

10 Things Potential Sponsors Wish You Knew...

1. First impressions are lasting.

How you approach a sponsor from the very beginning will say a lot about you as a person. Sending a quick message to a company through FaceBook or InstaGram asking, "Hey, do you do sponsorships?" is not the most professional way to achieve your ultimate goals of being sponsored. If you want to be taken seriously the best way is to call the company, introduce yourself and ask for an email to send a sponsorship inquiry to. Calling and sending an email is a great way to show that you are a good communicator and will follow up with more information, both of which are important traits.

2. Be a customer first.

If you have not already used a company's product or services, we highly suggest you look into doing so prior to asking for anything. If you cannot invest in them, why should they invest in you? Great places to find sponsors are products and businesses you already use — the place you buy tires from, the brand of trailer you purchase from every time, the supplements that have worked for your horse or the saddle pads you believe are the best for your horses. Build a relationship with these companies, update them some and share why you enjoy using that certain company with friends. Being a great customer can lead to sponsorship opportunities.

3. You should not have slept through English class.

Poor speech skills, bad grammar or misspelling several words can show that you may not apply yourself or that you do not take pride in how you do things. Always spellcheck and have someone proofread your sponsorship requests and interactions with a business. Take note of how well you communicate with people and try to improve. A person who is great at public speaking will draw more sponsors.

4. Social Media presence and content are important.

If you do not want a boss, grandma or your future children to see it, **do not post it**. Almost every company takes time to look at your pages when they consider you for represent their brand. When you become a "public figure" in your event, there are a lot of eyes on you. With that said, no one is perfect, but if you are at a place in life where you are pursuing sponsors, it's best to hold yourself to a higher standard. Being active on different social media platforms is a large bonus. Social media is currently one of the leading advertising opportunities.

5. Have a resume and references.

Yes, you read that right — just like you are applying for a job. You can include your education, any long-term jobs you have held pertaining to the industry, any leadership positions you have taken (i.e., president of a rodeo club), a short list of your most important accomplishments in and out of the arena. Include how many rodeos/events you plan to attend for the year so they know how much exposure you will have. Be sure to add what you plan to do for the company if they sponsor you. Lastly it never hurts to list a reference or two. Whether it's a company that already sponsors you, a past teacher or a coach providing a reference, their recommendations can show that you are really serious about the opportunity. Take the time to put together your proposal, it will pay off.

6. Know why you should be chosen.

List a few reasons as to how you can be a great addition to their company. It would be good to mention the names of some people you have already referred to them; let them know you have a great testimonial of what their product did for you. Perhaps you give lessons and help a lot of people that you can refer to them. Having a **plan of action** is very appealing. Remember, great character, positivity, a good following on social media and consistency goes a long way!

7. You should be as informed as possible.

Whether it's the location, prices, ingredients or materials, you should do your best to know everything you can about the company and their products. When it comes to supplements, knowing ingredients and how it works is important when you are referring other people to use the product. You may only use one specific product, but make sure you are informed about everything the company has to offer.

8. Creativity is great!

Be creative with how you plan to advertise your sponsors. Have a plan to wrap your trailer, have their logos put on your barrels at home if your arena is a high traffic area. Have t-shirts made with all your sponsors for jackpots or even make videos talking about the company. Whatever you do, be original and try to think outside the box.

9. It does not hurt to start small.

If you are just starting to add sponsors and may not be an accomplished athlete yet, keep what you ask for realistic. Ask them to start off with a small sponsorship and allow a few months for you to prove that you are valuable. Many companies will say some of their best sponsored individuals are not always the ones winning everything. Do not cheapen yourself by wearing any patch, make sure you sport patches for companies that are helping you!

10. Receiving the sponsorship is not the end.

You are an investment that needs to provide a return. Simply slapping a patch on your shirt or trailer in return for product or money is not where it ends. Use your social media to promote sponsors when there is a good opportunity. Be sure to use moderation since over advertising can have an opposite effect. You are now a walking billboard, be sure to dress like it. Communicate with your sponsors and make sure you clearly understand what it is they expect you to do, then do it! Set weekly goals to give back to a sponsor. **A sponsorship is meant to benefit both parties.** Never forget that.

Insights By -

- **Alissa Kelly with The Back Tack**
- **April Olson with MVP**
- **Rachel Lowrey with 5 Star Equine Products**
- **Josh Corley with Josh's mohair gear**