

Special Events Galore!

MONTHLY IDEAS FOR THOSE WHO PLAN,
ORGANIZE AND MANAGE EVENTS OF ALL KINDS

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ALUMNI REUNION CONSIDERATIONS

Remember Alumni With an 'In Memoriam' Section

By Megan Venzin

What steps are you taking to remember those stakeholders who have passed on?

Each year Middlebury College (Middlebury, VT) alumni gather to remember former classmates who have passed away. Some host memorial services where old friends reconnect over heartwarming stories. Other classes dedicate a tree to lost loved ones in tribute. When COVID-19 prevented groups from returning to their alma mater in person in 2020, this tradition lived on.

"It might sound odd, but the memorials may be the nicest parts of the class programming because they truly bring people together," says Director of Advancement Communications Margaret A. Paine. "They highlight a shared experience and the dramatic impact that Middlebury has on lives, especially through the friendships formed on campus." Paine, who graduated from the small liberal arts school herself in '79 says these gatherings add an incomparable slice of comfort and community to the annual reunion festivities.

"When we got to thinking about our virtual reunion, we wanted to create a similar experience," she explains. In addition to posting the names of every deceased alumni member on the reunion website, individual classes also took the opportunity

to host memorials with smaller circles via Zoom. The current chaplain broadcasted his speech this year in lieu of the traditional celebration and remembrance ceremony, which typically takes place at the on-campus chapel. "The online ceremony gave people at home the opportunity to reflect on their own," Paine adds.

Middlebury also includes a list of people who have died that year in its alumni magazine. "It's something everyone looks at because we all know each other, and we care," says Paine. Short obituaries often accompany the names as well; it's a simple way to honor the legacy of the incredible students who have shaped the college throughout the decades.

Reunion organizers will continue to offer the In Memoriam section on the reunion website, as well as virtual memorial programming to improve accessibility. "At Middlebury, the sense of community is very important to us, and we do endeavor to engage people with one another," says Paine. "From this sense of connection comes further engagement with the institution." ♦

Source: Margaret A. Paine, Director of Advancement Communications, Middlebury College, Middlebury, VT. Phone (802) 443-2004. Email: mpaine@middlebury.edu. Website: www.middlebury.edu

Create a Not-to-Do List

“Our to-do lists always focus on what we have, should or need to do. Flip it!” says Productivity Consultant Lisa Montanaro. “Think of some items, activities, goals or projects that you can delete to free up some time, space and energy.” She suggests eliminating the extra noise, which will foster more opportunities to focus on wants and loves (instead of only needs, shoulds, and have-tos). A more balanced schedule can lead to fruitful tendencies and, ultimately, a happier, healthier life. ♦

Source: Lisa Montanaro, Productivity Consultant, Success Coach, Business Strategist, Speaker, Author. Phone (530) 302-5306. Email: Lisa@LisaMontanaro.com. Website: www.LisaMontanaro.com

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WILEY

HOSTING REVENUE-GENERATING EVENTS

Elevate Your Sales Skills To Host More Events

Is your space historic, memorable or downright iconic? CEO of Unique Venues Chuck Salem says now is the time for nonprofits to make the most of their auxiliary businesses. As in-person gatherings continue to make their return, organizations such as museums, botanical gardens, zoos, aquariums and universities have a clear opportunity to generate additional revenue this season by selling one-of-a-kind experiences.

“Ask yourself: Have I taken time to reflect on who my core audience is?” Salem suggests. “Once you understand their qualities, figure out how to cast a net to catch more of those clients.” Salem’s company recently evolved its focus to expand upon lead generation services toward becoming a multiservice marketing and solutions firm. In addition to connecting venues with highly relevant clients, they also help them build lasting relationships.

Over the past year, he says the pain points of customers have changed, and nonprofits must be cognizant of this fact as they seek to sell their spaces. Here Salem offers advice to nonprofit organizers who want to elevate their sales pitches and host more external events:

- 1. Be a partner.** “These are tenuous times, and clients need to feel confident they are working with venues who can be flexible,” Salem explains. “Communicate that you’re more than just a place — you’re a partner.” Solidify language and rules regarding extenuating circumstances and be ready to proactively present solutions (such as rescheduling in the event of stay-at-home orders) to promote transparency.
- 2. Sell experiences.** “Think about the experience you can offer that is unique and inherently memorable,” Salem offers. “I strive to suppose what a client’s preconceived notions may be about a space, and then I put a proposal together that blows those notions out of the water. Put your attraction at the center of the event and build out from there.” Have an amazing aquarium on site? Set up dinner there. Have famed gardens on the ground? Offer a private guided tour to attendees. Get creative!
- 3. Be considerate when speaking on safety.** “Some people are trying to sell images of their venues with antibacterial spray on the table,” Salem shares. “There are ways to make people feel safe at your venue without being so literal about a sterile environment. Be upfront about safety expectations, but don’t forget to sell something hopeful and exciting.” Try displaying photos of happy people convening outdoors or presenting beautiful images of dressed tables with ample space in between (especially if your market still requires it).
- 4. Avoid tone-deaf language or visuals.** “For example, don’t lead with a picture of a buffet — it might be a while before people feel safe sharing like that again,” Salem says. “If your venue has access to an incredible culinary program, show plated meals to grab your prospects’ attention.”

Following each of these steps will ensure that you are maximizing the greatest number of events throughout the course of the year. ♦

Source: Chuck Salem, CEO, Unique Venues. Phone (571) 789-0011. Email: chuck@uniquevenues.com. Website: www.uniquevenues.com

HOMECOMING EVENTS

In-Person Homecoming Events Resume

How will your 2021 homecoming be different from previous in-person events?

In 2020, homecoming celebrations were vastly different from any other year. Institutions put together the best celebrations they could while keeping public health safety in mind. Now as pandemic restrictions are lifting, organizations have the opportunity to learn from the past to make 2021 the best homecoming celebration year yet.

Katie Lowe, senior director of signature programs for the Office of University Advancement at William & Mary (Williamsburg, VA), says initial conversations about 2021 were hopeful but uncertain. As restrictions lifted, the university decided to also celebrate much of what was missed in 2020.

“We will be having double reunions and hosting commencement for the class of 2020. This is causing us to shift some things we have traditionally done at homecoming, but we think this special opportunity is too big to miss,” she says. “And when better than to see what our next big opportunity can be than trying something new after a pandemic? In addition, we will still be predominantly hosting events outdoors to make sure everyone is comfortable.”

The 2021 celebration will include traditional favorites, like a Saturday Bash, homecoming tailgate and the dedication of the

expanded Alumni House. But Lowe says it will also still have a virtual component for at least two of the events that received high marks from the virtual homecoming last year, one being a leadership conversation with Chancellor Bob Gates, former secretary of defense.

“This will allow us to have programming that people can participate in whether they are on campus or joining us from somewhere around the world.”

Expectations are high for the 2021 event, and Lowe thinks it could be the biggest event yet.

“As an event planner that is daunting for two reasons: We are still technically in a pandemic and having that many people around has its concerns, and I have only had the opportunity to plan virtual events the past year, and this will be our first one out of the gate and we all might be a tad rusty,” she acknowledges. “Despite those concerns, I am excited to reconnect with the fabulous W&M community and feel that energy on this campus. We hope that the focus on our traditional celebrations and continuing certain virtual components will allow us to engage more alumni wherever they are.” ♦

Source: Katie Lowe, MBA, Senior Director of Signature Programs, Alumni Engagement, Office of University Advancement, William & Mary, Williamsburg, VA. Phone (757) 221-1182. Email: kflowe@wm.edu. Website: www.wm.edu

ANNUAL FUNDRAISING EVENTS

President's Dinner Raises Millions Per Year

Drawing a connection between donors and your mission is key to pulling off a successful event. Not only does that connection allow you to raise funds once but for years to come.

For nearly 25 years, St. John's University (Queens, NY) has held its President's Dinner, its single largest annual fundraising event. Historically the event is held the last week of October and features approximately 900 guests including students, employees, alumni and friends of the university. All funds raised go directly to student scholarship support, says James Hogan, assistant director of advancement.

“We typically have three to four honorees each year who receive the Spirit of Service Award from St. John's. The Spirit of Service Award is given to alumni and friends who embody the university's Catholic and Vincentian values in their life and work. During the event we have a biography video shown for each honoree, hear speeches from the honorees and other St. John's community members and have a student performance.”

The 2019 event raised a record \$3.4 million, which Hogan says is part of the three-year uptick they've been seeing in year-over-year support of around \$3 million gross (not including the 2020 event which was held virtually). Prior to that, the President's Dinner raised close to \$2 million annually.

Funds are raised through personal solicitations, various mailings and committee members' outreach to other colleagues or organizations in their networks. Alumni, business partners, members of the university as well as foundations and corporations also support the dinner through sponsorships and donations.

Hogan explains this type of fundraising is so successful because supporters believe in the university's mission and want to support it.

“Being a university with Vincentian values, we attract people and organizations who are interested in giving back to those most in need,” he says. “We also are very blessed to have extremely talented students who help show our supporters that the funds being invested in student scholarships are going to a worthy cause.”

Other keys to the event's success are the collaboration between advancement and university relations, specifically when it comes to meeting financial goals, and alumni support. ♦

Source: James Hogan, Assistant Director, Advancement, St. John's University, Queens, NY. Phone (718) 990-3352. Email: Hoganj2@stjohns.edu. Website: <https://www.stjohns.edu/>

Create Meta-Decisions to Boost Productivity

Do you follow everyone else's rules but not your own? Meta-decisions can help planners stay the course, especially as events swing back into action after an unusual year.

"A meta-decision is a global rule or policy that you create to help you be more productive," says Productivity Consultant Lisa Montanaro. Planners who set and stick to these decisions will be organized and better prepared to tackle what's likely to be a busy fall season filled with conferences, festivals, graduations, fundraisers and other lively gatherings. Here she shares five examples that have served her well:

- 1. Maintain one page of emails in your inbox at a time.**
"If you have to scroll to see emails, it's time for an email processing session," Montanaro says.
- 2. Resist the urge to check email first thing in the morning.** "It makes you reactive," she explains. "If you have to for the sake of your job, then do what I call a 'first pass,' which is a timed email session of 15 minutes to see if there are any fires to put out. Then focus on your highest priority task first before diving into email."

- 3. Honor appointments with yourself.** "Do it the same way you honor appointments with clients, vendors and other important individuals," she adds.
- 4. Schedule in a weekly productivity maintenance session.** "Use this time to go through your email and hard copy inbox, as well as event or project management systems," Montanaro suggests. "I use 'File Friday' as my theme, but it doesn't have to be on a Friday. Yours might take place on Motivation Monday, Tweak It Tuesday, Work It Wednesday or Tame It Thursday."
- 5. Apply the 'One In, One Out' Rule.** "This rule comes in handy when it's time to consolidate digital and physical items," says Montanaro. "Every time you add something to your calendar, task list, email folders, hard copy folders, bookshelf, clothes closet, event day backpack, conference registration systems, etc., pull something else out to trash, donate or repurpose." ♦

Source: Lisa Montanaro, Productivity Consultant, Success Coach, Business Strategist, Speaker, Author. Phone (530) 302-5306. Email: Lisa@LisaMontanaro.com. Website: www.LisaMontanaro.com

EVENTS THAT RAISE AWARENESS

Heat and the Helix: Hot Sauce and Genomic Medicine

"We wanted to create something for cultivation — to get people interested in what we're doing," explains Steve Finkelstein, director of advancement at University of Utah Health (Salt Lake City, UT). The solution: Heat and the Helix, a 10-part video series featuring brief interviews with faculty and department heads who discussed various scientific topics — and tasted hot sauces on-screen.

"It was a pastiche on the hit show *Hot Ones*," notes Finkelstein, "and it ultimately did what we were hoping. It was less about fundraising dollars and more about engagement. We were successful in connecting with other communities that were previously unaware of what we're doing. And it started conversations about future major gifts."

To create the series, Finkelstein emailed staff to see who would be willing to participate and what level hot sauce they would be comfortable trying on camera (from level 1 [mild] to level 10 [inferno]). He lined up nine interviewees and recorded 5- to 7-minute videos with each. Finkelstein did the tenth session alone as a thank-you video, saving the level-10 hot sauce for himself.

Staff recorded the videos using Zoom and edited them with Adobe Premier. "We edited the recordings to make it look like we had multiple cameras, switching back and forth between

the screens and zooming in for comedic affect. But it was *not* a AAA production. We went for tongue-in-cheek rather than try to make it super polished. It's not worth the effort or expense, when we're in an age of social media and TikTok. So many clips aren't professionally made or edited, but they get a lot of attention. Often, viewing audiences are willing to take in information and make a connection from these unsophisticated sources, so we leaned into low quality."

Finkelstein promoted the series using email blasts and links in Giving Day marketing efforts. Social media was also key, and participants let their networks know about the interviews.

"You could do this type of series with anything," notes Finkelstein. "We chose hot sauce, but you could do cooking or any other hobby. It's a great way to humanize your experts and take a topic to the nonexpert level. Our viewers saw PhDs dying from hot sauce, and then they were talking about intense scientific developments. For any organization that may struggle with a disconnect in relating to the community, this type of series is an ideal way to draw people in." ♦

Source: Steven Finkelstein, Director of Advancement, University of Utah Health, Salt Lake City, UT. Phone (570) 592-1662. Email: steven.finkelstein@hsc.utah.edu. Website: <https://uofuhealth.utah.edu/>

RUN/WALK EVENTS

Red Shoe Shuffle Engages 1,600 Participants

“Despite being virtual, this was our most successful shuffle yet,” reports Allie Klein, director of marketing communications and special events at the Ronald McDonald House (RMH) Charities in Baltimore, MD. “Over 1,600 people shuffled with us, raising over \$450,000. It was a true event day. People got out there and walked their neighborhoods and documented on social media. They emailed photos to us showing everyone in their gear. We were apart but together.”

Klein shares several key factors that helped make their virtual 5K a success. “This was the 10th anniversary of the event, so we found ways to showcase this milestone. We rolled out a 10-day challenge program, offering a different challenge each of the 10 days leading up to the event. These were not mandatory and varied from fundraising challenges to personal challenges, such as ‘check on someone you love today.’”

Klein adds, “We wanted to build momentum and that sense of togetherness leading up to the event, knowing we would not be together the day of. It got nice traction on social media. The challenges helped with the fundraising bottom line and the overall feel-good aspect of the event.”

Staff also hosted drive-through pep rally events as another way participants could connect to the cause. Volunteers and staff were stationed at the RMH, where participants could drive up and receive their Red Shoe Box Shuffle Runner’s Kit. The kit provided a “race in a box,” with everything participants needed for race day, including shirt, race bib, commemorative medal and other fun giveaways from sponsors — all packaged in a red shoe box.

Another aspect new to the event this year was fundraising incentives. Klein notes, “We set five levels with incentive gifts ranging from a hat to a jacket to an iPad. People really enjoyed it. They like RMH swag, plus it helped repeat participants strive for new goals, and gave structure for new participants to set goals.”

On event day, staff, along with an emcee from a local radio station, offered a live-stream program that aired from the House. The 40-minute program was tailored around ‘the 10 reasons why we shuffle,’ to continue the 10-year anniversary theme. This program offered participants a good starting point or finish line, depending on when they wanted to do their 5K. “Participants could run or walk any time that day and submit their times, if they wanted to, via our running software,” explains Klein. “We awarded the three fastest times for men and women with a winner medal mailed to their home.”

“For virtual events like this, the marketing and communication efforts are critical,” Klein adds. “The 10-day countdown, Shuffle Kits, and other pre-event efforts really helped people feel engaged and part of something special.” ♦

Source: Allie Klein, Director of Marketing Communications and Special Events, Ronald McDonald House Charities Maryland, Baltimore, MD. Phone (410) 528-1010. Email: aklein@rmhcmaryland.org. Website: <https://rmhcmaryland.org/>

FOOD AND BEVERAGE TIP

Look to Local Culinary Stars

There has never been a better time to spotlight your culinary hometown heroes. As in-person events make their highly anticipated return, these shining stars should be at the center of any exciting food and beverage program.

Global Culinary Trendologist Christine Couvelier of Culinary Concierge says that 2021 is all about seasonal and regional tastes. “Is there a new craft brewery that could set up a tasting station, or is there a local farmer who could not only provide fabulous produce to be used in the menus for the event but could also set up a wonderful display of their produce and offer guests the possibility to participate in fresh produce boxes from the farm?” Couvelier suggests. “What about hosting an outdoor gathering where you can have stations from local chefs, even if it is just a number of local pastry chefs who could provide a ‘sweet taste around’ of desserts for the event?”

The possibilities are endless, and these kinds of partnerships are mutually beneficial. Plus, creative collaborations such as the aforementioned provide guests the opportunity to learn more about your mission, your values and the colorful culture of the cities in which you operate. ♦

Source: Christine Couvelier, Global Culinary Trendologist, Culinary Concierge, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Phone (250) 589-5845. Email: taste@culinaryconcierge.ca. Website: www.culinaryconcierge.ca

Guest Involvement Ideas

- Suggest a table switch. Put five or six different colors of decoration on individual desserts. Ask each person to have the last course with someone else who has a green flower, an orange star or a purple crown. ♦

Ways to Make Parking Easier For Attendees and You

Q *What techniques or procedures can you share for making parking easier for your event attendees and you?*

“We are lucky enough to have a security team that provides parking guidance to guests. For a regular zoo visit, our parking attendants are on the street to direct guests to the parking lots. We do have a fair number of handicapped spots, and the attendant will direct those guests with handicapped tags to these spots. We also have bus parking, which comes in handy for school field trips or special bus tours.

“For special events, we work with our security team to create specific parking plans depending on where the event is to be held at the zoo. The security team is deployed along the road to direct guests to parking and will offer assistance to those with any special parking needs. And for those who prefer a ride sharing option, we have designated drop-off points for UBER and Lyft riders, conveniently situated to access either the main gate or our mansion house.”

Jane Ballentine, Senior Director, Communications,
The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore, Baltimore, MD.
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“We partner with a local transportation company for our events. Their in-kind donation involves sending free shuttles to and from the venue after picking up guests at a free-to-park lot several blocks away. They also offer convenient, safe rides home if a guest no longer feels comfortable to drive after partaking in the food and beer pairing. That partnership has made our parking situation much easier to manage, and we’ve had attendees who are so satisfied with the service that they utilize the transportation company for their next trip to the airport or similar adventure.”

Alex Statham-Lardner, Communications and Youth Engagement Director,
Fort Collins Habitat for Humanity, Fort Collins, CO.
Email: <https://fortcollinshabitat.org/contact-us/>. Website: www.fortcollinshabitat.org

“Though parking isn’t usually an issue at our nonprofit events, we did engage the services of a trolley to shuttle folks from off-site parking to a recent ribbon-cutting event. We partnered with several local businesses in Plymouth to allow our event attendees to park in their lots, and the trolley services were donated by the owner of those establishments.

“We’ve also held events at Sky Meadow Country Club, a venue which has plenty of parking, though much of it is not right near the building. If folks had a lot to carry or couldn’t walk the distance easily, Sky Meadow provided a golf cart that would shuttle people from the remote lot to the event venue, and back, of course. ♦

Angie Riley, Fundraising Specialist, Nashua, NH.
Website: [linkedin.com/in/angie-riley-74b49a98](https://www.linkedin.com/in/angie-riley-74b49a98)

Do you have a tip or technique or success story that you would like to share with our Special Events Galore subscribers? Direct your comments to Scott C. Stevenson, Editor (scott.c.stevenson@gmail.com).

Recognize the Rising Tide of Seaweed

Oceans are rising; that’s a fact. Sustainability-focused nonprofits (or any nonprofit, really) can tell a powerful story about Earth’s trajectory by spotlighting one important green ingredient on their menu — though it may not be the first one that comes to mind.

“Seaweed is the future of feeding the planet,” says Global Culinary Trendologist Christine Couvelier of Culinary Concierge. “Challenge the chefs at your venues to use it in any dish from breakfast to lunch to dinner. Seaweed even works with cocktails.”

Three types of edible seaweed are popular among diners: nori, kombu and wakame. However, other varieties such as umibudo (also known as sea grapes), ogonori, sugar kelp, alaria and hijiki have interesting applications too.

Here are a few ideas to consider:

- Nori-wrapped hand-rolls (or a fusion take on tacos).
- Green smoothies.
- Breakfast omelets stuffed with seaweed.
- Caesar dressing made with seaweed instead of anchovies.
- Added to green goddess dressings or hummus dips.
- Seaweed sipping broths.
- Dirty seaweed martinis.
- Added to thicken custards and other desserts.
- Topping off poke or grain bowls.

“For a main course, it can be added to any sauce or even made in a fabulous ‘meatloaf’ or burgers,” Couvelier explains. “Yes, it’s seaweed’s day to shine.” ♦

Source: Christine Couvelier, Global Culinary Trendologist, Culinary Concierge, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Phone (250) 589-5845. Email: taste@culinaryconcierge.ca. Website: www.culinaryconcierge.ca

CHAPTER EVENTS

Set Up a Competitive, Fun Event Among Your Chapters

The International Live Events Association New York Metro Chapter (New York, NY) held an online version of *Family Feud* hosted by Video Chat Game Shows that paired all ILEA northeast regional chapters into two teams to compete game-show-style for fun and prizes.

The ILEA Northeast Regional Feud, held over Zoom for an hour and a half on the evening of April 14, 2021, attracted 40 registrants (34 chapter members and 10 nonmembers) with 30 attending. Each team competed against one another to see which responded best to the same question. Just like the TV version of *Family Feud*, answers are developed by surveying hundreds of people to find the top or most cited answers. For each top answer a team guesses correctly, that team receives points corresponding to the number of surveyed people who gave that answer. Although the event is held over Zoom, participants play on their mobile phone or tablet by scanning a QR code to open a web-based game show app (or they could play through a link on a separate window). Participants were also given a prep sheet to help them prepare for the event. The event started with a pre-event party to allow attendees to mingle before the competition. [A short highlight video from the event is available to view.](#)

Donors provided gift cards, sweatshirts, a cooler filled with

charcuterie items, a bottle of Newport Vineyards wine paired with two ILEA stemless wine glasses and gourmet snacks and other items for use as prizes.

“We wanted to give our members the opportunity to network with each other and people in the region they might not have typically met,” says Jaclyn Zendrian, president. “It was a fun way to have a safe, structured and collaborative environment in which to do that.”

To get the word out about the event, they relied on each of their chapters to promote through social media (primarily Facebook and Instagram) and email. Individual chapter members also shared it through their personal networks.

“Video Chat Game Shows were super-friendly and great about customizing the event and game to our needs,” says Zendrian. “In addition, they helped us brainstorm different options to help people network and get to know each other while making the event fun and interactive.” ♦

Sources: Jaclyn Zendrian, President, International Live Events Association, New York Metro Chapter, New York, NY. Phone (347) 294-2831. Email: zendrian@careps.org. Website: <https://www.ileanyc.com/>

Ray Rodriguez Jr. and Jeremy Martorano, Co-Creators, Video Chat Game Shows. Phone (602) 935-9314. Email: Hello@videochatgameshows.com. Website: <https://videochatgameshows.com/>

BRIEFS

Thank Your Event Guests

Looking to express appreciation to event attendees? Next time you have a sit-down event, give each guest a small potted plant with an attached note that reads, “Thank you for helping us grow.” ♦

‘Beat the Clock’ Raffle

Arrange for a donated prize such as a weekend trip or spa package. Get a wind-up clock and sell tickets to guess what time the clock will stop. The one closest to that time wins.

Let everyone know when the clock was started and place it in a location that can be readily seen. In case of a tie, have duplicate prizes available or draw for a winner. ♦

Invite Sponsors to a Preview Party

To justify higher price tags for sponsorship opportunities, invite all sponsors to a preview party for your special event as an extra benefit. Special touches for preview party attendees might include:

- Valet (or preferred) parking.

- Previewing auction items.
- Distinctive name tags.
- A corsage or boutonniere.
- Up-close contact with a celebrity.
- Champagne.
- Public introduction at main event. ♦

Guest Involvement Ideas

Offer a scavenger hunt. Compile a list of common items (shoelace, nail clipper, pocketknife, flashlight) that guests might not normally carry to a party. Ask those who have the items to share why they brought them. ♦

‘Six C’s’ Create Sponsorship Proposals That Sell

By Megan Venzin

The world is different. However, the ingredients that make up a strong sponsorship proposal remain the same.

“A sponsorship should help a company achieve strategic goals,” says Bruce Erley, president and CEO of Creative Strategies Group, a sponsorship agency based in Denver, CO. “You’ll fulfill your objectives if you first fulfill theirs.” Follow that simple rule, and much of the proposal should write itself; however, there are a few helpful guidelines to bear in mind.

“Development professionals who approach sponsors simply looking for a hand-out should recognize that won’t work these days,” Erley says. “Even more so now you must make the case for why events should invest in a sponsorship package, and these six C’s will help you make that case.”

1. **Content.** “Start with an executive summary and overview that paints a colorful picture of the event and addresses the who, what, when, where, why and how,” Erley suggests. “Don’t forget to point out your event’s strengths and profile the audience as well.” Custom sponsorships should include extensive rights and benefits, as well as the fee and terms discussed. “Then include a conclusion, call to action and thank-you that speaks to the sponsor’s needs.”
2. **Conciseness.** “Assume your prospect will give the proposal an initial five-minute review,” Erley offers. “Use punctuation bullets and clear, short paragraphs. The proposal (including the executive summary with fee) should be three to six pages maximum and should include limited additional handouts.”
3. **Customization.** “Sponsors prefer customized proposals that speak specifically to them, not everyone else,” Erley shares. “Avoid preprinted brochures and ‘universal’ language — instead use information you’ve learned from doing your homework. Restate what you’ve read from them, incorporate their marketing campaign themes/language and reference relevant audiences.”
4. **Creativity.** “Look outside the square — if you don’t have an asset that fits your sponsor, create one,” Erley says. “Can you create special cross promotions between your sponsors, or brainstorm ideas for their sponsorship that have a direct impact on their customers?”
5. **Cost.** Be bold and be prepared to demonstrate value. “Don’t be apologetic or sheepish, and don’t provide a price range,” Erley insists. “Position the sponsorships as an investment rather than an excuse or contribution.” It’s best to ask for a deposit with the signed contract to lock in the agreement, and then provide dates for remaining balance payments.
6. **Call to action.** “Restate the value and benefit of the sponsorship, and ask for an agreement,” Erley says. “Set clear deadlines and stay in the driver’s seat.” ♦

“Development professionals who approach sponsors simply looking for a handout should recognize that won’t work these days.”
— Bruce Erley

Source: Bruce Erley, APR, CFEE, President and CEO, Creative Strategies Group, Denver, CO. Phone (720) 840-1974. Email: berley@csg-sponsorship.com. Website: www.csg-sponsorship.com

Come Up With Fun Outdoor Events

Outdoor events are a nice change from the traditional gala. Go beyond the expected fundraising walks and golf tournaments to get creative in offering an outdoor event.

Consider these alternative fresh-air options to win supporters and raise funds:

- ❑ **Restaurant crawl.** Donors pay a flat ticket price and walk from restaurant to restaurant sampling food and drink.
- ❑ **Concert collaboration.** Partner with a local arts charity for an outdoor performance; split costs and proceeds.
- ❑ **Big Boy Toys.** Rent backhoes, monster trucks, diggers, ATVs and dirt bikes, then let people play. Just make sure to check with your insurance provider first for any potential liabilities.
- ❑ **Field day competitions,** including sack races, three-legged races, tug-of-war and leap-frog competitions.
- ❑ **Polar Bear Plunge.** Participants collect pledges in return for taking a dip on one of the coldest days of the year.
- ❑ **Scavenger hunts** where, instead of gathering items, people gather digital pictures of community landmarks.
- ❑ **Canoe or kayak races.**
- ❑ **Softball in the snow.** Doing an outdoor event during an off season adds to the fun.
- ❑ **Outdoor family movie night.**
- ❑ **Miniature golf tournament.** A mini golf event is fun and encourages team-building.
- ❑ **Outdoor yoga event.** Hosting an outdoor class can increase excitement during a time of year when participants are tempted to skip their workout. ♦