



## STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS

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For-profit companies have traditionally provided only a small fraction of museum revenues. Increasingly, however, these companies are recognizing the marketing power of being associated with respected cultural institutions. Although the concept is not new, high-profile advocates, including Bill Gates, have revitalized the concept of “doing well by doing good.” This renewed interest in “strategic philanthropy” provides museums with an opportunity to tap corporate marketing budgets for financial support.

Critics argue that museums cannot accept corporate sponsorships and remain true to their mission. However, as the movie “Jerry Maguire” demonstrates, the pursuit of financial success need not be incompatible with one’s values, but that pursuit should be second place to them. To effectively take advantage of the renewed interest in corporate largess while remaining true to their mission, museums need to take a number of important steps.

### **Know Your Organization**

Before you can effectively solicit corporate support, you must first take the time to understand your own organization. Businesses want to know the advantages of investing in your organization and, in particular, how their investment will further their own business goals. A clear knowledge of the demographics of your membership and visitors, and the strengths of your museum’s image and reputation, is crucial. Similarly, to effectively solicit a corporate sponsor, you need to understand the business goals of the company you want to approach. You need to be able to clearly and concisely explain the benefits you can offer a potential corporate sponsor and be prepared to demonstrate the unique “fit” between the two organizations. Successful corporate sponsorships take time to develop – just like building a membership base or cultivating donors, it is crucial to establish an ongoing relationship with potential corporate sponsors. Waiting until there is an urgent need is usually not effective.

### **Adopt Clear Policies**

In addition to self-evaluation, it is important for your museum board to adopt a corporate sponsorship policy before you begin soliciting. According to the “Guidelines for Museums in Developing and Managing Business Support” prepared by the American Association of Museums, “it is essential that each museum draft its own policies, appropriate to its mission, regarding its interaction with businesses.” The process of preparing guidelines for corporate sponsorship helps the museum to proactively consider issues which may arise with a particular corporate sponsorship and to determine – without undue influence – how the museum wishes to address these issues in light of its mission and values.

Establishing criteria and procedures regarding corporate sponsorships provides consistency in handling individual sponsorship opportunities, facilitates the acceptance of sponsorships, helps in the maintenance of those relationships, enhances the museum’s reputation, and empowers staff to seek corporate funding opportunities. A sponsorship policy should at a minimum include a description of acceptable forms of sponsorship, acceptable uses of the organization’s image, logo and trademarks, and specify the criteria and procedures for accepting corporate sponsorships.

### **Prepare Your Presentation**

When actively soliciting corporate sponsorships, it is important to prepare a detailed sponsorship package which clearly spells out what your museum can offer the potential sponsor and sets out a pricing schedule and other key elements of the proposal. Pricing corporate sponsorships should be done with care. Too often museums seriously undervalue their corporate sponsorship packages, basing them solely on what the museum believes is needed for a given project or on a mistaken belief of what would be reasonable to ask of a given sponsor. Ideally, pricing should reflect the perceived value to the sponsor of the marketing opportunity. This may depend on the number of visitors anticipated, and the degree of exposure the company will receive. It is well worth the time and effort to do market research into the value of the sponsorship package you are proposing, and to base that value on the quantifiable benefits the museum can deliver. Remember, you are not asking for a handout but proposing a partnership with mutual benefits to both the museum and the sponsoring company.



## Put It in Writing

Once you have interested a company in providing a sponsorship, it is important to draft a detailed sponsorship agreement. The process of drafting the sponsorship agreement is important in helping to manage expectations about the relationship. The sponsorship agreement should address what services will be provided and what rights will be granted. It should address whether and to what extent the sponsorship is exclusive, and should describe acceptable uses of both the museum's and the sponsor's intellectual property, including logos, trademarks, brands and any programmatic materials. The sponsorship agreement should also include provisions for terminating the agreement for non-performance by either the sponsor or the museum. Above all, the sponsorship agreement should require strict adherence to the museum's sponsorship policy. Too often museums hesitate to treat the sponsorship in a businesslike fashion – but from the company's perspective, this can indicate a lack of professionalism. Companies expect to deal in concrete terms and are used to the contracting process.

## Show Me the Money

By knowing your museum's mission and values, establishing clear and objective corporate sponsorship policies, and pursuing corporate sponsorship opportunities in a professional and businesslike manner, museums can successfully develop corporate sponsorship relationships and remain true to their organizational mission and values.

In the movie "Jerry Maguire," Tom Cruise plays the role of a sports agent who has a crisis of conscience. After quitting his job and starting his own agency, his sole client, football player Rod Tidwell, gives Maguire a lesson in family values. After telling Maguire he will keep him as his agent, Tidwell teaches Maguire his family motto:

Tidwell: This is what I'm going to do for you: God bless you, Jerry. But this is what you gonna do for me, Jerry?

Maguire: Yeah, what can I do for you, Rod? You just tell me what can I do for you?

Tidwell: It's something very personal, a very important thing. Hell! It's a family motto. Are you ready, Jerry? I wanna make sure you're ready, brother. Here it is: Show me the money. SHOW! ME! THE! MONEY! Jerry, it is such a pleasure to say that! Say it with me one time, Jerry!

Maguire: Show you the money.

Tidwell: No, no. You can do better than that! I want you to say it, brother, with meaning! Hey, I got Bob Sugar on the other line. I bet he can say it!

Maguire: Ye, ye, no, no, no. Show you the money.

Tidwell: No! Not show you! Show me the money!

Maguire: Show me the money!

Tidwell: Yeah! Louder!

Maguire: Show me the money!

Tidwell: I need to feel you, Jerry!

Maguire: Show me the money! Show me the money!

Despite what critics say, museums can remain true to their mission and values so long as their pursuit of financial success remains a means to further those goals, and not an end in itself. To do that, a museum must have a clearly articulated set of values and establish a process for evaluating funding opportunities before pursuing corporate sponsorships.