



*A Guide to Help You Create Successful*  
**Sponsorships**



# Introduction

While all of us are striving to increase revenue through increased attendance and sales, many have begun to look to sponsorships as another way to increase revenues. When done tastefully and in a way that complements the atmosphere of your farm, sponsorships can definitely enhance your operations (rather than detract from it) and add the dollars you need to “step things up” to the next level.

Though the idea of pursuing sponsors can be a bit scary and overwhelming, it's important to remember that you are representing an event/attraction of great value and offering sponsors an opportunity that can help to meet their needs and goals. You are not asking for a donation!

That's right. **Sponsorships are not donations. They are a non-traditional form of advertising where you partner with a business who invests in your event/attraction in return for marketing benefits.** The biggest key to succeeding in partnering with sponsors is to give 'em what they crave...to properly match something you have to offer with what that particular sponsor is wanting. All of them are different. While one may be primarily interested in increasing exposure, another may be more enticed by the opportunity to host an employee party on your farm. Ultimately, our goal should be to form long-lasting partnerships and relationships with our sponsors and to have a genuine interest in making sure they benefit from what we are offering. If we do this, then both parties will succeed for years to come.

We hope this guide will help you on your road to succeeding with sponsorships.

## *Helpful Hint*

Another, and probably better, name for sponsorships is PARTNERSHIPS. What we are really trying to form is a win-win partnership where we work together with our sponsor to create a mutually-beneficial relationship.

For the purpose of avoiding confusion, we will be referring to these programs as sponsorships in this guide. We do, however, recommend that you use the MARKETING PARTNERSHIP term as much as possible...especially in any conversations and written materials for the sponsors themselves.

## Step

# 1

# Make a List of Potential Sponsors

Your first step, after deciding that you would like to pursue partnering with sponsors, is to create a list of possible companies to target. There are three basic approaches to doing this...

### OPTION 1: TAKE NOTICE OF WHO IS ALREADY SPONSORSHIP FRIENDLY

One simple way to make your sponsor pursuit easier is to target companies who are already familiar with and friendly to sponsorships. How do you find these companies? The best way is to keep your eyes open throughout the year and see who is sponsoring other local events (i.e., fairs, festivals, etc.) More than likely, you'll start to see a pattern of some of the same companies/organizations sponsoring multiple events. Typically, someone who has been convinced of the benefits of sponsorship will end up sponsoring more than one event...making them a perfect person for you to approach!

### OPTION 2: TAKE NOTICE OF WHO IS WILLING TO SPEND MONEY FOR EXPOSURE

Similar to the option above, it is much easier to convince someone to spend money sponsoring you if they are already friendly to the idea of paying for exposure. Again, all you really need to do is keep your eyes and ears open for who has ads in the newspaper, on the radio and tv, in direct mailers, etc. These are the people wanting to get their message out to the general public and willing to spend \$\$\$ to do it.

### OPTION 3: DETERMINE WHAT YOUR NEEDS ARE AND TRY TO FIND A MATCH

The final approach is to first figure out what you need and then try to think of who can best provide it. For instance, if you are planning to build some new bridges in your maze, then you'll be needing new lumber and supplies. Thus, the best sponsor for your bridge would be a local hardware store, lumber supply company, construction company, etc. The benefit of this approach is that you can potentially best meet all of your needs. The down side is that you may end up targeting companies who are not already active in advertising or sponsorships. Still, this approach is not impossible and may be worth giving it a shot. It never hurts to ask, after all.

#### SOME OF THE MOST COMMON SPONSOR TARGETS INCLUDE:

##### **Media Outlets**

(tv stations, radio stations, newspapers, magazines)

##### **Beverage Suppliers**

(Pepsi, Coke, Dr. Pepper, etc.)

##### **Building Suppliers**

(Home Depot, Lowes, local suppliers)

##### **Farm Suppliers**

(any companies who supply fertilizers, seed, etc.)

##### **Retail Stores To Distribute Your Coupons**

(gas stations, restaurants, video stores)

##### **Sports Teams & Universities**

## Step

# 2

## Finding the Right Contact Person

Once you have your list, you'll need to know the name of the person you should send a proposal to and/or meet with at each company. The best way to find that name is to simply call the company and have a conversation like the following:

**Secretary:** Hello, thank you for calling Coca Cola, this is Jane speaking.

**You:** Hi Jane, my name is John Edwards and I need a little bit of help getting some contact information for your company. I'm with a local event here in Omaha and have a sponsorship proposal I'd like to submit. Can you tell me the correct person I should send that to?

**Secretary:** Sure, if you're looking for a donation, you'll probably need to speak with Bill Johnson.

**You:** Well actually, this is more of a marketing partnership we'll be proposing, rather than a donation.

*(it's important to make this distinction if they try to put you in touch with someone regarding donations. Unless you are a non-profit, the chance of you getting a donation is very slim. Additionally, you truly are proposing a marketing partnership where you provide something of value to them in exchange for something of value to you.)*

**Secretary:** Oh, okay. In that case, you'll probably want to send it to Kathy Smith.

**You:** Great. Could you possibly give me the correct spelling on Kathy's name and tell me the best mailing address for her? Plus, if it's not too much trouble, I'd love to get her direct phone number.

**Secretary:** No problem, her name is spelled....

**You:** Thank you so much Jane. I really do appreciate all your help today.

### Helpful Hint

Before moving to the next step, it is a really good idea to do your homework and learn a bit more about the company you are targeting. Research them on their own company's web site, look up old news articles written about them on google.com, etc. To be as impressive as possible, you'll want the person you are calling/meeting with to feel like you know something about their company, understand their sponsorship history and have a real grasp of how this partnership you're seeking will be of benefit to them.



## Step

# 3

# Request Meeting or Send Proposal

## HOW TO SUBMIT THE PROPOSAL

After you have identified the company and contact name for a sponsor you'd like to target, there are a couple of options for how to proceed:

1. Call and request a meeting with the person to explain your event, see what level of interest they have in being a sponsor, and identify what sponsor benefits they are most interested in. Then, use this information to customize a proposal that you send to them within 3 days after the meeting.
2. Write a proposal and mail it to the appropriate contact person. Then, follow up by phone and request a meeting to discuss their interest level. In the meeting, you can discuss whether the proposal meets their interests/needs as is or if it needs revised in some way to best satisfy both parties.

Each of these two strategies are great and can lead to sponsorship deals. It is up to you, the sponsor, and the circumstances as to which you approach you prefer to take.

## WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THE PROPOSAL

Following are some essential elements for a sponsorship proposal:

- ◆ Cover letter
- ◆ Cover (*this is the first impression you'll give, so try to make it high-quality on nice photo paper*)
- ◆ Overview, history and fact sheet for your event
- ◆ Demographic data (*attendance totals, age groups, # of field trip attendees, etc.*)
- ◆ Supporting collateral materials (*i.e., news articles, brochures, sample ads, etc.*)
- ◆ Benefits you will provide
- ◆ What sponsor is asked to provide (*make sure this list is shorter than the list of benefits*)
- ◆ Deadline for answer and/or request for meeting
- ◆ Aerial photos of your current and/or past mazes

Remember that you need to do the best job you can of helping your target to understand the size, scale and popularity of your event. Corn mazes don't always conjure up the grandest images for everyone and you can't assume that they understand the draw you have.

An inexpensive, yet professional way to package your proposal is to put it in a clear-view report cover with a sliding bar or spiral binding.

### Helpful Hint

One easy way to make an impression is to mail your proposal in a colored envelope. This not only helps it to stand out, but also makes it easier to reference when following up. For example, if the contact says they're not sure if they got it when you call, telling them the color of the envelope will hopefully help them to better remember or find it.

## Step

# 3

Continued

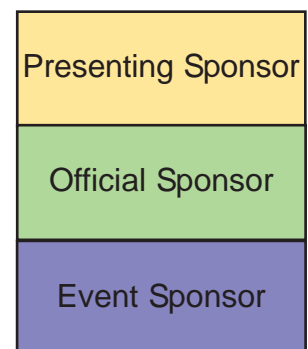
### SPONSORSHIP MENU OF BENEFITS YOU HAVE TO PROVIDE

You might find it helpful to first create your own sponsorship menu - a master list of every sponsor benefit you have to offer - before developing individual proposals for each sponsor. This will help you to organize your thoughts and quickly draw from the list for specific proposals. Since each farm is different, each of your lists will also be different. Following, however, is a sample menu you can use to modify into your own.

- ◆ Product sale opportunities (*i.e., will sell Coke products if Coke sponsors*)
- ◆ Official sponsor designation
- ◆ Special event sponsorships
- ◆ Discount ticket promotion (*visitors receive discount admission with proof of product purchase*)
- ◆ Sweepstakes promotions (*sweepstakes entry for sponsor product on back of your ticket*)
- ◆ Complimentary tickets
- ◆ Invitation to a VIP party
- ◆ Opportunity to host an employee party
- ◆ Product sampling/coupons
- ◆ Product displays/booths (*most liked by auto dealers, cell phone providers, etc.*)
- ◆ On-site signage
- ◆ Collateral mentions (press release, brochures, education materials, tickets)
- ◆ Advertising mentions (fliers and posters, coupons, direct mail, rack cards, billboards)
- ◆ Advertising mentions (radio, tv, newspaper)
- ◆ Billboard tag
- ◆ Logo and/or link on web site
- ◆ Exclusivity/non-competitive environment (*i.e., won't have both Pepsi and Coke as sponsors*)
- ◆ Logo in maze
- ◆ Logo as target for corn/pumpkin cannons
- ◆ Logo on passport posts or bridges
- ◆ Call-A-Friend clue inside maze (*would be great for a phone provider sponsorship*)

### OFFERING LEVELS OF SPONSORSHIP

Once you make your list, it'll be easier to see that you do indeed have a lot to offer to a sponsor. Because you have so many benefits, it may be a good idea to create sponsorship levels. Meaning that sponsors can either invest a small amount and receive just a couple of benefits, or they can invest a larger amount and receive more of the benefits. When offering levels, it's nice to name them. See graphic to the right for examples.



Every situation is different and you'll have to decide when you think a sponsor might have a small budget and you should offer them various sponsorship levels. In other cases, you might be better off to first submit a proposal asking for the highest investment you think is possible and then later scale it back to lower options if they turn down the initial proposal.

## Step

### How Much to Ask For

# 3

Continued

When asking the question of how much you can get from a sponsorship, the answer will be different for each of you. There is no “standard” amount to ask for. Following are some of the points to consider when determining your pricing and the reasons each farm will be different:

- ◆ Benefits offered
- ◆ Attendance
- ◆ Market size
- ◆ Prestige of event

In the end, the best way to answer that question is to ask, “What is the value of what I have to offer?” Though the answer is determined largely by practice and experience over time, there are a couple of industry standards that may help...

### STANDARD PRICING FORMULAS

Banners on site	.02 x attendance
Coupon on tickets	.03 x number of tickets
Logo in brochure	.02 x number of brochures
Coupon in brochure	.05 x number of brochures
Sampling of sponsor product	.05 x attendance
Inclusion in advertising	cost of ad x % of ad devoted to them
Tickets to your event	retail cost of tickets

(For example:  $.03 \times 20,000 \text{ tickets} = \$600$  for coupon on ticket)

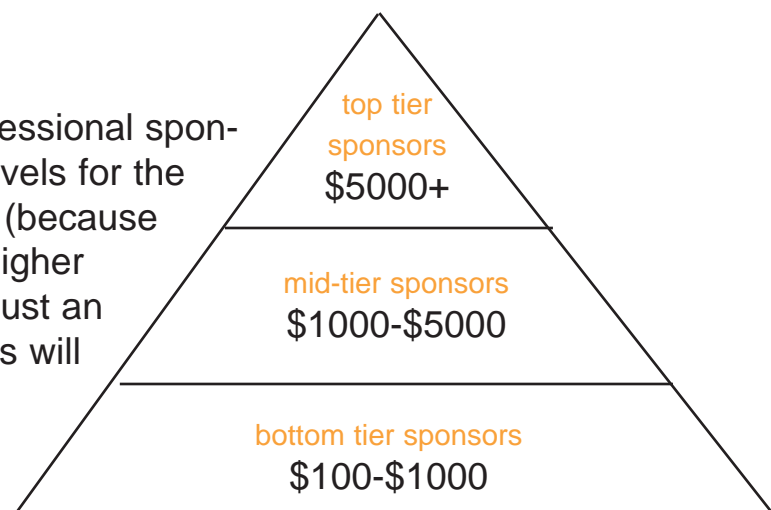
*\*each of these formulas largely represents tangible values only. There are many intangible values (i.e., affiliation with a family-friendly event) that could also be factored into your final amount.*

### SPONSORSHIP AUDIT

A sponsorship audit is merely calling around to other events or attractions (typically ones in other seasons who don’t compete with you in any way) and asking their opinions regarding what sponsors in your area are willing to give. It’s always best to get advice from someone who’s “been there and done that” in your specific market.

### PYRAMID GUIDELINES

This pyramid that was provided by a professional sponsorship company that projected pricing levels for the average MAiZE location. Some locations (because of market size, attendance, etc.) will be higher than this and some will be lower. This is just an average prediction. Most of your sponsors will likely fall in the lower tiers, with a smaller handful in the higher levels.



## Helpful Hint

Keep in mind that “trade” or “soft dollar” sponsorships can be just as valuable to you as cash, if you are receiving items/services you’d otherwise have to pay for. What’s nice is that these sponsorships are often easier to secure and higher in value.

## Step

# 4

## Finalize Agreement

---

Once you've received a commitment that the sponsor wants to participate in what you've proposed, it is best to finalize the agreement in writing. The agreement can simply be a signature on the written proposal you submitted, or a separate document drawn up by either you or the sponsor (ideally by you, but sometimes sponsors -- particularly media outlets -- have their own format of documents they are required to have you sign.) Doing so provides multiple benefits:

1. There is complete understanding on both sides of what is expected and what is being provided.
2. It gives you something to go back and reference if you ever have a question from either side.
3. It makes it easy for you to look in your files years down the road and see what various partnerships arrangements were, instead of trying to remember year to year.
4. It gives you a more professional image in the eyes of the sponsor.
5. It gives the sponsor a more secure feeling that you'll be delivering on what you've promised.





## Step

# 5

## Treat Your Sponsors Well

The old saying “It’s easier to keep an existing customer than to get a new one,” rings true with sponsors too. It’ll save you a lot of time, energy and money to form long-term relationships with sponsors and keep the partnership going year after year. Following are a few tips for how to make that happen.

1. **MAKE SURE YOU DELIVER ON ALL YOUR PROMISES.** Whatever you agree to provide to the sponsor in your proposal needs to happen. And more than just happening, it needs to be done well, on time and in a manner that will meet and/or exceed the sponsor’s expectations. For example, if you agree to put their logo on your web site, it’s important to make sure you get it from them in a high quality format so that it looks good and isn’t fuzzy. Make sure it is posted on your web site right from the start and doesn’t show up half way through the season. And make sure that you email and/or call your sponsor contact to let them know it’s been done.

2. **GO THE EXTRA MILE AND EXCEED THEIR EXPECTATIONS.** Along with giving them everything you promised in the proposal, it’s great to plan a few extra things that (instead of including them in the proposal) you can implement to make them think you are really going above and beyond. For example, if you’ve got extra pumpkins and/or other fall decor items (like corn stalks, gourds, etc.), why not deliver some that they can use to decorate their offices for the Halloween season? Or, perhaps even bring enough pumpkins for each of their employees to take one home.

3. **INVITE THEM TO A VIP EVENT** and really make them feel like they are getting the “star treatment.” Everybody loves to feel important and this is a great way to let your sponsors know how much you appreciate them. Some things you might include are:

- ◆ free admission
- ◆ a private area where they can mix, mingle and eat
- ◆ a chance for them to meet and visit with the owners
- ◆ “fast passes” that allow them to bypass any lines
- ◆ free food and beverages
- ◆ pumpkins and other items they can pick out and take home
- ◆ special arrangements like helicopter rides (*if you do your VIP event on your media day*)
- ◆ fall photos of their family (*they can have as a souvenir & you can use in future marketing*)
- ◆ reserved parking spot
- ◆ special items like carved jack-o-lantern (*see photo*)



*Photo of a jack-o-lantern that has a sponsor’s logo carved into it. It was on display at VIP event and then given to sponsor to take back to office.*

## Step

# 6

## When the Season is Over...

---

At the end of your season, you may think your job with sponsors is over. But remembering the following important steps will go a long way toward helping you to retain the partnerships for the next season.

1. **SEND THEM A THANK YOU** card and/or gift. Delivering it in person is even better!
2. **FORWARD THEM ANY THANK YOU MESSAGES YOU MAY HAVE GATHERED** from attendees (i.e., such as school children who attended field trips...it's a great idea to ask teachers to have their students write thank you cards to sponsors who supported and made possible their visit.) Receiving cards from students will truly help sponsors to feel appreciated and proud of their contribution.
3. **PROVIDE THEM WITH AN END-OF-SEASON REPORT** that summarizes attendance, recaps what their funds/donation was used for, provides samples of items that contained their logo and demonstrates the exposure they received, stats that show # of hits on web site, etc. It's recommended to get this to them within 30 days of closing. Though you may have a great relationship with your sponsor, at the end of the day, they still have to justify the cost of the sponsorship and see that it paid off.
4. **PROVIDE THEM WITH PHOTOS** of visitors enjoying your farm and/or areas of your farm where their logo was displayed.
5. **SOME SPONSORS LOVE TO HAVE PLAQUES OR CERTIFICATES** to hang on their wall. It's a great idea to visit their offices in advance and take note of whether or not they display things like this in their lobbies or offices. If they do, then you'll want to be sure to provide them with an item of recognition to add to their collection.
6. While the sponsor is happy and has you on the top of their mind, it is great to **EXTEND AN INVITATION TO RENEW THE SPONSORSHIP** for the next year. You can do this casually to at least get a verbal commitment, but it is always better to get something in writing. An easy way to open this discussion might be...

*"Again, we really enjoyed working with you this year and appreciate all you did for us as a sponsor. It really turned out great for us and we hope it was a win-win that you felt good about too." (after they've had time to give their positive response, you can add...) "While this is still fresh on our mind and before we each get drawn into different directions again, would you like me to put together an agreement to renew the same sponsorship arrangements for next year? That way we'll have it all taken care of and will have less to worry about when this time of year rolls around again next year."*

# Sample Pitch Letter

## Sample 1

Generic letter from Maris Farms in Buckley, WA



*Pumpkin Patch, Haunted Woods and the MAiZE!*  
24713 Sumner-Buckley Hwy, Buckley, WA 98321  
888-235-5439

[www.marisfarms.com](http://www.marisfarms.com)



Dear Marketing/Promotions Team,

I am a partner in a large corn maze, pumpkin patch and haunted woods venue in Buckley, Washington. Ours is one of 140+ such venues across the country, representing more than 1 million visitors each fall, that belong to one organization known as The Cornfield Maze group ([www.cornfieldmaze.com](http://www.cornfieldmaze.com)). Our venue alone attracted close to 25,000 people in 2004.

Our interest in contacting you is twofold—one, we know there are powerful marketing/promotional opportunities that can provide a very innovative, unique and flexible avenue of marketing/promotions for your company; and two, we share virtually the same demographic, so attracting folks to your product through our product is a natural fit.

The marketing/promotional relationships we have built over the past five seasons help defray the large costs of operating and marketing one of Pierce County's most popular fall destinations. We attract thousands of families during the month of October who are looking for a pumpkin, wanting to test their patience and navigational skills in our corn maze or attempting to brave our haunted woods.

I believe we can benefit each other greatly by working together. We have worked with the likes of Dargold, Best Buy, AM/PM, Safeway, Spirit Halloween Stores, Home Depot, Orange Julius and Car Toys. We also have very strong media partnerships with STAR 101.5 and 94.1 KMPS, two of Seattle's most popular radio stations, as well as KOMO TV and the Tacoma News Tribune. These partnerships end up being significant for our marketing/promotional partners in that it creates as much or more exposure outside of our venue for them as it does through our visitors to the farm.

During the season, we have close to 500,000 pieces of literature (brochures, coffee sleeves, coupons, etc.) distributed throughout the Puget Sound area. This doesn't even count the newspaper ads we place with the News Tribune, Enumclaw Courier-Herald and Fort Lewis Ranger which all list our marketing/promotional partners' names and logos.

I would like to provide for you some of the articles about Maris Farms that have been published, ads placed and marketing/cross-promotional materials used in the past. I would also like to provide statistical/factual information about our venue and organization as well as marketing opportunities available in 2005.

Please let me know if you need any additional information. I'll look forward to working together.

Thanks and best regards,

Steve Templeman  
Maris Farms  
[www.marisfarms.com](http://www.marisfarms.com)  
888-235-5439



# Sample Cover Letter

## Sample 1

Letter template for a specific sponsor that accompanies a proposal outlining all the details of the partnership and your farm.



May 24, 2001

John Doe Company  
000South Street  
Atlanta, GA 301111

Dear Mr. Doe:

Every company is looking for a new way to promote their company.

Your company can be promoted at The MAiZE at **You're Name**, the maze with the largest attendance in the State of Georgia 2004 and in the top in the United States.

A maze is a puzzle carved into several acres of cornstalks, which have grown higher than your head. It is an activity designed to test the wit and skill of those daring to find their way in and out of the maze. The concept of the cornfield maze was first introduced in 1993 in Pennsylvania at the same time **You're Name** was beginning AgriTourism. It appeals to the young and to the young at heart.

**You're Name** has enjoyed being a part of promoting companies in Metro Atlanta for three years at THE MAiZE. People enjoy having an opportunity to bring the entire family together including grandchildren and grandparents.

I am enclosing an outline of a partnership opportunity for your review. We understand that there may be things that you and I both may want to add or change at the time we sit down to discuss this proposal.

After you have had a chance to visit our web site [www.you'rename.com](http://www.you'rename.com) for some company background, and time to think about how we can promote your business directly to more than 40,000 people, then we can sit down and talk.

Your company and **You're Name**, as well as thousands of Maize patrons can benefit from our partnership. I will contact you in a few days.

Sincerely,

Scott Cagle  
**You're Name**, Inc.



# Sample Cover Letter

## Sample 2

Letter to specific sponsor that accompanied a proposal outlining all the details of the partnership, as well as info/demographics about HeeHaws Farm



May 1, 2004

Ann Whittaker  
Kids Village  
1641 North State St.  
Orem, UT 84057

Dear Ann:

I visited your Village the other day in the process of previewing preschools for my daughter and was so impressed. Overwhelmed almost by the unique educational offering that you have. While I will likely be enrolling my daughter there, I'm writing today for a different purpose.

I am involved with a local farm that has hosted a fall/Halloween event for the last nine years. While it has become very popular for its entertainment value, it is also becoming more and more known for its educational program. Hosting more than 5,000 children each year for field trips, and making an additional effort to incorporate education into the experience that the general public receives as well, HeeHaws is striving to provide an experience that appears similar to yours.

With this in mind, I thought I'd approach you with an opportunity to work together. We are introducing a brand new attraction this year, the Family Fun Tent, and are looking for a sponsor to help host its events. You seem perfect! In exchange, we feel like we can provide a number of benefits to you....namely exposure.

I've enclosed a sponsorship proposal that outlines the details and look forward to the opportunity to perhaps discuss it in person. Once you've had a chance to review these materials, please don't hesitate to contact me at 801-427-8323 or ktmaize@aol.com. I look forward to hearing from you and the possibility of working together.

Best regards,

Kamille Combs  
Marketing/Events Director

# Sample Proposals

Several samples of proposals are available for viewing or download in the **DOWNLOADS** section of our site owner web site.

# Sample Agreement

## Sample 1

Generic template for a "passport post" sponsor agreement.



AT

# Your Name

Thank you for becoming a Supporter of The Maize.

We agree that you will receive exposure for your business during The MAiZE at **Your Name**, which opens September 3, 2005 and closes November 20, 2005.

Your logo and information, which you give to us in camera ready format, will be displayed on one post within the maze, in a way that everyone who goes through will have the opportunity to read about your company.

You may also furnish and display business cards or other information that may be picked up by those coming thru the information tent to use in contacting your business.

In exchange for this advertising contract your cost will be \$\_\_\_\_\_. Payment will be due one half at the signing of the contract and last half payable two weeks before the opening.

**Your Name**

Scott Cagle

Date

---

Name

Representing Company