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SPONSORSHIP SALES ... POST COVID!

If you thought there were obstacles BEFORE CoVid, there are even more now. People are working from home (you don't have a contact number); some sales emails are perceived as SPAM and blocked (I have that problem with Allen Consulting!); and telephone solicitors are calling from unknown area codes that at times THOSE calls are blocked ...it all makes snail mail really attractive! For those of you that have my business card let me remind you of the saying on the back? *"Obstacles are what you see when you take your eyes off the goal."* With this statement in mind let's look at some statistics that will give you ammunition to overcome objections when you have finally made contact.

You have to be loaded with statistics regarding the value of investing NOW in events, organizations, and other marketing activities. Just a suggestion...if you are not a 501(c)3 align yourself with one where they can benefit, financially, from the partnership as well as from the exposure. Some statistics reinforce a company's desires (read that: *"need"*) to be associated with a worthwhile cause-- (501(c)3. Here are some to bolster your solicitation to potential marketing partners:

[2013 Cone Communications/Echo Global CSR study:](#)

1) 91% of global consumers are likely to switch brands to one associated with a good cause, given comparable price and quality;

2.) 61% of consumers are willing to try a new brand, or one they've never heard of, because of its association with a particular cause;

— Nielsen 2013 Consumers Who Care study:

3) 50% of global consumers said they would be willing to reward companies that give back to society by paying more for their goods and services.

However, there are statistics from McGraw Hill Research that don't depend on having a non-profit relationship. And, although this was done almost 40 years ago the results still hold true. In a study of U.S. recessions, McGraw-Hill Research analyzed 600 companies covering 16 different SIC industries from 1980 through 1985.

The results showed that business-to-business firms that maintained or increased their advertising expenditures during the 1981-1982 recession averaged significantly higher sales growth, both during the recession *and for the following three years, than those that eliminated or decreased advertising.* By 1985, sales of companies that were aggressive recession advertisers had risen 256% over those that didn't keep up their advertising. Sales for the companies studied were relatively even before the recession, but varied sharply during and after it.

Companies that cut advertising during both of the recessionary years maintained flat sales during the period and only modest sales growth in the following two years. In contrast, the companies that maintained their advertising experienced significant sales growth throughout the four-year period. And, whether it is B-to-B or B-to-C (business to consumer) have they kept up with the times? Do they have a website presence? Do they have an internet sales portal? Go to the site... see if it is user friendly. Learn as much about the buyer BEFORE going to see him/her and be prepared to offer them a creative marketing solution to their business/sales problems. Remember they are impacted just as much as you are by the "stay at home" mandate and social distancing. The easiest way to handle your call is to think of yourself as a consultant, not a salesperson, and you are there to help them with their business.

And, read, read, read. Here are some excerpts from articles written since 9-11 that will help you during the sales process. This is from Alf Nucifora, an Atlanta-based marketing consultant who writes a syndicated column "Shoestring Marketing". The audience was marketing people (the ones you are calling on for sponsorship!) and the headline for this particular article was **Tough Times Ahead? Spend. Spend.** Here are some of his suggestions and observations. "From *Advertising in a Recession* ... Be pro-active ... concentrate on core values ... increase spending and share of voice ... concentrate on your loyal customers ... start sponsoring: events, cross-promotions, cause marketing ... anywhere the brand message can be spread."

Other writers who have echoed Nucifora's sentiments include Mel Poole and Terry Lefton, both writers for Street and Smith's *Sports Business Journal* and Rebecca McPheters, a consultant who writes for *Advertising Age*. You might also want to research more articles by going online and just looking under "Recession Marketing" ... last count there were 99,200,000 articles on this topic!

Final thoughts? Don't give up...sponsors need the many values and benefits associated with your events. How else can they reach out and touch the customer, one to one? Where else can they have a total marketing surround ... not for seconds but hours, even days. Keep in mind that you are helping them achieve their marketing goals and maintain market share. Good luck and remember ... "no" is just the starting point!

Sidebar:

Selling sponsorships, although a fun process, is never easy. You have to develop a sponsorship offering that meets the potential sponsor's needs, research until you find the right company AND the right contact, and you have to sell your sponsorship during the sponsor's buy cycle. Now, add to this an uncertain stock market, concerns over the CoVid virus, anxiety over the world situation, social distancing and "stay at home" directives and you have a more challenging sales environment. Not impossible, just more challenging.



Sylvia Allen is President of Allen Consulting located in Holmdel, NJ. Allen is an author, publisher, teacher and practitioner. Many of you have attended her Main Street seminars and have purchased her book HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL AT SPONSORSHIP SALES. She is also the publisher of HomeTownNewsOnline which is a tips for sponsorship newsletter. Recently, she received the very high honor of Sales Consultancy Professional award of the by Corporate Livewire Innovation and Excellence Award based in England.

Between CoVid automation and limited employees with experience, **customer service** has taken a beating. The ole' Please, thank you, and I'm sorry have been replaced by "No problem" or, worse, "For help, dial 1, for recovery, dial 2, etc.) and there is no human contact to be found. Keeping in mind that a happy customer is also a longtime customer (it is easier to keep customers than to get new ones!) a well-planned, integrated program will not only keep your customers but will attract new ones. Brown's Heating, Cooling and Plumbing is a wonderful example of a successful one-year program that not only resulted in positive customer feedback but also reduced the number of negative reviews, as well as generating more revenue. Call me and ask me what I did for Brown's. I'll be happy to share and see if you could use the same services.

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