

Chess Sponsorship






Hello and welcome,

This is a guide to helping clubs boost numbers, organise tournaments and attain sponsorship.

Sponsorship is a key aspect in ensuring the future of Over The Board tournament participation - it was great to see so many sponsors secured for the recent 2007 Australian Open and 2007 Sydney International Open.

Thankyou to those who have given their ideas and contributions to this prospectus; IM Javier Gil, Denis Jessop, Ian Murray, Phil Bourke, Libby Smith and Shaun Press.

Some of the areas that will be addressed are:

-  *How are organisations approached for sponsorship? (Through player contacts, corporate meetings?).*
-  *What methods are employed in negotiations?*
-  *What constitutes reasonable expectations in achieving these sponsorships?*
-  *How should the acquired resources allocated? (Prize funds, operating costs, player activities?)*
-  *What efforts can you make to keep sponsorship deals long-term?*

Chess sponsors so far have been quite diverse, from shopping centres and private businesses, to a church, and even Ansell! This is encouraging, as it shows there are no boundaries to what you can imagine.

Promotion and sponsorship are essential in creating great events, as is player feedback. Some of the things mentioned herein would likely have been discussed sporadically here and there but if you are serious about promoting and organising a successful tournament, go one step further and build on them, critique them, collate the good ideas, listen to input from all sources and continue to build on the good work done already by administrators.

I wish you all the best in your endeavours,

Dion Sampson
CAQ Development Officer

Suggestions from Chess Administrators

1. JAVIER GIL, International Master:

Selling the idea of sponsorship:



One of the key ideas to be successful when approaching an organization is: "You must offer them something for their money, and it must be something concrete, tangible and realistic". By this I mean something more than the usual "exposure".

Sending the same letter to all organizations is unlikely to work, because each organization is different and they get hundreds of requests.

A local tournament that was run in my hometown got sponsorship from a bank. The idea which was "sold" to the bank basically went like this:

- ✚ Only young kids would be taking part if the event.
- ✚ First 20 in the tournament would get a new bank account with x amount of money.
- ✚ The winner got a larger amount of money in the new account.

The tournament was a huge success (more than 200 kids took part).

The bank was happy because for little investment, they got some new potential clients (kids, parents) and the image which they sold to the public was a very positive one (not an easy thing for a bank!).

I'm not saying this formula is bound to work all the time, but I do believe that you have to sell a different idea to each organization, if you expect results, that is.

(And, by the way, the bank got more exposure than it actually expected.)

2. SHAUN PRESS

Q & A on behalf of the Australian Open organising committee:

How were these organisations approached? Through player contacts, corporate meetings...?

Mainly through the personal contacts of Stephen Mugford. The only exception was Libby Smith tipped us off about a couple of grant opportunities through the Southern Cross Club and ACT Tourism. We were successful in receiving a grant from the Southern Cross Club but were unsuccessful in receiving a grant from ACT Tourism (They went for the Junior Championship instead).

What methods were employed in negotiations?

Personal negotiation between Stephen Mugford and his mates – it can be very important 'who you know' when getting assistance.

What constituted reasonable expectations in achieving these sponsorships?

Holding a tournament with at least 150 players including most of Australia's top players, plus a strong contingent of young improving players. Also the opportunity to have their business names associated with chess and with the top players in Australian chess plus some overseas GM's.

How were the acquired resources allocated? Prize funds, operating costs, player activities...?

Improving the prize fund (especially in the area of Women's chess).

Paying appearance money to the 4 GM's with the expectation that their presence would result in a number of Australia's IM's taking part as well.

What efforts are made to keep sponsorship deals long-term?

In this instance, short of lying to the sponsors about the success of the tournament, none. Nonetheless, there are a couple of potential sponsorship opportunities that may come about as a reaction to the success of the tournament i.e. "Supporting events like the Australian Open obviously doesn't work, tell us what events you have that do work". However, if you can sell the idea of long-term sponsorship, it would be very desirable.

3. LIBBY SMITH

On Applying for Grants:



The 2007 Australian Juniors has attracted (irrespective of the ACT Tourism comment) substantially less cash sponsorship than the Open.

We have had significant success in non-cash sponsorship with donations that have improved the prize fund or contributed services for the event.

I have found it far, far easier to obtain non-cash donations whatever I have attempted to run, which makes it important to target companies who offer services that you require.

In terms of grants (notably the ACT Tourism and other grants I have applied for over the years) my tips (generally ignored) are -

1. Bother to apply in the first place (often requires ignoring people who tell you not to bother because they "never" support chess)
2. Attend the (often boring & self-evident) seminars and workshops that the organisations offering the grant are running. Sometimes a single critical point is made that can make a

big difference in the way you present your application. It's also a networking opportunity.

3. Write a decent application to meet the criteria for the grant. There is no point applying for a grant if the money must be for a specific purpose and you are asking for something that is clearly not that "purpose." Read the supporting material, address the criteria and format your application (number of words, attachments etc) as you are asked.

4. Put it in on time.

5. Don't fail once and use that as an excuse not to bother in the future.

6. Think outside the square. Both our Women's Sports Grant and ACT Tourism

Grant required some creativity to allow us to meet the criteria.

7. Obtaining funding under the Tourism grant had nothing to do with us being a Junior event over the Open. It was to do with our ability to demonstrate tourist outcomes through the use of the funds applied for. It was 18 pages of shameless spruiking.

8. Finally, understand that with both grants and sponsorship you will get many people who say no before anyone says yes.

4. IAN MURRAY

On a Personalised Tournament Prospectus for Sponsors:

When I was organising our annual Capricornia Open in Rockhampton, I made up a prospectus for potential sponsors, a bound A4 booklet containing information such as:

Thumbnail sketches of the event and Rockhampton chess club

Advantages of sponsoring chess (value for money, broad spectrum participation, above average number of higher-income players attracted to a cerebral sport, etc)

Levels of sponsorship available (naming rights, first prize, second prize etc with descending levels of cost and exposure)

Exposure offered (tournament brochure, magazine/newsletter ads, newspaper columns etc)

Copy of Reark Research summary on Australian chess participation

It worked very well, largely because I wasn't too greedy - a number of smaller sponsors are easier to get than one or two large ones.

It was less successful in Brisbane, where the competition for sponsors' dollars is much fiercer.



5. DENIS JESSOP

On sponsorship difficulties:

I understand that sponsorship arrangements for the current Open were mainly handled by Dr Stephen Mugford, the other Principal Organiser.

Both with the Open and the Juniors it might be noted that much of the sponsorship came from a number of modest sources. I suspect that obtaining sponsorship of a large amount from a big company is now quite hard. Even major sports are finding that, one reason apparently being that the government has drastically reduced the tax benefits available to companies for sponsorship.

Further suggestions

Social events



All players come to tournaments to play chess but there are also a number of extra considerations that constitute their motivations for playing – a nice venue, easy access to the location,

prizemoney and often, a pleasant social atmosphere. If it is a junior event you are running, having it close by to a park/oval might be desirable. If it's more adult-oriented, perhaps having an RSL or pub in close proximity would encourage more players to come along.

Some tournaments I've attended have had dinners, poker games, table tennis,

simultaneous exhibitions and blitz tournaments. Be mindful players would have had a long day if you've scheduled four long rounds, so manage the timing of these events effectively.

Numbers

A successful tournament can be gauged in a few different ways; top level player participation, an event that players are likely to return to next time, sponsorship dollars, net profit, etc. For most though, it is the number of participants that guarantee the success of a tournament as it can encompass and represent many positive aspects of a great tournament.

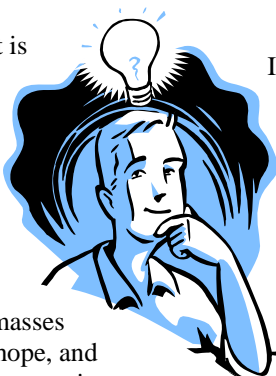


As the majority of players are going to be low-average strength participants, market to that audience.

Combine chess with other activities

Average player Phil Bourke writes:

I know from the chess aspect that it is nice to have a tourney with 6 GM's, but your ordinary chess player, and I suspect sponsors too, would be more excited about seeing a field of 300 chess players all eager to play. How to make this happen - put more prizemoney into the ordinary rank and file tournaments, get the masses excited about playing. Of course I hope, and think, that this would result in an increase in prizemoney for the top level players as well, but I think we need to address and increase the base of players first.



If your club is struggling with numbers or you're having difficulty with the costs of a venue I recommend trying to combine your club with another sport/activity and share the premises/costs. For example, some chess clubs meet at bridge clubs and hire the venue from them, some clubs have combined with Games Societies to share funding and resources.

Business Concerns

Having a number of rating-group prizes and creating a comfortable social atmosphere should encourage player participation. Running ceiling events such as U1750 can also be quite successful.

If you do not have the time to volunteer in order to kickstart a club or run large tournaments, have a business run them for you, or run events to profit the club. Chess coaching businesses will want to get more clients for their business so they may be able to assist with tournament organisation in return for distributing information on their coaching services.



If you are still out of ideas...

Ask! Ask players, people you know, the Chess Association of Queensland or anyone you can think of for their input.