



Securing your Hook A Kid On Golf Sponsorships

Fundraising is a very integral part of being able to provide a Hook A Kid On Golf program that meets and exceeds the expectations of your participants. The National Office has always stressed the need to make your local Hook A Kid On Golf program a community-wide effort to ensure quality and sustainability. We have put together the following guide to help you, our Hook A Kid On Golf Site Coordinator, reach out to potential corporate sponsors in a professional manner to try to secure the funds that are necessary to sustain and grow your program.

Step 1: Determine which corporations you will target

You will want to find companies with a strong presence in your community and determine if they have a community commitment (charitable goals) that is in-line with the goals of Hook A Kid On Golf. Options may include:

- 1) Corporations headquartered in your region
- 2) Branches of large companies
- 3) Local businesses
- 4) Local sports teams

Make sure you are going after the right corporate sponsor category. Because Hook A Kid On Golf programs provide a wide variety of benefits, the community outreach goals of most corporations will fit nicely with the Hook A Kid On Golf goals. Some of the goals of Hook A Kid On Golf are as follows:

- 1) Provide participants with the skills needed to participate in a healthy, lifelong activity
- 2) Provide participants with many quality life skills that are obtained through golf
 - a. Honesty, Integrity, Perseverance, Respect, Responsibility, etc.
- 3) Many programs reach underserved and at risk participants
- 4) And much more!!

Step 2: Utilize Personal Relationships

Ask your committee and/or Board Members for contacts they may have at the corporations on your list of targeted prospects. If somebody with a stronger relationship with a corporation in your community can reach out on your behalf that may be more successful. It's difficult to have success with "cold calls", so having an "in" with a company will usually make reaching the right people easier.

Things to remember:

- 1) Bring a clipboard with a sign-up sheet to committee and Board meetings so members can list those companies they have a personal connection with. They very well may also provide suggestions on companies you may not have thought of during your research phase.
- 2) Ask committee and Board members whether they're willing to do the outreach directly, whereby they sign the letter, or if they prefer the letter comes from you with them referenced within the body.

- a. If one of your members is willing to sign a letter directly, offer to have the letter drafted on their behalf so all they need to do is sign their name. You then actually put the letters into envelopes and mail. This ensures it gets done. If they want to personalize the letter, we recommend they handwrite a note on the printed letter itself rather than redrafting a new letter, although flexibility is important.
- b. If a member is merely referenced, it would be beneficial if they were willing to make a phone call after the letter was mailed. On this call they can ensure the recipient received the letter (and read it). It also acts as an endorsement of the organization and program as well as addresses any questions.

Step 3: Develop Your Offering

You will want to prepare well thought out sponsorship opportunities that provide a variety of options. In order to do that, you will want to take a close look at several factors:

- 1) Review previous year's program
 - a. Identify the obstacles that were overcome with the implementation of your Hook A Kid On Golf program
 - b. Determine which pitfalls to avoid in the coming year
 - c. Identify the things your program did successfully and make sure to replicate those
- 2) If possible, provide demographics on your program participants:
 - a. Number of anticipated participants
 - b. General socioeconomic status of participants
 - c. Age range of participants
 - d. Gender breakdown of participants
- 3) Before developing the financial commitment associated with each sponsorship level, there are several considerations to review:
 - a. What sponsorship levels worked in previous years?
 - b. Is there enough benefit differentiation between the various levels? If you are only seeking \$125 sponsorships for participants then you won't need to create multiple levels/sponsorship opportunities.
 - c. How does your sponsorship offering compare to similar fundraisers?
 - d. How much time is there to promote your sponsors? You'll want to thank them as often and as publicly as often. Make sure your sponsors are aware that you will "get their name out" as a program sponsor.
- 4) Draft the sponsorship levels and what the benefits are to the corporations at each level. Reference to the sponsors at each level can tie into the Hook A Kid On Golf theme such as:
 - a. Eagle Sponsor, Birdie Sponsor, Par Sponsor. If a first-time program, could be termed Founding Sponsor.
 - b. Other types of sponsorships: Table sponsor, Activity sponsor, Award Reception, Lunch sponsor, etc.
- 5) Sponsor benefits usually include acknowledgement in the following ways:

- a. Pre-event promotion
- b. Invitation to program
- c. Links to sponsors websites from the host organization's website
- d. Event signage/banner
- e. Verbal thank you at the event
- f. Gift – such as a plaque for recognition

Step 4: Understand Sponsors Motivation

You will want to determine to the best of your ability what each potential sponsor you approach will want to get out of their sponsorship. This may vary from company to company, but most will want to achieve any one (or all) of the following:

- 1) **Brand building:** Corporations are willing to sponsor a Hook A Kid On Golf program if the programs goals and outcomes align with the key messages a company wishes to communicate.
- 2) **Marketing:** If a sponsor views your guests as viable prospective clients their sponsorship participation can often be derived from marketing dollars reserved for client cultivation. For example, you may have a company such as Sports Authority or Dick's Sporting Goods that would like to reach the youth (and their parents) of your program.
- 3) **Meets their charitable goals:** If your project aligns with their philanthropic efforts you have a better chance of attracting their support. A few examples would be 1) reaching underserved youth, 2) promoting healthy/active lifestyles, and 3) developing the "character" of a community's youth through golf's intrinsic values.

Step 5: Craft Your Letter

When writing your letter to a potential sponsor, it is important to follow a few basic principles.

- 1) Keep your cover letter to one page.
- 2) In the first paragraph list anyone associated with your organization that has a direct relationship. (For example: Your long-time customer, John Doe, who is on our Board asked me to invite you to be a sponsor our Hook A Kid On Golf program...)
- 3) If there are celebrities or noteworthy community/industry leaders attending your Hook A Kid On Golf program, mention them in the first paragraph.
- 4) Make sure your letter includes the following:
 - a. Name of the program, time, and location
 - b. Name of your organization and its mission
 - c. What you want them to sponsor
 - d. Your contact information
 - e. When you will call them to follow-up
- 5) Have someone proofread your letter before it is sent out to check for grammar, typos, spelling, etc. If you rely just on your own set of eyes you often miss the smallest of errors.

- 6) Make sure your letters are personalized to whomever you are sending them to. Do not send a letter 'To Whom It May Concern'. If you don't know who the decision maker is at the corporation, do a bit of research to find the CEO who will surely forward your letter to the right person.

Step 6: Outreach

There are three types of prospects in order of preference.

- 1) Previous corporate sponsors. Note that many corporations choose to sponsor an event only one time so they can spread their reach to a broader audience over the years. Hence, do not be disappointed if a past Sponsor says no.
- 2) Referenced sponsors. Those personal contacts from your Board or committee are most important for prospective sponsors.
 - a. Keep in mind that the personal contacts may not be the final decision maker within the organization.
- 3) New sponsors. Commonly referred to as 'Cold Calls' since there is no 'warm lead'. Usually the most difficult category of prospective sponsors, often solicitation committee members get discouraged. Turn it from a qualitative process to a quantitative one. For example: for every twenty letters sent out, your goal could be to get five calls and then one company to request a meeting. For each meeting, your goal is to convert half to sponsors of your event.
 - a. Remember, even if a company turns you down for your upcoming program, you are building the underpinnings of a future sponsor.

Step 7: Follow-Up

You must assume prospective sponsors will not contact you directly; it is your responsibility to contact them.

- 1) Whether you called the prospects before you sent your letter and sponsorship overview or not, always follow-up via phone within five to seven days after the letter was mailed.
- 2) If someone does not return your call, that does not mean they have said No to you. You should continue to call back until you get a positive or negative response. We recommend spacing the calls three days apart with a minimum of five calls before giving up. Each time you call have a new piece of information that may be helpful to their decision making process. For example "Hello, Mr. Doe, I am happy to let you know that XYZ Corporation has signed on to sponsor our program and we hope you will join in the community support of our Hook A Kid On Golf program."
- 3) Your goal is not to necessarily get a prospect to say Yes over the phone, although that would be terrific. Rather, it is to set up an in-person meeting with the appropriate decision maker(s).
 - a. Since they, like you, are busy, you should request a meeting of no longer than 30 minutes. This ensures you get right to the point. If you get the meeting – be prepared, especially with a sponsor contract ready for signature!
- 4) Remember to ask them to become a sponsor!

Step 8: Be Creative

You will want to customize a sponsorship package that addresses their goals. As you learned earlier, not every company is going to have the same sponsorship goals. Do your best to determine in what way a company will most benefit from sponsoring your Hook A Kid On Golf program and present the opportunity to them.

- 1) Do not take the word 'No' as a rejection. Rather, it is a request for more and/or better information.
- 2) Don't be afraid to tailor a program to meet a sponsor's needs. Ask them what their goals are and then try to create something that meets those goals. For example: merchants (such as a Dick's sporting goods) want potential customers in their store.

Step 9: Deliver What You Promise

You can never express enough appreciation for the support of corporations with regards to your program. Over deliver!

- 1) Have someone specifically delegated to review each contractual commitment.
- 2) Ensure you have done everything you committed to do.
- 3) Follow-up after the event with a final thank you. This will also give you the opportunity to let them know how their participation helped achieve the success of your program.
- 4) Please encourage Hook A Kid On Golf participants to write thank-you notes to your sponsors as well.

Step 10: Be Passionate

If you and your committee are enthusiastic about the cause it will shine through and will be infectious to people around you.

- 1) Don't be afraid. It has been proven that Hook A Kid On Golf programs positively impact kids and the community year after year. This is a worthy cause and showing that pride will help persuade sponsors to join your efforts.
- 2) Remember, a "No" is not a rejection. There are many reasons that a corporation might say "no" to your offer (funding constraints, time constraints, etc). A "No" now does not mean a "No" forever.
- 3) Remember to share what you've learned with others. After you've been successful at corporate solicitation others can learn from your efforts.