

Want to land that sponsor? Be in the solution business

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MISHA SHER 18 SEP 2017

Most businesses are planning for 2018 and for the sponsorship industry the next 3 months is where more than 80% of partnerships will be agreed. Some people believe it is a numbers game, but the trick is to stand out.

Quality, not quantity is the answer. Thousands of proposals will pass through desks of brand managers, many of which will never get any consideration. Why? Because they fail to connect. We see hundreds of proposals that all look and sound the same and fail to address the most important component – why the brand would make an ideal partner and how can the sponsorship benefit their business.

There is an old saying that you should treat others the way you want to be treated. Lou Imbriano, former CMO of New England Patriots, put it a different way and he nailed it. If you want to win the business, treat people the way 'THEY' want to be treated. By 'THEY', he meant making sponsor feel that you're as passionate about their business as they are.

So next time you're preparing a proposal, you may want to consider these Do's and Don'ts to stand out from the crowd.

Category partnerships.

Don't say that you're in the market for a category partner. There is nothing wrong wanting to have partners in certain categories but if that's your opener, nothing sounds less personal. It also focuses on your needs, not theirs. They spend millions differentiating themselves so making them feel like just one the category will hardly win them over. Brands want to feel wanted and feel there is a reason you want them on board as opposed to someone else. Focus on why you think the partnership makes sense.

Enough about you.

Don't spend the first 15 slides talking about yourself. Brands are not interested in you... sorry to break the news. They are interested in themselves and how to address their business challenges. Start with those or at least an attempt to demonstrate that you understand their challenges. It will validate everything that follows. Less focus on what and more on the why. Why is collaborating with you a great investment for the brand? Not a guarantee but a good start.

Look beyond the surface.

Share something that the client wouldn't be expected to know, either about the industry or about your property or sector. A good example of this is eSports and highlighting that while linear TV has seen a decrease of 45% viewership since 2010 for 18-24-year-olds, the gaming sector is where much of this audience has migrated. One slide like this makes the

entire pitch make sense if the brand is after this audience.

Innovation is not just industry jargon.

Speak to any CMO and they will tell you they want their company to be associated with being forward thinking and innovative. It's more than a buzzword, it's a message to the employees and consumers that the business is moving forward and partnerships help companies project that message.

There has been so much disruption in recent years brought about technological advancement and subsequent change in behaviour. Demonstrating that your property recognizes that and has introduced solutions that solve new challenges is a sure way to stand out.

For example, it's clear that fans are increasingly dictating how they consume sport, which often means less via traditional TV and more through social and digital platforms. It would then make sense to highlight how your social/content strategy along with relevant digital platforms allow fans to stay connected prior, during and post the event.

Social is by far the biggest channel used for activation. While not all sponsors are looking for always-on engagement and not all properties are suited to deliver this (i.e. art exhibition), it's increasingly an area that brands see as critical to their partnerships.

Think personalized marketing.

We are living in the world where increasingly everything is personalized. People now can customize their news feeds, photos, shoes, and anything else where a consumer can have a unique experience based on their personal preferences. This trend has not been lost on brands who want consumers to feel that the experience their products deliver is indeed personalised.

What does that mean for rights holders? It means there is a need to demonstrate more than just the traditional share of voice or propensity to purchase. Rights holders who want

to compete for big sponsorship budgets must be in the insights business, clearly demonstrating who, when, and how makes purchases.

Stop pitching IP, assets and inventory and focus on deep audience insight. Demonstrate that you understand your audience, can connect and tools to emotionally engage.

Following this advice may not guarantee success but ignoring it all but ensures failure. In a world where we're all competing for people's time, the devil is in the detail.

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