

RETAINING CORPORATE SUPPORT DURING COVID-19



INSPIRING A HEALTHIER SPORTING NATION

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Clubs play a vital role in keeping people connected with each other and with healthy activity. During times of disaster, those things are even more important.

Yet, COVID-19 might be making it harder or more expensive for you to deliver on your commitments to your club members. Your income might be down, and there's a chance any corporate sponsors or partners are also under financial pressure.

The stakes are high, and retaining corporate partners has never been more crucial.

EIGHT WAYS YOU CAN KEEP YOUR PARTNERSHIPS HEALTHY – EVEN THROUGH COVID

1. Set up an online meeting to ask your sponsors or partners more about their motivations for supporting your club and how you can best deliver value in return.
2. Write a series of emails thanking individual corporate supporters. Send this to your members, and make sure your sponsors and partners are on the mailing list.
3. Ask players, parents, coaches and/or volunteers to make a short video thanking individual sponsors personally for their continued support during this time.
4. Develop one or a series of online events, with an interesting local speaker, to engage your community. Invite your corporate supporter to introduce the speaker and tell the community a bit about why they are continuing to support you during the COVID pandemic.
5. Organise something to surprise and delight your contact at the corporate e.g., a home-delivered tray of fresh mangoes, sent with a friendly thank you letter.
6. Create a social media event or online competition that engages your community, and where you could provide naming rights to your major sponsor e.g., a soccer club might create 'The [insert major sponsor's name] Soccer Keepie Uppie Competition', where members of your club video themselves juggling a football with their feet.
7. Remember to acknowledge your supporters in all your newsletters or President's updates and encourage your members to support them.
8. Get a group together to brainstorm other ways your club can continue to provide benefit to your partners.



KEEP HAVING STRAIGHT-UP CONVERSATIONS

Don't back away from having open discussions with your sponsors and being honest with them about the impact of COVID on your club. Such discussions will help them to authentically understand the importance of their support – and they're more likely to feel needed and appreciated.

If you have ideas about how you could improve your value to them, get talking. You'll be able to gauge their level of interest, and together you might come up with other options. There's a chance they won't want or need anything more from you, but by asking, you'll show your genuine investment in the partnership.

PLAY THE LONG GAME

For a lot of clubs, COVID has reduced the day-to-day pressures of running the usual competition and events. So now is a great time to start building a smart long-term corporate partnerships program. Use this time to:

- develop a strong fundraising proposition and gather material for partnership proposal documents,
- get clear on all your sponsorship assets and club needs that could be met through partnerships or grants, and;
- develop a stronger digital approach to community and partner engagement and fundraising.

Refer to Part 3 of the Fundraising Smarts Toolkit.



At times like this, 'for-purpose' motivations shine through

In good news, the motivations of corporates supporting local clubs are likely to be 'for-purpose'. That is, they genuinely want to be an active member of the local community and contribute positively.

However, it has never been more essential for you to give them value in return and show them your appreciation – ideally to increase the likelihood of retaining their support over the longer term.



While this moment is tough, it also provides clubs with the opportunity to rethink, reset and re-energise your approach to developing strong corporate partnerships.