

SPONSORS REQUIRED

One of the biggest problems Orchid clubs face these days is their inability to find serious sponsors. A “Sponsor”, prepared to pay a share of the prize money offered in exchange of some publicity. Consequently, shows with prize money are scarce. Prize money is replaced by vouchers or products that nobody wants but accepts because of lack of choice. What is the benefit to a retired grower, if the first prize is \$25 and instead of \$25 cash the winner receives a \$25 voucher with a list of nurseries attached? A voucher becomes a nightmare if the nursery is more than a 30 minutes drive away. Because if it is, the car expenses are higher than the prize money won, no to mention the wasted time.

Fund raising is a form of art. Running successfully a “chook” raffle does not make a person an expert in fund raising. Regrettably, individuals with limited experience are always getting involved in this.

A show is a “business project”. There can only be **ONE** person in charge, the “Organiser”. A **CAN DO** person who accepts the responsibility of persuading businesses to sponsor the show.

A good organiser will present the club, its activities, its member and their interests in the negotiations. His intentions are clear and firm; however, there is some “build in” flexibility in the plans and there is room for the “give and take” in the negotiations.

Many “want to be” organisers, dream of sponsors and sponsorships but they always end up with donations and vouchers if they are lucky, from local shops or nurseries. The number of nurseries and even individual club members that sponsor local orchid shows has increased substantially the last few years. It is happening because organisers are either lacking the knowledge and confidence to seek funds or are just lazy. I am sure that most clubs have members capable of raising funds, if they were asked.

How does it work?

Businesses (Companies) receive sponsorship requests from clubs and organisations all the time. Professionals know that these requests must be made in writing towards the end of the financial year. Applications are assessed and the best requests progress further. After a further assessment, the costs of funding the successful applications are included in the new financial year’s budget.

Companies spend money in three areas: Advertising, Sponsorships and Public Relations (PR). Depending upon the amount of money required, clubs and organizations must either make an application for funds in writing or if the amount is too small, request funds from the PR budget. Moneys set aside for PR are easier accessible because in most cases the decision is in the discretion of the local branch manager. Orchid clubs normally require small amounts of money and therefore the procedure is simple.

Midyear, a second chance appears. Local branches review their spending commitments. It is common for approved sponsorships to collapse and expected approaches for funds not to eventuate. Sometimes, Managers refuse sponsorships in expectation of a better request. Now, midyear, the branch has unspent money and the manager is in a difficult position. The Manager has a big problem. If he does not spend the money, the branch may face a reduction of its PR funds the following financial year and there will be less money to spend. Remember, Money is Power and Managers do not want to lose power. For this reason, clubs have better chance to get financial support midyear than at the end of the financial year. Unfortunately, most clubs do not plan or think so many months ahead.

What to do

A sponsor is a business partner. Choose him carefully. He must be well known, respected and with a good reputation. The sponsors name should “upgrade” the show. When choosing

more than one sponsor, the organiser must make sure that all the sponsors are equally good, from different business fields, preferably locals not competing against each other.

A short list should be made. Details such as: The history of the business. Can they effort to support “your” club? Did they support another club in the past? Do the activities of that business relate to your clubs activities? Do club members use that business? Could the Club members become customers in the future? Should be known in advance.

Find out who is the decision maker and make an appointment. There should be only two people in the meeting, the “Decision Maker” and the “Organiser”. It is common for “junior” employees to interfere, trying to impress the boss. Do not talk to persons that are not in charge, because the chances are your wasting your time.

Remember: Time is Money. Explain in a few words, who you are and why you are there. Request the amount of money you want, a straight request. A comment like, “Ideally, we would like to have \$500 but we will accept what ever you can give us”, is a big mistake. Too many words, de-value your the request.

The deal:

Present your case, make your request and at the same time, without any hesitation, offer something of equal value in exchange. The organiser tells the Decision Maker exactly what he wants and what is being offered in exchange, with confidence. The saying: “If you offer peanuts, you get monkeys” is true. Let the Decision Maker be in no doubt that YOU can and will deliver everything you promise.

Few things to consider and include in your presentation: Exposure such as advertising (Radio, Newspapers, Posters, Newsletters, etc); Displaying of a banner during the show (“Sponsored by XXX”); Add the name of the sponsor on a trophies; Explain how the business will benefit financially from this sponsorship; How many members the club has; How big is the area the club represents? Average age of the members; how many shows does the club have every year? Are the shows Free to enter? How many persons visit the show? Who were the sponsors last year? Why they do not participate this year? Is it going to be a better show this year? Why? Do you expect more visitors? Does the local council, community, paper etc, support the show? **Finally:** Who are the other sponsors you already have or plan to approach?

Twitter:

A twitter account can be a very powerful tool in the negotiation. It was not mentioned above because very few people have and know how to use such a powerful weapon. A twitter account with more than 10,000 followers can give the organiser some “real” power to negotiate, assuming he/she known what to do and how to do it. Info-commercial “Tweets”, are worth many hundreds of dollars each. Depending up the number of the followers, it can be in the millions.

The formalities:

An agreement has been reached in principle and you have a sponsor. The new sponsor must justify his action to his superior and the Tax Office. To do so, he must have your request in writing and he will convey his decision in writing. (He probably will help you to draft the request). That way, you have the agreement in writing for the club’s records and the sponsor has your request for his. The timing of the payment must be discussed. Upon receiving the payment the club must issue a Tax receipt. Sponsorships are Tax Deductable a point that should also be mentioned when asking for funds. Donations are not Tax Deductable unless the receiver is registered.

The show:

The mission to find sponsors has been accomplished. From now on, the organiser is no longer representing the interests of the Club. **NOW THE ROLES ARE CHANGING.** He now represents the interests of the sponsors. The reason is very simple: He made promises and these promises must be kept, his honour at stake.

The show is now in the capable hands of a Committee: Every club has a show Marshall, "Show Stewards", "Sales Manager" if there are Plants for sale, "Canteen Manager" if there is a Canteen. Etc. From now on, the show will run according to a well-discussed and rehearsed plan. The organiser was part of the committee, informed the committee about the agreements made, and has full confidence in the honesty and integrity of its members. The organiser is now an observer. He observes from the sidelines the progress of the show and will interfere only if something is not working as planned and may result in a broken promise, in a negative way. Interfering simply mean "have a chat" with the Show Marshall.

Show Time:

The organiser will invite ALL sponsors to visit the show, the committee is well aware of it. Sponsors DO NOT PAY. He will welcome the sponsors in person, introduce them to the President of the club and the "Public Relation" officer, if there is one, and show the around. He will point which part they sponsor, and how their business name is exposed. If required, a knowledgeable person will answer questions about orchids the sponsor may have. A cup of coffee, a biscuit, a little flower present for the wife/partner, etc is always welcome. It is advised to take a picture of the president with the sponsor for the Clubs Newsletter and have a copy posted to the Sponsor.

Show ended:

The show is over and everyone is happy; however, the responsibilities of the organiser do not stop here. Now is the time for the most important part. **TIME TO SAY "THANK YOU"**.

Straight after the end of the show, the organiser will collect and collude information (statistics) about the show, anything positive. Number of exhibitors, exhibits, visitors, etc; Prize money winners; a breakdown of the visitors (if possible) to men and women. Comments about what did the visitors think about the show. Did the club manage to sign new members? And finally, a rough Profit/Loss statement.

The information collected and well presented, plus a letter of appreciation written by the secretary and sign by the president, should be delivered in person by the organiser. There is a good reason for it: It will give the opportunity, if everything went according to plan, to discuss the possible continuation of the sponsorship.

Remember: The success of a good business is based entirely in the ability of the management to recognise opportunities to promote, improve sales and expand and grow the business. A management will be foolish to reject a good proposal. Make your presentation a good one.

PS:

The responsibilities of the "Organiser" are not restricted to finding sponsors. He is involved in the search for a suitable "Venue" for the show, if there isn't one. He plans, organises and carries out the promotion and advertising campaign of the show, including poster designs, etc. He participates in discussion related to the set up, presentation and running of the show. As he is the organiser, nobody else from the club can organise or do anything that has directly or indirectly anything to do with the show or may influence the quality of the whole or part of the show or the outcome of the show without the knowledge and consent of the organiser.