

HOW NOT TO APPROACH POTENTIAL CORPORATE SPONSORS

By Gail S. Bower

Three non-profit organizations with which I have no relationship recently sent me proposals to sponsor their events so that Bower & Co. could reach:

- families and children;
- North America's business leaders;
- the fashion industry's elite.

The first thought that came to mind when I opened the envelopes and read these invitations was, in a word, "Huh?"

Bower & Co. Consulting LLC clients are non-profit leaders. That's pretty clear from reading the second sentence of the web site (<http://www.GailBower.com>). What is also clear to me is that none of these organizations did its homework, and their staffs do not understand how to market and sell sponsorship.

Sponsorship opportunities through events and other programs provide solutions to business objectives for corporate partners. A solution, by its nature, is a way to address a problem or opportunity. The only way you will succeed in discovering the problem or opportunity of a potential sponsor is through building a relationship. Relationships are built on trust, not on unsolicited piles of mail.

It's tempting to think that direct mail would be a simple solution to marketing sponsorship. We all know that idea of throwing it out there and seeing what sticks. But that concept does not work in sponsorship.

Would you sign up for cardiac surgery through a generic solicitation through the

mail? Would you invest \$10,000, \$50,000, or \$150,000, with a financial advisor you've never heard of who sent you a proposal by mail? Furthermore, would you invest any amount of money with an organization that clearly spent zero time and energy trying to understand your target demographics and business purpose?

Now you understand what it must be like for corporations on the receiving end of these proposals. Bower & Co. Consulting LLC is hardly a household name, and my office received three proposals in half a year. Imagine what Coca-Cola, P&G, and banks receive.

The purpose of your proposal is to put forth an idea, a plan, an action or a suggestion that meets your prospect's business outcomes for his or her consideration. The proposal documents a discussion and outlines the tenets *and* the value of your sponsorship opportunity.

If you're sending unsolicited proposals by the truckload, stop. Spend the time, money, and energy researching and building relationships with your prospects. Identify how your sponsorship program meets their business and marketing goals. Then write your proposal.

By the way, all three organizations that solicited Bower & Co. pledged that someone would be contacting me within weeks. No one did.

(432 words)

Gail Bower, President, Bower & Co. Consulting LLC, specializes in raising the visibility, revenue, and impact of non-profit organizations. She's a professional consultant, author, and speaker, with 20 years of experience managing some of the country's most important events, festivals and sponsorships. (*Business Philadelphia* named Gail among the "100 People to Watch" in 1993.) Launched in Philadelphia in 1987, today Bower & Co. provides marketing and business development counsel and implements marketing programs. For more information, visit GailBower.com or contact her at 1-866/36-BOWER (1-866-362-6937). © 2006 Gail S. Bower. All rights reserved.

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