED EQUAL?

The value of brand exposure varies significantly according to the quality of visibility, notably in terms of its prominence, clarity, synergy and type.

In other words, a brand will benefit from greater value if its logo is placed in the heat of the action, as in on the players' jerseys, for example, and if that presence is reinforced by other elements of visibility, such as on the home screens or in other placements during the broadcast.

But value cannot be measured through mere media exposure alone; expertise in sponsorship is also needed to fully understand the factors that can influence that value. Qualitative or so-called intangible elements come into play, on top of the media equivalencies, to affect the value for the brand. A straight evaluation of media value can therefore only tell one part of the story.

WHAT WILL LIKELY BE THE FUTURE TRENDS IN BROADCAST ANALYSIS?

There is a growing trend among consumers worldwide to pull the plug on cable or even toss out their television altogether. This is going to have a direct impact on the old model whereby promoters negotiate lucrative exclusive broadcast deals for which broadcasters then have to sell ad space to secure a return on their investment.

Although still marginal in some spheres, online listening makes it possible to pay only for the desired content by cutting out the middleman, i.e. the broadcaster. Online listening means the ability to instantly determine the location, time and number of plays, which will greatly facilitate the painstaking job of measuring the broadcast value.

DOES AN EVALUATION HAVE TO BE DONE EVERY YEAR?

While this exercise is essential, it doesn't have to be repeated unless major changes have been made to the broadcast environment. In fact, a certain "routine" tends to settle in that keeps the value of a broadcast relatively stable from one year to the next. For example, the Mercedes logo that used to be beside the net in the Rogers Cup generally produced the same level of visibility during the games because the brand was seen by the camera angles and the same audience.

However, any significant development like a modification of the visibility area, a change in broadcaster or a difference in the site or positioning of the logo would necessitate a new evaluation.

HOW MUCH TIME AND MONEY IS REQUIRED?

Evaluation is still a relatively lengthy process. As a general rule, about 3 hours of analysis are required for every hour of broadcast time. The cost will vary according to both the length and complexity of the sequence to be analyzed: the number of markets being evaluated, the nature of the visibility, which may be of different types and formats, the use of media creativity, webcasting and social media, and so on.

Knowing the value generated by television or Web exposure remains an important piece of the puzzle in determining how much a sponsorship is worth.

Contact us to find out more about Elevent's broadcast evaluation service.



DIGITAL SPONSORSHIP

SAMANTHA PHELAN — DIGITALLY DISCONNECTED

There's a massive disconnect in the sponsorship space that you can observe across most activations that stems from an overall lack of understanding surrounding digital assets and valuation of digital properties.

Conference after conference will preach the value and importance of the digital space, showing you how multi-million dollar brands with robust teams of individuals and insights manage to pull together a flawless digital media activation. You'll see the millions of impressions, conversions that are sky high, and you'll then be inspired to go back to work and try your best to replicate the activation, only to realize that you have one of three problems- or likely a combination of all three:

- You rely on external resources (or other team members) to help you understand your digital assets
- You have no idea how to value digital assets
- You don't understand how to define success of a digital media activation beyond surface level metrics

Let's dive a little deeper into these, shall we?

PROPERTY SIDE

If a partner comes to you asking for exposure in the digital space with an overall objective of brand awareness, chances are most sponsorship coordinators have a general level of understanding to know what's been performing well on their channels and then start the ideation process of integration from there. But very few sponsorship coordinators or management I've encountered on the property side truly understand how the algorithms are performing recently, or what types of digital integrations are best received by followers. Therefore you ask a digital team member whose understanding of valuation and sponsorship fulfillment is limited, and they tell you what works for the property's social channels but not necessarily what will work best for your partner.

A perfect example of this is sponsored lineups in sports teams. Lineups are traditionally one of the most sought after pieces of content on a sports team page. They communicate a heavily sought after piece of information that fans flock to before a game begins. When a partner says they want brand awareness (otherwise known as wanting people to notice them), these line-up posts have been a go-to piece of content to sell partners because the metrics behind them speak for themselves. The problem with line-ups on brand awareness is not the metrics that come in return—it's the recall rate of these types of partnerships. There are ways to provide better brand awareness now that actually deliver “consumed impressions” for a partner and their logo or brand messaging, as opposed to simply slapping a logo on a line-up graphic and hoping fans will feel any type of emotion or sentiment once they see it. The digital space has evolved to be more dynamic, more creative, more visual, and yet we're still delivering activations for partners that were successful 5 years ago. That is about 4.5 years too long in the digital media space.

ST. JOHN'S ICECAPS

To use a better example of brand integration, take this recent video series that we ran last year with the St. John's IceCaps (AHL Affiliate of the Montreal Canadiens) and their partner Rocket Bakery. Rocket Bakery wanted to build brand awareness but in a way that they could actually interact with the fans that were consuming their content. They asked their players to pick their favourite meals from a list of menu items and filmed their responses. Then they created a short video series where they played an intro of Rocket Bakery, segueing into the question and pausing to show a multiple choice menu, whereby fans had to comment on the post to guess which item the player chose. If they chose correctly, their name was entered in a draw for a chance to win a gift certificate for Rocket Bakery.

This activation was more involved in terms of production and effort, but it also delivered more significant returns in exposure. Facebook's algorithm works in such a way that incorporating video elements and encouraging comments would favour overall exposure far greater than posting a static graphic of a line-up, where the content is more likely to be

consumed without engagement from the fans. Rocket Bakery followed up with almost every fan that commented with a quality comment or suggestion in return, thereby building a stronger level of awareness and interaction with fans. Same price for two activations, drastically different results.



VALUATION

Once you get the hang of the digital space and what could actually be a value-added activation for your partners, the next big hurdle people face is valuation. Chances are when you came into your role as a sponsorship manager or coordinator, you were given a list of rates that predated you, and then a small understanding of how those rates are justified. The problem with the digital space is that it is fairly new and constantly changing. There is no one out there telling anyone in sponsorship how to break it down and value each digital asset properly, as it's often on a case-by-case basis. So instead we default to trying to value with as much common sense as we can, which often leads us to compare value to how we sell other forms of online advertising. Do you value it like a website banner? Cost per click on a Facebook Ad? Pick some arbitrary number to cover the cost of a platform you want to use in tandem with it? Or maybe instead you choose to value it at a similar price point to TV or newspaper based on “circulation” or reach. And just when you think you've started to get a handle on it, platforms like Facebook or Instagram will readjust their algorithms to change the dynamics of what's engaging to your audience, and you'll have to start from square one all over again.

BRANDS

All of this confusion is not just common to the property side. Larger brands often work in silos, where a sponsorship team handles the activation and the digital team might only participate if there's a need for support to enhance the partnership. In fact, this entire disconnect really works to the property's advantage, as even when post-activation reports are given, the sponsorship team rarely has the in-depth knowledge to understand if the results are successful or not. They might see a high number of impressions, know that their objective was brand awareness, and then check the box for renewal without a second thought. This is much likelier with larger brands that are juggling multiple partnerships and don't have the dedicated resources to do in-depth analysis on each of their partnerships. It's a higher incidence than with smaller companies, who might be more budget conscious, have a much smaller sponsorship portfolio, and have less understanding of the analytics reported back to them, but are still pushing for as much insight as they can get on how the activation went – not just the highlight reel.

THE CURRENT STATE OF SPONSORSHIP

So what happens when neither the person selling the property assets nor the person representing the brand on the sponsorship side has a clue how to properly run a digital media activation? Poor outcomes. Sponsored lineups for brands that hoped for lead generation, for example, which is the equivalent of giving in-stadium visibility (rinkboards, in-field banners, trackside advertisement, etc) to a partner that hoped for drive-to-retail promotion. Sure, there may be some sort of intangible there that the exposure gave the brand, but you'd never be able to measure it.

You wouldn't sponsor a live event and not have an on-site presence; you wouldn't buy a banner and not ask for its measurements or placement to ensure optimization of space and exposure; you wouldn't buy title partnership of the Super Bowl and then sit back and expect the sales to come in on mentions alone. And yet, here we are in the digital space with seemingly complete complacency and no shame in our game. I think the space is due for a complete shake-up, wake-up, and shift in execution.

Account executives never needed in-depth knowledge to understand signage. Most people can grasp what a sign is and how it can be valued based on placement, traffic, broadcast exposure, etc. But most people cannot grasp Facebook Live's capabilities and what value it has based on views, reach, and engagements, not without some training. We really need to ensure that anyone working in the space of sponsorship has at least a basic understanding of these platforms, but ideally a comprehensive knowledge on it, so that smarter, more creative sponsorships can be sold.

We also need brand managers and other brand facing sponsorship specialists to become better informed so that they are asking the right questions. If I got a report back that shows my “Brand Awareness” focused activation harnessed over 500,000 impressions, I wouldn’t immediately default to renew. I would need to be educated enough to go back and ask for views. To ask for engagement rate. To ask for demographics on those viewers. I would need to be able to do some quick calculations to determine cost of engagement and then decide if that activation was successful for me or not.

For those brands looking for lead generation, they should be looking beyond how many leads they received through the activation. They should be asking about the quality of those leads; how many of those leads were unique; how many of those leads were within the right demo that the sponsor was looking to target; how many of those leads went on to open up an email from the partner after the fact or made a purchase.

There is so much more knowledge required to play in this space now and to do it well. The reason you see some top brands absolutely killing it in this space is because they have armies of people - smart people, well informed people - working on an activation from start to finish and even iterating frequently in between. Gone are the days when brands could just slap their name on a sign and call it a good ROI. The possibilities are just so much bigger now, and denying it by playing ignorant to the advancements made in this arena will undoubtedly leave you underperforming and forgoing massive amounts of revenue opportunities – for both brands and properties.

If you’d like to hear more about Samantha’s perspective on sponsorship in the digital media space, she’ll be speaking at the Relevent Conference, November 7-8, 2017 in Montreal. Read more on elevent.co.



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SCIENCE

OF SPONSORSHIP

NCE

THEY MAY COME FROM TWO DIFFERENT WORLDS, BUT SPONSORSHIP PROFESSIONALS AND UNIVERSITY RESEARCHERS IN MARKETING WOULD BENEFIT FROM PUTTING THEIR HEADS TOGETHER MORE. TOO OFTEN, SPONSORSHIP MEASUREMENT TOOLS AND STRATEGIES RELY ON IMPERFECT METHODS AND INTELLECTUAL SHORTCUTS.

PONSORSHIP

AT ELEVENT, WE DECIDED TO BRIDGE THIS GAP BY ESTABLISHING STRONG TIES WITH PROFESSORS WHOSE RESEARCH IS WELL RESPECTED IN THIS FIELD. WE ALSO DO OUR BEST TO BREAK DOWN THE BARRIER BETWEEN THE TWO WORLDS WITH OUR BLOG SERIES CALLED “THE SCIENCE OF SPONSORSHIP,” WHERE WE SUMMARIZE RECENT ARTICLES THAT HAVE APPEARED IN SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS AND OUTLINE THE CONCRETE APPLICATION OF THE FINDINGS FOR INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS.

HERE YOU’LL FIND TWO ARTICLES FROM THIS SERIES.

BRAND IMAGE CONGRUENCE IN EVENT SPONSORSHIP: HOW CAN IT BE FOSTERED?

Brand congruence can be achieved when two parties come together to form an association, often through event sponsorship. This association leads to an image transfer of meanings and symbols between the event and the sponsoring brand. For example, a brand may want to sponsor the NFL because it reinforces its image of masculinity and excitement. It may also help position a new brand or promote a new positioning for an existing brand. In line with a study by Gwinner and Eaton (1999), Kwon and his colleagues showed in the 2016 *Journal of Advertising* that merely associating a brand with an event through its sponsorship may significantly increase brand image congruence, which is defined as the “consistency between the event image and the brand image” (Gwinner and Eaton, 1999, p. 53).

It may seem like common sense that an association would help create congruence between parties, but the question deserves a deeper dive. Besides strengthening brand image, congruence between brands in a sponsorship context fosters brand recall and the development of positive attitudes toward the sponsoring brand. So sponsoring an event, in itself, helps build brand equity because the association fosters the perception of image congruence between the event and the brand.

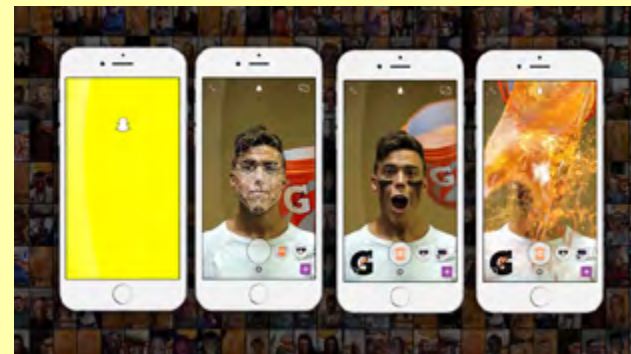
More interestingly, in their 2016 study, Kwon and his team also looked at what factors may increase image congruence between an event and a sponsoring brand in terms of the perception of similarity between the two entities. To this end, they investigated two kinds of similarities: functional similarity and image-based similarity. Functional similarity signifies the extent to which sponsoring brands appear to be used within the sponsored event. For example, Pennzoil, which is a brand of motor oil, is likely to be used in NASCAR but not at the U.S. Open. The second kind of similarity—image based-similarity—denotes the degree to which the two entities appear to be related.

In their study, Kwon and his colleagues found that respondents perceived a low degree of image-based similarity between the Toyota Prius and the NFL, but a high one between Dodge Ram and football. Their results showed that image-based similarity did not help increase image congruence between the event and the sponsoring brand. In other words, a high level of perception of image-based similarity does not help in strengthening image congruence between the two entities: whatever the perceived level of similarity based on image, event sponsorship will positively influence image congruence regardless.

According to the authors, an associative learning process can explain this situation: whenever an association occurs between an event and the sponsoring brand, the connection is strengthened. Therefore, image congruence is enhanced even when image-based similarity between the event and the sponsoring brand is somehow low. On the other hand, image congruence was enhanced when a high functional similarity was perceived between parties (note that a low perceived functional similarity had no effect on image congruence). This means that the perception of a brand actually being used within a particular event, as Nike is in the NFL, helps foster image congruence. Functional similarity thus appears to be a key factor in reinforcing the perception of congruence between two entities.

From a managerial point of view, we strongly suggest that a sponsoring brand with relatively low functional similarity should develop strategies that promote the perception that the event participants do actually use their brand/products, as Gatorade does so effectively with the NFL. A concrete and distinctive integration of the brand within the event can in fact enhance the perception of functional similarity with the target.

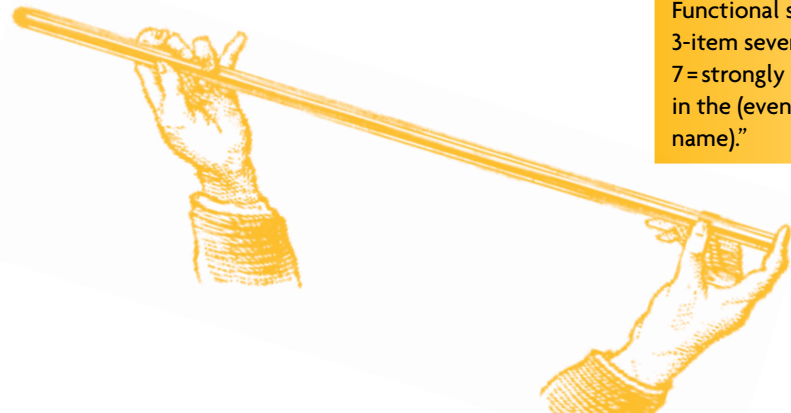
IT MAY SEEM LIKE COMMON SENSE THAT AN ASSOCIATION WOULD HELP CREATE CONGRUENCE BETWEEN PARTIES, BUT THE QUESTION DESERVES A DEEPER DIVE.



In the case of Gatorade, its visibility on the sidelines of the NFL teams brings a perception of functional similarity that is reinforced when the players are seen drinking the beverage—even though it is usually just water contained in the Gatorade-branded containers. And the famous Gatorade ice-bath tradition of drenching the coach of the winning Super Bowl team also opens up several creative possibilities for the brand. In the 2016 Super Bowl, Gatorade reached a total of 165 million views on Snapchat with their digital Gatorade dunk, a sponsored digital lens that enabled users to dunk a virtual Gatorade cooler over a video selfie. Gatorade also leveraged their sponsorship with Serena Williams to create a funny animated GIF with this lens. Marketing initiatives like these have helped reinforce the perception of Gatorade actually being used/drunk in NFL games like the Super Bowl.



Ambush sponsorship specialists can also take advantage of their endorsement with athletes and celebrities to create an indirect perception of their brands being used in conjunction with a property. Nike, who according to CNNMoney analysis spent \$8 billion between 2002 and 2015 on endorsements of superstar athletes, clubs and teams, is probably the king of ambush sponsorship. A good example is Nike’s endorsement of the soccer player Cristiano Ronaldo. Their association with him helps create the perception that the brand is used in FIFA’s events even if Adidas is the official sponsor.



Below are the principal findings of the 2016 Kwon et al study in the Journal of Advertising, as well as the measurement tools used to assess the main variables in play (image congruence, image similarity, functional similarity). (See Gwinner and Eaton (1999) in the Journal of Adverting for the full scale items.)

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS:

- Event sponsorship increases image congruence between the event and the sponsoring brand — This is important considering that image congruence has a positive influence on brand equity
- A high image-based similarity between the event and the sponsoring brand does not foster image congruence between parties
- A high functional similarity between the event and the sponsoring brand helps increase image congruence between parties

MEASUREMENTS

- Image congruence —
 - (a) Use a set of the ten adjectives that best describe a particular event (e.g., fast, dangerous, exciting...), i.e., those that obtain the highest rate on a seven-point scale on how well they describe the event (1=not at all ; 7=very well)
 - (b) Repeat the procedure using the same adjectives, but for the sponsoring brands
 - (c) Calculate the sum of the absolute difference between the corresponding adjectives of the event and the brand. The adjectives that have the lowest difference represent the highest congruence between the event and the brand
- Image-based similarity —
3-item seven-point scales (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). E.g., “The (event name) and (brand name) have a similar image.”
- Functional similarity —
3-item seven-point scales (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree). E.g., “It is likely that (participants) in the (event name) use (brand name) during the (event name).”

WINNING HEARTS
WITH SOCIAL SPONSORSHIP

Original article : Przybysz, Audrey. Corporate philanthropy : a move toward social sponsorship?
Master’s thesis, hec montréal, 2016.

Social sponsorship has proven to be a relevant tool to express a brand’s values and to add a social dimension to a brand identity. It has the potential to improve brand image, generate better attitudes toward a brand and increase purchase intents. Besides, it is a more powerful lever for brand image than commercial sponsorship.

However, it can be more complex than it looks. There is the risk of consumers perceiving that a company has selfish motivations, which would not only prevent a company from benefitting from the partnership, but could also badly damage a brand image. You don’t want to give consumers the impression that you are exploiting a cause they care about for commercial reasons.

Audi was recently criticized for its “Daughter” ad that aired during the Super Bowl. The ad promoted equality, in an elegant and convincing manner. The problem is that Audi has no women on its executive team and its board has only 16% women. It was not long before media and social media spread the word. Charity begins at home.

However there are a few examples of successful and inspiring collaborations. For instance, Disney and the Make-a-Wish® Foundation have been partners for over 35 years and have granted over 100,000 wishes, all over the world. Disney has been a generous philanthropic supporter of the Foundation and provided access to its theme parks to make dreams come true. Another good example would be the partnership between Hanes, the number one sock manufacturer in America, and The Salvation Army. It can sound trivial, but socks are one of the most requested items by homeless people. Since 2009, Hanes

has donated over 1.9 million pairs of socks to The Salvation Army and helped raise awareness and donations during the holiday season by installing collection bins in 160 stores across the United States.

So, how is it done? We are going to look into the drivers of successful social partnerships. But first, let’s do a quick review to avoid any confusion between cause-related marketing, corporate philanthropy and social sponsorship.

Cause-related marketing aims at enhancing a company’s performance while helping a cause. The support generally depends on consumers buying a company’s services or products. One of the most famous examples of cause-related marketing is probably the restoration of the Statue of Liberty by American Express: for every purchase, an amount of money was given to the restoration fund. Lush, the cruelty-free cosmetic company, also uses this technique with its Charity Pot body lotion: 100% of the retail price is donated to charity (usually human rights, animal welfare and environment).

Corporate philanthropy was initially expected to be only about pure generosity. Companies still donate without worrying too much about the commercial returns. However, academics and practitioners increasingly value strategic use of corporate philanthropy. It still benefits a cause, but also a company and a brand. Now these budgets are being transferred to fill marketing and communication purposes. Enter social sponsorship: the sponsorship of an organization or an event promoting a social or cultural cause.

All of these can work together as part of a wider, fully integrated program that nourishes a company's strategy and objectives. They also can be used within one partnership, mixing different types of support.

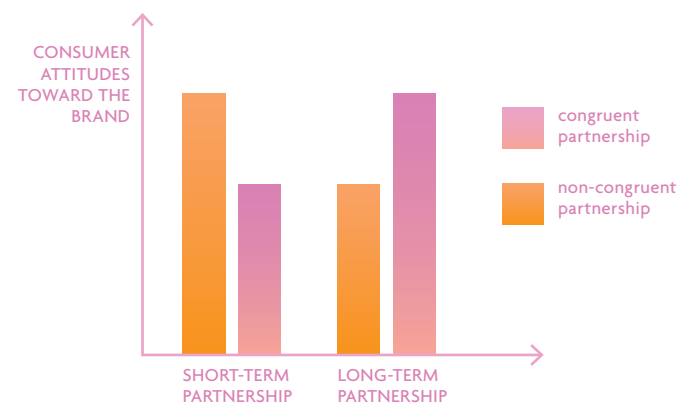
Now, what do those successful and inspiring social partnerships have in common? Fit (or articulation i.e. "made up fit") and commitment.

Fit between a company's clients and a cause's audience, or the relevance of a company's expertise to what a cause needs are aspects to consider in order to enhance the perceived fit. A good fit will in turn increase the legitimacy of a partnership and generate positive outcomes in terms of brand image.

Commitment, in terms of time, resources or structure of a partnership (punctual sponsorship vs complete partnership), also has a significant impact on consumers' reaction to an alliance. For instance, the impact of a social sponsorship on a brand image will be more positive if the sponsorship is perceived to be philanthropic support rather than a punctual action. Philanthropic support paves the way to sponsorship.

What is interesting is that in a short-term partnership (mixing philanthropy and sponsorship), a non-congruent alliance generates better attitudes than a congruent one. Inversely, in a long-term partnership, a congruent association will have a more positive impact on consumer attitudes.

Let's try to picture it. Imagine a company like L'Oreal, the cosmetics manufacturer, getting involved in a social issue. A short-term alliance perceived as being non-congruent, for example with L'Itinéraire, a newspaper created by homeless people, would generate better attitudes from consumers than an alliance with a congruent cause, for example the Breast Cancer Foundation (as L'Oreal's main target is women). In the long run, however, it would be the opposite: the association with the Breast Cancer Foundation would generate better attitudes than an alliance with l'Itinéraire.



It can feel counterintuitive, considering that fit is a key success factor of a sponsorship's effectiveness. However, in the case of a social sponsorship, the major risk lies in the potential perception of a company exploiting a cause for selfish commercial reasons.

Therefore, in a short-term partnership, where commitment in terms of time is limited, consumers are going to search for a reason or a hidden agenda. A non-congruent partnership can prevent people from thinking that a company has another interest in the association other than helping a cause. A non-congruent association would thus work as a bulwark against negative perceptions.

Inversely, when a brand has been committed to a cause for a long time, a congruent association will generate more positive attitudes toward the brand. Since the brand has proven its credentials for a certain period, the need to look selfless is less urgent. Instead, consumers are going to look for common points and positively regard the synergy the alliance is based on. They will tend to see it as a "win-win" partnership.

HERE ARE THE KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR YOUR FUTURE SOCIAL PARTNERSHIPS:

In any case, you will get better outcomes from a social sponsorship if backed by some sort of philanthropic support

To promote your company's recent involvement in a social cause, you are better not to emphasize the similarities between your company and the sponsored organization, so that consumers do not see your brand as exploiting the cause

To communicate a long-term association to a cause, you should highlight the common points and potential synergies in order to enhance the perceived fit, your legitimacy in the alliance and consumers' attitudes

Demonstrating your values and getting involved seem to be a long-lasting trend. Sponsorship is a great tool to do this, but must be handled carefully in order to make the most of it, for the brand and the cause. Fit and commitment are the essentials.

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TOP SPONSORSHIPS

PICKS FROM THE EDITORIAL DESK

We’ve been following the evolution of sponsorship for many years now. And we’ve seen activations become a lot more refined, due in no small part to the adoption of better practices and the fact that promoters generally have more expertise. But too many sponsorship programs still don’t amount to much more than simple tactical initiatives, characterized by a promo-based approach, a short-term vision and a sub-par activation.

So how do we know good sponsorship programs when we see them?

- They are designed specifically to drive business objectives that aren’t adequately served by traditional communication channels, and these objectives are set in advance and adjusted along the way
- They are rooted in a long-term vision with a firm understanding of their purpose, which is primarily a partnership between two entities
- They have the right human and financial resources to support the objectives and the amount paid in rights, and in sufficient quantities to pull off a good activation
- They draw attention to the natural tie between the two entities in question, or they create a relevant connection in the eyes of consumers with a smart communication campaign
- They are intelligent and surprising
- They come with a measurement program that allows parties to evaluate the success of the initiative

These key elements of success stand the test of time and served as guiding criteria when we looked at sponsorship programs of today and yesterday to showcase some of our favourites. Some programs have existed for years, others are no longer active. Some have big budgets, others don’t; some are local initiatives and others are international in scope. What they share is a savvy application of the points above, and a well-deserved place on our highlight reel.

Do you have interesting cases that you’d like to share? Submit them to info@elevent.co

TOO MANY SPONSORSHIP PROGRAMS STILL DON’T AMOUNT TO MUCH MORE THAN SIMPLE TACTICAL INITIATIVES



01 DHL X FORMULA E

SOMETIMES IT PAYS TO MAKE THE FIRST MOVE

Formula E was launched in 2014 as the world’s first electric street racing series, attracting attention from traditional manufacturers like Audi, Renault and Jaguar, as well as curiosity from many former Formula 1 drivers. With the overall aging of motorsports audiences, Formula E provided a fresh opportunity to gain new audiences for the sport as a whole, and as with the launch of any new series, there was tremendous potential for innovation without any red tape, pre-existing agreements or politics. Formula E’s sustainability narrative is definitely catering to a younger, more eco-sensitive audience, and apart from the environmentally-friendly philosophy, the series also boasts a range of interesting features that mark a clean break from traditional motorsports.

Of course, it can be perilous for a brand to associate with a new property or entity; there is always the risk of it remaining a fringe property that never gets off the ground, as we saw with the very short-lived (and now defunct) XFL, which was backed by pro wrestling titan Vince McMahon. But in the case of Formula E, that risk was mitigated by the backing of the FIA (Fédération Internationale Automobile), and further still alleviated by the support of numerous renowned manufacturers and drivers.

Formula E is also refreshingly disruptive, redefining the boundaries of what a sport can be by fusing entertainment, sustainability, technology and innovation, not unlike e-sport. One example is the Fanboost feature, an avenue designed to get fans directly involved with the events on the track. Clearly drawing inspiration from the engagement success of reality TV, Fanboost lets fans vote for the driver of their choice, giving the three drivers with the most votes a boost they can use for extra power on the track. Another fixture of Formula E race weekend is the eVillage, an entertainment destination that gives fans the chance to get up close and personal with teams and drivers. Fans can also enjoy exclusive music tracks from the resident DJ, which are broadcast on TV and available online.

As one of the founding partners of the series, DHL’s role is the official logistics partner of Formula E. As such, DHL is responsible for all logistical moves of the 10 competing teams, as well as Formula E’s travelling infrastructure. Basically, DHL’s mandate is to deliver Formula E around the world as efficiently as possible, minimizing the Championship’s carbon footprint.

The partnership falls squarely into DHL’s wheelhouse—their mission statement is “Delivering Sustainable Innovation. Fast.”

FORMULA E'S SUSTAINABILITY NARRATIVE IS DEFINITELY CATERING TO A YOUNGER, MORE ECO-SENSITIVE AUDIENCE

Driving progress in sustainability and e-mobility is similarly at the core of Formula E, which acts as a testing ground for new tech in the environment and e-mobility sector, making the series an excellent match with DHL's brand DNA. The global logistics company was the first of its kind to set ambitious sustainability goals, looking to optimize carbon efficiency by 30% by the year 2020 and reduce all logistics-related emissions to net zero by the year 2050. As the transport sector currently accounts for nearly a quarter (23%) of global energy-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, it's an industry-changing commitment that is relevant and well perceived by the brand's core audience.

The partnership, mostly driven by B2B objectives, makes a lot of sense for DHL. It sends a strong message to stakeholders regarding energy reduction costs, which will one day become an advantageous edge in an undifferentiated and competitive environment, both from an operational and an image standpoint. Furthermore, there is likely business income from the partnership to offset the spend on rights fee.

When a brand mostly caters to a business audience, or has commodified products or services, it can be tough to capture consumers' attention. The partnership with Formula E lets DHL tell stories that are more engaging, humanizing their brand and creating a more meaningful consumer connection through various content.

While DHL doesn't necessarily have a very broad and public activation campaign, the PR, content and opportunities on the business side make for a solid sponsorship program. Plus, being the first movers to so boldly partner with the environmentally-friendly series gives them a legitimacy and associated brand attribution that will be hard for competitors to replicate or beat.

B2B-based partnerships are often overlooked because they may own fewer visibility assets, making them more discreet, but they can bring tremendous value to a brand. While B2B companies should consider using sponsorship as a communication tool more often, consumer-based businesses may want to look at adding a business dimension to their programs. It can be as simple as creating a unique experience for clients, engaging the people involved in the distribution network, developing a contest for sales teams, conveying a message to investors, and so on—the possibilities are endless.

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02 AIRBNB X AUDI X OLYMPICS X ART INSTITUTE

AIRBNB'S UNIQUE APPROACH TO THE MARKET IS REFLECTED IN THEIR COMMUNICATION STRATEGY, AND THE CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS THEY BRING TO LIFE

Founded in 2008, Airbnb set out to connect travellers with people ready to lend extra space. The company's out-of-the-box approach took the travelling industry by storm, reshaping the way people seek accommodations around the globe. It also kicked off a buoyant community feel, and has expanded beyond just rentals, offering broader experiences to travellers.

Airbnb has crafted a reputation for attention-grabbing stunts, like the 'Night At' campaign, which is a series of contests that offered buzz-worthy guest experiences like overnights in a floating house, deep in the Paris Catacombs and at a book store. More recently, Airbnb has ventured into a wide array

of partnerships in different areas, setting the brand up to benefit from tremendous reach in multiple branches: "serving the public, building the brand, connecting communities and saving the environment."

While some partnerships take a page from Airbnb's splash-worthy repertoire, like the chance to stay in the plane loft of a decommissioned KLM jet on a runway in Amsterdam, or overnights at Ikea stores, the most interesting examples are recent partnerships with Audi, the Olympics and the Art Institute of Chicago.

AIRBNB HAS CRAFTED A REPUTATION FOR ATTENTION-GRABBING STUNTS, LIKE THE 'NIGHT AT' CAMPAIGN

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AUDI

The car manufacturer partnered with Airbnb as part of its running 6-year sponsorship of the Emmy Awards, featuring the all-new Audi R8 in 2016. The initiative paired an ultimate driving fantasy with a stunningly modern Death Valley house, available on Airbnb. The middle-of-the-desert location was ideal to properly enjoy the fully-fuelled Audi R8 that came with the house, as well as high-speed driving lessons, wide open spaces to set speed records and even a private chef to handle any driving-inspired appetite. At 610 USD a night, the thrilling 3-day experience was a bargain, and it booked in under 6 seconds.

The supporting ad campaign and PR initiatives, created by San Francisco-based agency Venables Bell & Partners, centered around “Desolation,” a 60-second TV spot featuring the Audi R8. This was the first time Audi has collaborated with another brand for a campaign of this size, reported Loren Angelo, vice president of marketing for Audi of America.

We like this partnership for a lot of reasons. Obviously, the production quality was flawless, both in terms of the ad and in managing the complex logistics involved in creating an experience like this in the middle of the desert. But Airbnb has to ensure their stunts continue to be fresh and engaging, avoiding

the consumer fatigue that can come from hitting the same note too often. This partnership, playing alongside the Emmys, was a great way to generate massive new interest from multiple angles. It had excellent storytelling potential for traditional media outlets, and invaluable entertainment support from the car industry media as well. And that’s not even counting Audi’s very strong digital presence, where they outspend traditional media 3-1, or their impressive social presence, where they routinely outreach their competitors. They netted out at about 20 million impressions for the campaign as a whole.

More and more, the new economy lies close to the hearts, minds and value systems of younger audiences. Audi’s ongoing goal is to reach future generations of Audi drivers, and their research shows time and again that connecting with them through their values and interests is an effective way to do just that. That ability to really read and engage with their audience is the sweet spot connecting Audi and Airbnb, as well as a shared passion for forging new paths. “Travel on Airbnb is all about experiences that liven up your sense of adventure and ultimately become a way of life,” explains Airbnb CMO Jonathan Mildenhall. “We love that Audi shares that same spirit and are excited to offer this experience with them to those who live to drive, live to travel and live to adventure.”



RIO OLYMPICS

For the first time ever, the Olympic movement created a sponsorship category called “alternative accommodation,” listing Airbnb as an official Olympic partner for the 2016 Rio Olympics.

On its face, it seems like a straightforward sponsorship initiative, albeit a major coup for Airbnb to team up with the most valuable and prestigious property in the world, for, we imagine, a very fair price. But the back-story to this partnership is a fascinating lesson in seeing need and creating opportunity. With less than 500 days to go until the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, Airbnb proved that home-sharing was not only the best way to experience the world’s largest sporting event, but also the only way Rio could prepare adequate accommodations for such a vast influx of visitors, athletes and supporting teams, all flocking to the city for the two-week-long event. Without more construction, hotels alone simply couldn’t cope.

According to Leonardo Tristao, country manager of Airbnb Brazil, the partnership made perfect sense: “Instead of building more places, more concrete, that have a legacy in the city... sometimes, [with that], you have underutilization [of those hotels] after the Games. Instead, you mobilize the community and have this additional capacity. And then, after the Games, things will settle normally.”

The result was 35,000 listings in the city and more than 55,000 bookings for the duration of the Rio Olympics. On average, hosts made roughly \$1,200 per week.



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Solving a major issue for the organizing committee with such a short time before the event went live was an optimal way for Airbnb to team up with arguably the most illustrious property in the world, all while generating goodwill from key stakeholders, including cities and lawmakers, from around the world. Not to mention the potential for boosting their own brand presence in an emerging market and generating an absolutely staggering amount of global publicity, which might have been the greatest master move of all.

There was simply no need for Airbnb to craft an elaborate activation program, as media from all over the world covered the announcement and kept talk about the unique partnership going throughout the event. The on-site activation was limited to the creation of a gold-themed bedroom, which was designed in advance of the Games and included a full glass wall overlooking the gymnast arena, as a nod to the tactics the brand is best known for.

While not yet an official Olympic partner for the PyeongChang 2018 Winter Olympics, Airbnb has entered into an agreement with Korea’s Gangwon province to provide lodging and promotional support for the Games. Gangwon is facing a similar accommodations shortage for the upcoming Winter Games, and this latest agreement is yet another example of how Airbnb can help local governments quickly scale up available spaces when hosting globally or nationally significant events.

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ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

Airbnb and the Art Institute of Chicago joined forces as part of “Van Gogh’s Bedrooms,” an exhibition featuring three of Van Gogh’s domestic paintings of his bedroom from the late 1880s. The accommodation platform vividly recreates Van Gogh’s famous Yellow Room, giving visitors the chance to stay in a replica of the room from the painting, which is housed at the Art Institute, for just \$10 a night.

The promotional initiative was wildly successful, delivering a 250% spike in ticket sales and generating enormous media interest in more than 100 countries. The project also went on to receive a Gold Award at the Cannes Design Lions.

Quite simply, the activation was ingenious and far from typical of standard property/brand relationships, which often require creating something from the ground up. It’s also a great idea for Airbnb to forge partnerships that move away from pure accommodation to more experiential, as that—creating a community of like-minded people who can meet and share experiences—is what Airbnb is all about.

Even though the industry speaks highly about creating experiences and generating win-win for both properties and brands, all too often that kind of partnership success remains wishful thinking. That’s what sets these Airbnb partnerships apart. Holly Clarke, with Global Social Marketing Operations at Airbnb, sums it up nicely: “Think about what the partners are going to get out of this as much as what you are, and go in with

a strong proposal.” It helps when a brand also has out-of-the-box thinking as a big part of its DNA. With Airbnb, that thinking has proved its worth, as many of these partnerships are not big-budget expenditures in terms of rights fees or activation. Those innovative approaches also tend to generate big interest from media, as nothing beats authentic, truly interesting stories that can capture the imaginations of travellers.

Airbnb isn’t letting up any time soon, with numerous other innovative partnerships in the works, like initiatives with Nest and Tesla to help save energy. The company also created its own event, the Airbnb Open, a community-powered festival of travel and hospitality that celebrates individual cities and their neighborhoods, with, of course, its own sets of partners.

Creating multiple partnerships with brands is in line with the trend we outlined in last year’s edition of the Sponsorship Guidebook, and will gather even more momentum in the future.

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03
H&M X COACHELLA

THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME WE'VE PRAISED H&M FOR THEIR WELL-ROUNDED AND INTEGRATED PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

The fast-fashion brand has become the ultimate reference for music festivals, after eight years of official sponsorship of the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival. Coachella, launched in 1999, is an authority in the music festival scene and acts as the unofficial kick-off of the North-American festival season each April. Every year, H&M uses the platform to curate a special collection for the event, reaching a huge audience of style-savvy, trend-loving music fans. Today, the H&M brand has propelled itself to the forefront of the festival style stage, becoming a cult favourite for many young festival goers.

This is due in part to Coachella being more than just a music event: the festival attracts nearly 200,000 young attendees, but has followers in the millions, many of whom view the Coachella brand as a window into what’s new and what’s hot in lifestyle and fashion trends. The partnership between Coachella and H&M is a fantastic example of a mutually beneficial sponsorship—beyond revenues, Coachella also benefits from the vast communication effort made each year by H&M, as well as exposure to fashion consumers across the US.

This fully-stocked activation campaign, dedicated to the celebration of music and summer, includes a co-branded clothes and accessories collection, an ad campaign, original content, a dedicated landing page, in-store visibility, an on-site activation and pop-up store, the use of PR and influencers and a partnership with alternative pop band, The Atomics.



The involvement of The Atomics, who were playing Coachella for the first time and happen to be made up of four siblings-turned-models, was instrumental to the partnership activation. The band members were featured throughout the campaign, personalizing the products and projecting an image that teens could both identify with and aspire to (not unlike the H&M We Love Horses program we featured in the 2016-2017 Sponsorship Guidebook). Using the band members as models allowed for a really generous dose of content and storytelling angles, which in turn were leveraged across a variety of the brands communication tools: advertising, content, digital and on-site, as well as in PR channels. This unique triad partnership is basically a perfect branding storm, with particular resonance among younger Millennials and Gen Zers.

The H&M Coachella tent, an on-site activation powered by green energy, was there to highlight the brand’s sustainability efforts. It also featured an interactive experience of the Palm Springs House, where the original campaign for the H&M Loves Coachella collection was shot with none other than The Atomics band members.

H&M deployed PR, native advertising and input from top influencers to both support the launch of the Coachella-inspired collection, and to promote the partnership and program, casting a wide net over the combined H&M and Coachella target market.

This partnership, truly exceptional in the way it captured the attention and approval of a relatively young and fashion-focused demographic, gets it right on a number of levels. First and foremost, the activation campaign demonstrates a real understanding of the target audience and what makes them tick. The message and imagery play on the kind of connection and belonging that many teens seek out and gravitate towards. The brand also cleverly lays claim to a unique space and positioning with their music festival fashion story, an angle that continues to reflect positively on their image. In the words of designer Ross Lydon, “H&M has been the first brand to team up with the Coachella festival in order to develop a clothing collection... we love Coachella because we enjoy its democratic spirit and the bonding experience it creates. Coachella is about using fashion to express energy, and that’s what we want too.”

Unfortunately, too many brands struggle to find their own rightful place within a property, and H&M avoided this common pitfall quite beautifully. And while it may not be a viable option for all industries, co-branding a fashion line and integrating those same products in both the campaign and on-site for purchase created a great direct return opportunity for H&M. Generally speaking, we see that selling products on-site can lack finesse and not resonate well, but in this case the brand’s well-earned fashion credibility gives them the legitimacy to do so without negative repercussions from fans.

With the notable exception of hip hop, the music scene can still be slow to view the involvement of brands in anything other than a negative light. The fear of “selling out” is real. But when the integration is managed with style, festival goers have shown themselves happy to embrace it and participate in sharing content they enjoy. Case in point: the #HMLovesCoachella hashtag was used almost 12,000 times. The quality of the content also translated into a strong PR campaign, which then begot still more interesting content, incorporating the participation of influencers like fashion bloggers.

Each year H&M also crosses their t’s and dots their i’s outside of the two-weekend event itself, ensuring they create a sustained activation presence both before and after with more storytelling, content and co-branded products. Generating momentum and finishing well are other areas of notable weakness for activations that H&M neatly sidesteps.

And don’t forget the integration of a cause, as environmental responsibility is an important issue for many of the younger members of the target demographics the brand caters to. The fashion industry is the second largest industry in the world, after all, meaning its impact is indeed sizeable. H&M’s eco-message was present in various aspects of the activation, especially on-site, highlighting some of the initiatives they have in place to alleviate impact, like their clothes recycling program and the Conscious clothing line. Younger generations, however, are far more alert to potential company ‘greenwashing’. Several of the

H&M programs drew criticism. Lucy Siegle, a journalist at The Guardian, pointed out that “given the limitations of current technology, it would likely take H&M up to 12 years to use just 1,000 tons of clothing waste. Meanwhile, it produces that same volume of new clothes in a matter of days.”

But H&M strives to walk the talk, partnering with the World Wildlife Fund with the hopes of addressing “the most material environmental impacts across the company’s value chain with both short- and long-term perspectives,” according to Jochem Verberne, Global Partnerships director at WWF International.

The learnings from this program go on and on, despite the perhaps advantageous position of H&M and Coachella when it comes to brand image, awareness and appreciation. Even so, the brand was exemplary in occupying the partnership space at multiple touchpoints, or what we like to call 3D activation, with their skilled use of content, co-branding and on-site presence. This was truly a multi-faceted partnership, complete with both a band endorsement and causes the target audience could easily identify with. Research tells us that co-branding has a positive impact on brand perception and purchase intent, and H&M’s artful multi-partnership management, brand authenticity and rich brand narrative back that up.

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04 BREITLING X AVIATION

BREITLING’S TRUE AVIATION HERITAGE LIVES ON THROUGH ITS PARTNERSHIPS

Premium brands often forge an identity by aligning with prestigious and exclusive heritage pastimes, like equestrian sports, yachting, motorsports and aviation, although some brands create the link with more success than others. Throughout its history, Breitling has become synonymous with aviation, and now looks to various partnerships to maintain that heritage and brand association.

The company was one of the last major independent Swiss watch brands to be purchased in early 2017, and it retains about 5% of the luxury watch market. Breitling is also one of the few companies that produces its own mechanical chronograph movements, entirely developed and manufactured in its own workshops. Their claim to fame is having “shared all the finest moments in the conquest of the skies,” a claim based on their product innovations, reliability and overall sturdiness. That dedication to quality led pilots to frequently choose Breitling watches and pocket chronographs over others, as well as the onboard chronographs for aircraft cockpits. This storied association stretches throughout the watchmaker’s rich history, dating back to 1884.

Over the years, Breitling has acquired a broad series of assets to support its brand positioning. These include the world’s largest civilian jet team, the Breitling Wingwalkers, a team of aerial acrobats who perform on the wings of a plane while it’s in flight, and a Breitling-sponsored team in the Red Bull Air Race World Championship, a world-renowned aviation sporting event.

Aside from their partnerships, the watchmaker also owns several impressively iconic planes; the legendary Super Constellation, first launched in 1943, and a Breitling DC-3. These historic planes can be deployed to generate buzz-worthy attention for the brand, or further enrich their connection with their aviation roots, as they did with the 2017 “Breitling DC-3 World Tour,” marking 77 years to the day of its first flight.

Like many premium watchmakers, Breitling taps into endorsement power to create interest for the brand, generating unique content and using well-known personalities in their advertising. Their partnership with John Travolta spans over a decade, with the actor a brand ambassador since 2005.

Travolta has been a great fit for the brand, as he's a lifelong aviation fan and certified pilot of an impressive (and somewhat surprising) range of aircrafts, including the Boeing 747-400 jumbo jet. With a small collection of his own planes and a private runway at his Florida residence, he's been comfortably featured in much of Breitling's advertising, like the 2015 Breitling Navitimer campaign, "Profession: Pilot, Career: Acting."

The Breitling brand has created a myriad range of ties to the aviation theme, keeping their positioning and the spirit of the brand both retrospective and freshly modern. The partnerships are generally extremely media-friendly, with high levels of visibility and a better chance of remaining top of mind. For example, the Breitling Wingwalkers alone have generated an estimated value of 8 million USD in brand visibility a year. And the sponsorship of the the 1999 Orbiter 3 balloon, the first successful nonstop balloon flight around the world (beating Virgin founder Richard Branson's very public attempts in the process) generated an estimated 130 million USD in media exposure.

THROUGHOUT ITS HISTORY, BREITLING HAS BECOME SYNONYMOUS WITH AVIATION, AND NOW LOOKS TO VARIOUS PARTNERSHIPS TO MAINTAIN THAT HERITAGE AND BRAND ASSOCIATION

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These investments have not only generated big numbers in terms of media value, but have reinforced brand attributes and positioning that can be make or break in the premium watch category. Content is king and Breitling makes sure they have plenty of stories to tell, connecting their heritage narrative with contemporary aviation hooks.

The single greatest takeaway from this program? In a word, focus. Programs that are narrow and deep tend to generate better results for brands, especially when they stick to their established turf. Migrating from property to property, or across various categories, ends up not generating much in terms of value, and runs the risk of helping competing brands grab a bigger piece of the market.

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05 DICK'S SPORTING GOODS FOUNDATION

DICK'S SPORTING GOODS' COMMITMENT TO YOUTH SPORTS THROUGH THE SPORTS MATTER PLATFORM IS A GREAT EXAMPLE OF SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT THAT BENEFITS THE CAUSE AND THE COMPANY

DICK'S Sporting Goods is facing a new challenging environment. The digitalization of the retail industry has deeply transformed consumers' habits and generated new competition. Although DICK'S Sporting Goods is still the leading brick-and-mortar sporting goods retailer, in 2016, 74% of American consumers purchased sports items online through Amazon, 25% used Ebay, and only 21% shopped with DICK'S website. Having a strong brand image is crucial to standing out in an increasingly competitive landscape, and the company is set to create the relevant differentiation they need through Sports Matter, a platform for involvement in youth sports.

Researchers are resoundingly unanimous: sports play a critical role in the development of children and adolescents, and the benefits go way beyond the playing field. Athletic activities have a longer-range impact on health, personal development, education and career. Physically active kids have higher test scores, and student athletes are more likely to attend college and go on to get a degree. Yet youth sports are facing a funding crisis in the US. Between 2009 and 2011, 3.5 billion dollars were cut from school sports budgets, and it's currently estimated that 27% of public high schools won't have any sports program at all by 2020. And it's of little surprise that families with low incomes are likelier to have to cut access to sports due to costs.

In 2014, DICK'S Sporting Goods stepped in with their Sports Matter initiative, which included a 50 million dollar commitment and has already helped saved over 1,800 youth sports teams in communities across the US.

To pull it off, Sports Matter partnered with DonorsChoose.org, a well-known crowdfunding website driven by teachers. Together, they connect public school teams with thousands of donors to help them get necessary funding for their projects.

For a limited time, the DICK'S Sporting Goods Foundation matched the funding of any team's project once they had received half the amount they were seeking from crowdfunded donations.

The company also used its retail network to place cause-marketing products, and to give DICK'S customers the chance to contribute both to its foundation and to the fight against the youth sports funding crisis.

The initiative was anchored by a strongly compelling advertising campaign, which featured videos of students struggling but finding their purpose through sports, and ultimately receiving much-needed support from the initiative so they could carry on practicing the activity they loved and needed to thrive.

In addition, DICK'S acquired two digital companies to refine and launch DICK'S Team Sports HQ, a free digital platform that offered three key services for youth sports organizations: online registration and team/league websites, custom uniforms and FanWear, and access to donations and sponsorships. On every FanWear purchase, the team earns a contribution back. DICK'S Team Sports HQ also includes an app that delivers insights and instant game recap stories to players, parents and coaches throughout the season.

Despite being relatively new, the Sports Matter initiative already has reach that goes beyond simple donations or sponsorships, weaving in connected areas of interest and distinct competencies. While other companies struggle or restrict their social commitment to one-dimensional tactics, DICK'S has fully integrated their initiative into their brand strategy and positioning. From there, the company has stretched their offering into multiple and diverse marketing, sponsorship and philanthropic actions.

JOIN US IN SAVING YOUTH SPORTS

By 2020, 27% of U.S. Public High Schools
will be without sports programs.

The youth sports cause gels naturally with the company's core business and growth goals: consumers can easily and intuitively understand how the brand can have hands-on impact for the cause, and see the synergy between them. Focus and commitment provide key traction in making this initiative a success.

The challenge when companies commit to a cause is finding a way to adequately communicate the emotional appeal. DICK'S has excelled in sharing their particular story, making it all the more engaging and relatable. The company's wide scope provides a national communication platform, all while offering very localized and concrete actions that makes participation simple and appealing.

While the scope of the program may be national, the direct cost to DICK'S is offset by the involvement of its consumers. When a brand enables change or progress in such a relevant way, the cost-sharing of a philanthropic initiative is much less likely to be ill-perceived. The DICK'S initiative shows that there are multiple ways to approach donation and philanthropy, and when a brand innovates the way they bring about positive change, these investments can become working dollars without incurring criticism.

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06 ELECTRONIC BEATS BY DEUTSCH TELEKOM

WITH ITS LONG-LASTING PROGRAM ELECTRONIC BEATS, DEUTSCH TELEKOM CREATED AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT WITH MUSIC ENTHUSIASTS OVER A SHARED PASSION, AND TO ESTABLISH LEGITIMACY IN THE UNDERGROUND CULTURE

Electronic Beats is an international music platform set up in 2000 by Deutsch Telekom to celebrate the underground global electronic music scene. The program offers consumers diverse experiences and content, like interviews, DJ mixes, concerts and live streams, through a variety of channels: websites, social media, live events, magazine (until 2011), TV, radio and, more recently, nightclubs.

Electronic Beats also offers a series of festivals and live events, from a multi-city festival with a wide variety of renowned artists from around the world to a five-day festival in Cologne that included club nights, concerts, exhibitions, workshops and more. This year, Deutsch Telekom partnered with the group Gorillaz to enrich its platform, organizing the first live conversation with virtual characters from the band and broadcasting on Telekom Electronic Beats' YouTube channel. The brand also released The Lenz, a free app that turns any magenta surface (Deutsch Telekom's official colour) into a virtual portal with access to exclusive Gorillaz content. With this tech-friendly and innovative use of their network, the brand is able to bring fans closer to the artists they so enjoy.

As part of the platform, the brand also launched Telekom Electronic Beats Clubnights to bring iconic international artists to some of the most prestigious underground clubs in Germany. As Ralf Lülldorf, head of International Music Marketing at Deutsch Telekom explains, this new initiative will allow the company to cater to "a large number of partygoers, a large part of our target audience, in their familiar environment," going on to specify that, "with its long-standing loyal community, our music program addresses the valuable Millennial target audience at eye level."

The "loyal community" he mentions is a key element of the program. By definition, any underground community is notoriously hard to tap into, but if a brand is able to penetrate their core target audience there, it's a very effective strategy. The harder it is to get into a community, the more engaged people within that community tend to be. From a sponsorship perspective, the more engaged an audience is, the more naturally receptive they can in turn be to the sponsor's message.

A complementary match and long-term commitment are also helping drive the success of this program. The brand has been active in the music sector for a long time, establishing the legitimacy of its music partnerships through longevity and an ever-growing number of initiatives. Today the brand also sponsors the International Telekom Beethoven Competition Bonn, a classical music contest for young pianists, and Telekom Street Gigs, a showcase of famous artists performing at non-traditional venues.

Creating program from scratch gives a brand control and the potential to really stand out. On the flipside, the danger of such programs is the temptation to over-promote the brand or its products. Discretion can be one of your best allies as a sponsor, as many consumers develop avoidance mechanisms when faced with direct or over-bold attempts to advertise to them. The strength of a sponsorship like this one is its subtlety, with an activation that uses a soft approach and focuses on technology, which is part of Deutsch Telekom's core business and value system. Rather than pushing the brand's message, Electronic Beats zeroes in on what the audience actually wants, and the brand has put real energy into to discovering—and delivering—what content or experiences will make a positive difference to their target.

As Deutsch Telekom operates in many countries across Europe, it needed a concept that would address global corporate objectives and still be flexible enough to adapt to local subsidiaries. Electronic Beats meets both needs. The program nourishes and reinforces Deutsch Telekom's global positioning, "Life's for sharing," by creating memorable moments that encourage sharing, and addresses market-specific objectives with its sub-initiatives, like the Telekom Electronic Beats Clubnights.

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07 PROJECT PABST

WHILE SOME WILL ARGUE THAT THIS IS NOT SO MUCH SPONSORSHIP AS EVENT MARKETING, WE SAY PROJECT PABST IS ITS OWN PROPERTY—AND IT'S BRILLIANT

Now the largest American-owned brewery, the producer of Old Milwaukee, Colt 45 and, of course, Pabst Blue Ribbon (PBR), was established in Milwaukee in 1844. The iconic beer rose to the top four in the US until it peaked in the mid-1960s, followed by a severe 40-year decline in sales, where the brand lost 90% of its market volume between 1978 and 2001.

Unexpectedly, the brand benefited from a revival at the turn of the millennium, as it became suddenly popular amongst young trendsetters. Contrary to other beer brands, it was precisely because the brand was not advertising that it came back into favour.

What drew new consumer segments to the brand, besides its low cost, was the fact that the unpopularity of the beer actually made it cool. Bike messengers and Brooklyn hipsters appropriated the brand for themselves and redefined it. It was a counter-intuitive approach, and the marketing efforts to sustain the movement had to follow suit—or risk alienating the precious influencers.

The Pabst movement was born from then on, skilfully supported by the brand without alienating its core consumers. (Surprising) examples abound, from courier bike races to the popular Instagram handle pbr_art, which presents art inspired by, or made from, Pabst containers. It has 16,000 followers. From among all the partnerships, the music scene seems to be particularly welcoming to PBR, as the rate of sale is 18% higher in music venues than other bars.

After 15 years of supporting music events, the brand innovated once again, while maintaining their fringe, non-mainstream image, with a non-festival called Project Pabst, which launched in Portland, Oregon in 2014. Matt Slessler, national brand ambassador at Pabst Brewing Company, explains the rationale behind that choice: “We were supporting music events, lifting them off the ground just to see a big player steal it with money. We are a pretty unique brand so we are pretty specific on what we like. We are not the first ones to invent something like that but we thought, we would love to have one festival where we curated the music and set the prices, have our own vision, our own ethos.”



From the outside, it may look like an all PBR-event, but the brand partnered with Superfly, producers of Bonnaroo and Outside Lands, to bring the event to life. By choosing just the right partner, PBR didn't need to relinquish control of the event, and was able to stay involved at every step to create something reflective of the brand. The initiative is structured and effective, but Project Pabst is also unique in that it falls into the category of marketing expense. As Slessler succinctly puts it, “[they] are a beer company selling beer, but also marketing a festival.” In 2016, on the heels of two successful years in Portland that saw audiences of over 20,000, the brewer added Denver, Atlanta and Philadelphia to the roster of Project Pabst sold-out events, totalling 32,000 festival goers.

So what sets the event apart, according to Slessler? “Project Pabst offers a unique experience, incorporating music, art, hands-on experiences, as well as food and beer at reasonable ‘non-festival’ prices.” At its core, Project Pabst is a music festival with other forms of (branded) entertainment their consumers enjoy, such as PBRcade, old-school arcades at the event, or PBR Vandalism, an art experience that uses—you guessed it—a van as a canvas. There's PBR Wax, a mobile studio where people can record their own music demo on a vinyl 45. And each city has a limited-edition PBR can, designed by a local artist whose work gets plenty of visibility (a lot of beer gets sold). To top it off, one dollar from every ticket goes to the Jeremy Wilson Foundation, which is dedicated to the overall well-being of individual musicians and their families.



Project Pabst has a limited number of their own partners, like Polaroid, CAR2GO, Dr. Martens, Kettle brand and other service providers. Slessler explains, “that allows us to work with the sponsors that we like and not only look at money.”

We love Project Pabst because it captures the spirit of the brand so well and offers an opportunity for numerous brand aficionados to get involved directly. For the 2016 edition, the event trended worldwide No. 1 on Instagram, which says a lot.

In the words of Superfly partner Rich Goodstone, Project Pabst “sits at the nexus of everything we do. We're working on behalf of a brand, but we're creating what we call 'consumer funded marketing.' Pabst is creating a festival, and people are willing to pay for that experience, yet it's an incredible brand platform to leverage against all of their media, point-of-purchase, on-can



stuff, retail promotions, in-store; it all ladders into this overall event festival. That feels really good, especially when there are revenues coming in from those experiences.”

In the end, everybody wins. “We sold a lot of beer leading up to the festival because of the very cool thing we were doing—we are the gritty underdog” adds Slessler. Indeed, consumer response is very positive: “they are wowed, because we come from a good place,” offering an affordable festival while supporting touring musicians and galvanizing local stakeholders.

With less money to spend than their bigger competitors, PBR needed to follow another route, and they did so with admirable skill and smarts. A program that can generate revenues from tickets sales and put the product, a gold medal winning beer at just \$3, in the hands of consumers, deserves a lot of credit.

The biggest takeaway from Project Pabst is that brands don't need to leech on to existing properties to see success. The endeavour can be pricier than a traditional sponsorship, but creating a platform allows for bringing other partnering brands on board to share some of the costs. It also helps in establishing an unexplored angle, one that's different from the rest of the market. When you're an underdog, don't compete in the same arena as the big players—create your own arena and beat them there.

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08 CHEVROLET X ONE WORLD PLAY PROJECT

FINDING A NEW GEAR FOR A GOOD CAUSE IS A GREAT RECIPE FOR BOTH PARTIES



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While the automotive sector is a major sponsorship category, these types of partnerships may be difficult to activate with a relevant message. Chevrolet found an untapped niche that fit both its objectives and its brand values.

Indeed, Chevrolet, while enjoying strong recognition in the US, was looking to build greater brand awareness and affinity with potential buyers abroad, since more than 60% of its sales were overseas.

The car maker found the right vehicle with One World Play Project. The non-profit was born of a heart-wrenching sight: a man came across a video of refugee children playing football with a ball made from trash and twine in the mid-2000s, and set out to invent an indestructible football that would give more children the chance to play.

“One World Futbol Project is about play – when play happens, progress happens,” said founder Tim Jahnigen. “When we play, conflicts are momentarily forgotten, collaboration begins, despair is replaced by joy. Play enables hope, opportunity and optimism in the most dire of situations. While the ball technology is unique, the real magic is not in the ball: it is what happens when children are allowed to play. The ball is a tool that unlocks the human potential.”

Chevrolet has been a partner of the initiative since 2012, joining forces to help bring these footballs to more children around the world. The footballs often make their way to harsh environments, where standard footballs would have a limited lifespan. Made of ethylene-vinyl acetate foam and self-inflating, the One World Futbol is intelligently designed to withstand such conditions. These tweaks make them virtually indestructible, and the ball even boasts a 4.3/5 rating on Amazon. The folks at Chevrolet, car experts that they are, have even submitted the product to the same rigorous testing as their cars to ensure the balls stay inflated.

Today, over 1.6 million balls have been donated by Chevrolet and distributed in over 90 countries, touching more than 48 million lives in war-stricken zones, refugee camps, disaster areas and other underprivileged communities. The commitment will continue through at least 2018, as the brand will distribute an additional two million Chevrolet-branded One World Futbols.

The partnership gives Chevrolet the opportunity to involve local stakeholders, such as local dealers who deliver the balls in remote areas. There have been other positive changes as a result of the initiative, like the creation of youth sports leagues, and the brand has been able to collect powerful video content with truly inspiring stories to share across various outlets.

Involvement with the non-profit serves as an additional tie-in with Chevrolet’s overall football investment, as the brand’s main partnership is with iconic Manchester United, a relationship that started in 2014 and is set to run until 2021. The car maker is dedicating some assets to working with the players of the team to give back to communities and fans.

According to John Gasloli, senior manager, Global Marketing of Chevrolet, “half the world population is a fan, a follower or a player of football. There is no other sport that attracts such an audience. It creates emotional connections with buyers of cars, shows we care, that we are a brand that wants to make a difference in people’s lives.”

With this partnership, Chevrolet has been able to venture into uncharted territory and take on a cause as the only sponsor, growing it and growing with it. When on the lookout for sponsorship opportunities, the road less travelled may require more work, but can deliver greater results. A degree of caution, however, is recommended when entering into an agreement with a fairly recent venture. For one, other partners may join and cast an unexpectedly big shadow over an otherwise open field. And secondly, as an organization grows, it may become uncomfortably expensive to stay aligned with the property. To avoid those setbacks, a sponsor should think about crafting an agreement with longer-term vision. Plan on giving sufficient resources to remain a major, or negotiate founding partner benefits with options to control the costs associated with the property.

Ultimately, linking a cause to a commercial partnership allows a brand to embark on an initiative with more deeply-rooted authenticity, stepping away from perceptions of self-interest and moving toward the greater good for everyone involved.

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CONCLUSION

You've either just finished reading all of our latest Guidebook or simply the bits that fueled your interests. Either way, we're glad you took the time and we hope you enjoyed it.

The Relevant Sponsorship Guidebook is consistent with the vision we had when we founded Elevent 4 years ago. We all saw Steve Jobs's brilliant speech at Stanford where his final words were "Stay hungry, stay foolish." That advice strongly resonated with us at the time, and even though our agency has grown significantly since then (we now service over 80 clients in 3 countries), we like to think that we live by this statement and will for years to come. This Guidebook is the expression of our boundless curiosity, passion and desire to share our vision of what "great looks like" in sponsorship.

This is important to us, as one of our core founding values is to make sponsorship more accessible. In addition to this Guidebook, our blog and newsletter provide you with additional insights and ultimately, you might want to attend Relevant, our exclusive conference on sponsorship. If you haven't heard of it, don't worry; the event can only host 100 attendees, as we want to create the perfect collaborative environment to build strong ties among participants. Eight keynote speakers, most of whom are internationally renowned, challenge attendees' sponsorship visions in workshops so that they can improve their skills and, most importantly, take away something that they can directly apply the next day in the office. The 3rd edition will take place on November 7 and 8, 2017 at the Auberge St-Gabriel. More information and tickets can be found on our website: relevantconference.com.

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