TEAM 3176

PURPLE PRECISION

A Guide to Acquiring and Maintaining Sponsors

2018-19 Edition

By: Nicholas Pitts

1.0-Introduction

The business aspect of robotics is just as important as the technical aspect. In order to build a competitive robot, the team must first develop a strong financial foundation. This goes beyond just creating a budget. There are several major components of a successful financial season, perhaps the most important one being sponsorships. Not only do sponsors provide the team with valuable funding, but they also help the team extend its impact beyond the school and into the surrounding community. The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines that will help the business team develop strong relationships with its sponsors. Each section contains important information that will make the process of obtaining sponsorships easier and more organized. Sections 2.0 and 3.0 outline everything that is done before sponsor presentations are conducted. Sections 4.0 and 5.0 specifically focus on planning and carrying out sponsor presentations. Sections 6.0 and 7.0 offers details on the team's interactions with its sponsors. Lastly, sections 8.0 and 9.0 provide additional information that may be useful throughout the year. Acquiring sponsors is a year long process that requires effort and dedication. The more sponsorships the team has, the greater the team's potential for success.

2.0-Creating a Plan

Starting the season with a detailed, well thought-out plan makes it much easier to acquire sponsors and increases the team's potential. This Section describes the important steps in creating an effective sponsorship plan.

2.1-Analyzing the Budget

The first step in creating a sponsor plan is determining how much funding is needed from sponsors. A useful tool for this is the team's annual budget, which outlines the costs of competition season and how they will be covered. All you have to do is find the portion of the total cost that is not covered by other sources (such as student fees). This will help you predict how many sponsors the team will need to cover all of its costs.

2.2-Setting Goals/Benchmarks

Setting sponsorship goals throughout the year can provide a clear picture of what needs to be done and when. Goals should include a date and the amount of funding to be achieved by that date. For example: "By December 1st, we should have 70% of our funding."

> **Expert Business Tip:** At the beginning of the year, create a series of monthly goals relating to sponsorships. That way, each month you will have something specific to work towards.

2.3-Researching Sponsors

Before any phone calls or emails are made, it is important to know everyone who is going to be contacted. Keeping a list of businesses that will be contacted can simplify the process of reaching out those businesses.

Previous Sponsors: The ability to maintain relationships with previous sponsors is just as important as acquiring new ones. The team has several documents with information about previous sponsors. Examining these documents can help to determine what sponsors should be contacted first. Look for information such as business location, what year they last sponsored, and the amount they donated.

Potential New Sponsors: Actively searching for new sponsors gives the team an opportunity to acquire new relationships and increase its role in the community. A good way to find opportunities is to explore any connections you might have. This can be done by asking friends or family members if they know anyone who would be interested in supporting our team. Make sure to document important information about any potential sponsors, such as location and contacts.

2.4-Developing a Sponsor Contact Plan

The characteristics of a business may help determine the best time to contact potential sponsors and the best way to contact them. This is why it is important to have all of the information about all potential sponsors in one place. It is a good idea to create a document that will help you determine when you will first be contacting a business and how. The different methods of contacting sponsors are outlined in the following section.

3.0-Contacting Potential Sponsors

3.1-By Letter

Letters should primarily be used for thank-yous, major team updates, and requests for previous sponsors. Typically, they should also be the first method you use to contact a new sponsor. If you are contacting a business for the first time, you should include general information about the team(our mission, what we do, etc.).

3.2-By Email

Emailing sponsors should mostly be reserved for team updates and newsletters. As emails are most likely to be ignored or forgotten, try to use letters when you can.

3.3-By Phone

Generally, it is best to try contacting businesses by letter and email first. If neither of those methods are successful, then you can contact them by phone. When calling sponsors, say something along the lines of: “Hi, my name is (your name). I am a part of my high school’s robotics team, Team 3176. May I speak to the manager?” If you are able to talk to the manager, ask to set up a time that the team can present to the business. Make sure you are prepared to provide general information about the team if the manager asks for it.

4.0-Presenting to Sponsors

4.1-Planning the Presentation/Getting Presenters

Starting in the 2017 season, Team 3176 required that all team members be involved in at least one sponsor presentation. This allows each team member to understand the importance of finance, and it gives the team more flexibility with planning presentations. That being said, it is important that all team members know about opportunities to present.

Create A Sign-Up Sheet: This can be done using Microsoft Excel. Once completed, the document should be e-mailed to all team members to ensure that everyone is aware of it.

Announce the Presentation: Once there is a set date and time for a presentation, it is a good idea to announce it at the beginning/end of a team meeting.

Contact Members Who Have Signed Up: After the sign-up sheet is filled up, contact the team members who have volunteered. In the e-mail, provide them with important information such as the sponsor’s address and the presentation time. Make sure they have the presentation materials.

4.2-Preparing for the Presentation

Meet Beforehand: One or two days prior to the presentation, all presenters should meet in order to discuss and practice the presentation. Ideally, there should be an experienced member of the finance team there to assist the presenters. The school library and public library are both good places to meet.

Assign Parts of the Presentation to Each Presenter: During the meeting, determine which slides of the presentation each presenter will cover. Ensure that everyone is comfortable with the material they are presenting.

Rehearse: Each presenter should go through their material at least a few times. The entire presentation should be rehearsed at least once.

> **Expert Business Tip:** During each team meeting, pull aside some team members to go over the sponsor presentation and practice it. Have a different group every time. That way, with each meeting you will have more members that are familiar with the presentation.

Gather Materials: Ensure that the following materials are all in one place: the presentation binder, the presentation slides, and the leave-behind.

4.3-What Information to Include

The information you include in the presentation will depend on how much time you have for the presentation. Some things, you will need to include no matter what; other things, you may need to omit if you only have a few minutes. When you meet with the other presenters, discuss what information is most important.

4.4-General Structure of the Presentation

Introduce Yourselves: Each presenter should say their first and last name, and how many years they have been on the team.

Go Through the Presentation Slides: Each presenter should go through the information they have been assigned. It is okay to briefly look at the slides to guide you. However, do not just read the bullet points. The presentation slides should serve as a summary of what the presenters are saying. Try to add examples of your own experience on the team.

Explain Sponsor Levels: Once all presentation slides have been covered, take out the leave-behind. Describe each sponsorship level and the benefits that come with them. This is important because it may help sponsors determine how much they will donate.

The Sponsor's Decision:

> **If They Write You a Check:** Thank them for their donation. Take note of whether they need a receipt or not.
>
> **If They Say Yes, but Cannot Currently Write a Check:** Ask if they would be willing to sign a pledge. If they decline, make sure they know how to contact the team once they are able to write a check.
>
> **If They Do Not Make A Definitive Decision:** Provide them with the team's contact information, if they do not already have it. Encourage them to contact the team once they have reached a decision.

Always Say "Thank You": Regardless of the outcome of the presentation, be sure to thank the sponsors for their time.

4.5-Following Up

Maintaining contact with sponsors after presenting is important, especially if you did not get a decision. Initially, send an email thanking them for their time. For undecided sponsors, if you do not get a response within a few days days of the presentation, follow up with another email. At the end of the season, a definitive “no” is better than no decision at all.

5.0-Walk-In Presentations

5.1-What is a Walk-In Presentation?

A walk-in occurs when a few members visit the location of a potential sponsor to try and present to them. While walk-ins do not always result in donations right away, they are a great way to open up new opportunities.

5.2-When to Do a Walk-In Presentation

Generally, a walk-in presentation should be done under the following conditions:

- The team has made several unsuccessful attempts in contacting the business.
- The business has responded to the team, but has not followed up with any information for an extended period of time.

However, there may be other instances in which a walk-in would be appropriate. If you are unsure, discuss with a mentor whether or not you should do a walk-in.

5.3-Planning Walk-Ins

Typically, walk-in presentations are best done when grouped together. A good approach is to have one group visit multiple businesses within a certain time window(for example, 11:00 AM-1:00 PM). Below is the procedure for planning walk-ins:

Determine what businesses you will be visiting: Identify businesses that you have had difficulty contacting, as well as any other businesses you feel should be contacted through a walk-in presentation.

Determine the Date and Time Window: Set aside a one or two hour block to present to sponsors. If possible, set up multiple time windows within the same day to provide more flexibility for team members.

> **Expert Business Tip:** Plan walk-ins during Fall Break. Many team members will have less commitments during this time, and you will likely have more people available to present. Also, you will have additional time windows that would normally be taken up by school hours.

Getting Presenters: Follow the same procedure outlined in Section 4.1.

Create a Sponsor Walk-In Log: This will help you to easily keep track of all the businesses you visit and the outcome of those visits. Guidelines for creating a Walk-In Log are outlined in Section 5.7.

Meet Beforehand: Just before you start visiting sponsors, have a place that you can meet to discuss the plan (from personal experience, the McDonald's on East Main Street is a great place to go). Make sure that all presenters know when and where they are meeting.

> **Expert Business Tip:** Before the meeting, use Google Maps to pin the locations of the businesses you will be visiting, as well as where you will be meeting. This will help you to decide what businesses to visit first in order to maximize efficiency. It will also make those businesses easier to find. To pin a location on Google Maps, first type it in the search bar and click on the location. Then, on the taskbar that appears on the left side of the screen, click the "Save" icon and then click "Starred Places".

5.4-Introducing Yourselves

When you walk into a business, typically there will be someone at the front desk you can talk to. When introducing yourselves, say something along the lines of "Hi, my name is (your name). We are part of our high school's robotics team, Team 3176. Would we be able to speak to a manager?". You don't have to say exactly this-just make sure you indicate who you are representing and ask for the manager. This may be an uncomfortable process at first, but it will become easier as you get more experience.

5.5-If You Can Formally Present…

Be prepared to give a full presentation if the manager is available. Follow the same procedure outlined in Section 4.4. You may not even need to present, as some previous sponsors will make a donation right away.

5.6-If Their Manager is Not Available…

Take out the leave-behind and hand it to the person at the front desk. Briefly explain what it is, and indicate the team's contact information on the back of the paper. When leaving, say "thank you" and "have a good day."

Don't be discouraged if you are not able to present to most of the businesses you visit. Finding time when the manager is unoccupied is difficult, especially without prior notice. As long as you made a good first impression and deposited a leave-behind, you have opened up a new opportunity.

5.7-Keeping Track of Walk-Ins

As you go from business to business, you should be documenting the outcomes of each visit. Keep a piece of paper with you that you can write down important information on. At the very least, have a table with two columns: one for the name of the business, and the other for the results of your visit. Below is an example of what you can use:

Sponsor Name	Outcome of Visit
Business 1	Manager unavailable; person at front desk seemed interested; left leave behind
Business 2	Manager available; presented; business donated $100

6.0-Donations

6.1-Sponsor Levels

The sponsor level of a business is determined by how much the business donates. Each level comes with benefits that help the team establish a relationship with its sponsors. The four sponsor levels and their benefits are outlined below:

Bronze($100-$499):

- name on website; name on pit banner/display boards in small font

Silver($500-$999):

- name and logo on website; name and logo on pit banner/display boards in medium font; name on competition robot

Gold($1000-$4999):

- name and logo on website; name and logo on pit banner/display boards in large font; name/large logo on competition robot; article highlighting company in quarterly newsletter

Purple($5000+):

- name and logo on homepage website; name and logo on pit banner/display boards in large font; name/large logo on competition robot; article written highlighting company in quarterly newsletter

6.2-Keeping Track of Donations

It is a good idea to have all of the funds you have received condensed into one document. Microsoft Excel is a great program to use in creating this document. In addition to the names of the sponsors and the amounts they donated, include contact information and the date the team presented to them.

> **Expert Business Tip:** If you are using Microsoft Excel, set up the document so that whenever you add a new sponsor's donation, it adds to the total amount of funds. This will make it far easier to see your progress.

7.0-Maintaining Sponsor Relations

7.1-Follow-Up Emails and Letters

Reaching out to sponsors will help them realize how much their support impacts the team. At the very least, provide sponsors with team updates throughout the year.

Thank Yous: Expressing gratitude toward sponsors is important. Always send a thank you after giving a presentation or receiving a donation.

Team Updates: After major team accomplishments, be sure to contact sponsors to let them know. If sponsors know their support is helping our team achieve success, they will be more likely to continue supporting us in the future.

Newsletters: Providing sponsors with newsletters is a great way to communicate the team's progress. It can also showcase what the team does outside of building robots. Aim to send out at least one or two newsletters to sponsors each year.

7.2-Giving Back

One of the best ways to thank sponsors for their support is by supporting them in return. Fulfilling the benefits promised with each sponsorship level is an important part of sponsor relations. Throughout the preseason and during build season, effort should be made to ensure that all sponsor benefits are carried out fully. This can be done by:

- Collaborating with the graphic design team to ensure that sponsor logos are represented
- Updating the website to include new sponsors
- Writing articles for the newsletter that highlight gold and purple sponsors

7.3-Sponsor Involvement Within the Team

Another way our team connects with its sponsors is by inviting them to team events such as kickoff. This can give our sponsors a better idea of who we are and what we hope to accomplish. As you acquire sponsors throughout the year, make sure they are aware of this opportunity.

8.0-Potential Sponsorship Timeline

This section outlines how a typical year of finance might look. While it doesn't have to be followed exactly, it provides a good idea of everything that the finance team has to accomplish within the year.

1. Create a team budget
2. Analyze the budget/determine the amount of sponsorship funds needed
3. Create a list of monthly goals
4. Research previous and potential sponsors
5. Create a Sponsor Contact Plan
    a. Identify previous sponsors and potential new sponsors
    b. Determine the order in which you will be contacting sponsors
    c. Determine how you will be contacting each sponsor
    d. Create a document to keep track of the sponsors you contact
6. Contact Sponsors
    a. Send letters to previous sponsors
    b. Establish contact with potential sponsors
7. Organize/Plan Presentations
    a. Create a document to keep track of available presentation dates and times
    b. Fill in presentation dates once businesses respond
8. Present to Businesses
9. Walk-In Presentations
    a. Compile a list of businesses the team has unsuccessfully tried to contact
    b. Establish dates and times for walk-in presentations
10. Send thank you notes,updates, and newsletters to sponsors

9.0-Useful Documents

This section provides a list of Team documents that can be useful in organizing financial operations. All of these documents can be found in the Team's "Business Ops" folder. Ideally, these documents (except for the leave-behind) should be updated regularly so they can be used in future years.

Leave-Behind

Purpose: To list each sponsor level and the benefits associated with them

How to Use It: Take it to all sponsor presentations and walk-ins, and explain it to sponsors. Make sure that the benefits listed are carried out.

Sponsor History List

Purpose: To provide a list of all businesses that have ever sponsored the team and their donation history

How to Use It: Update the document whenever a new sponsor is acquired, or when a returning sponsor donates. Also use it to create/update documents relating to the team's financial history.

Sponsorships List Spreadsheet

Purpose: To help keep track of all sponsors and potential sponsors and identify which ones have been contacted.

How to Use It: When you start initially contacting sponsors, keep this document on hand. Whenever you finish sending an email or writing a letter, immediately update the document. Versions from previous years can help you identify returning sponsors.

Sponsor Thank You List

Purpose: To list all sponsors for a particular season and provide contact info(address, email, etc.) so that thank you letters can be sent.

How to Use It: If you are using a version from the year before, this document is a quick and easy way to identify all of the sponsors from that year. This can help you determine the order in which you contact sponsors and how you contact them.

Amount Sponsored

Purpose: To document all sponsors for a season and the amount they donated; to keep track of the total amount of funds acquired

How to Use It: The document is set up so that whenever a donation is added, the total amount of funds received is updated. This can help you keep track of your total funds and gauge how close you are to your goals.

Budget

Purpose: To list the costs for the competition season and how those costs will be covered.

How to Use It: As stated in Section 2.1, you can use the budget to determine the amount of sponsorship funds you will need. You can also use it to help predict what student fees will need to be.

Past Sponsor Letters

How to Use It: Sponsor letters from past years can act as templates for new sponsor letters. It is a good idea to refer to these letters when initially contacting sponsors.