

The Sponsorship Sales Playbook

The complete, practical method nonprofits use to win sponsors and keep them.

The method: win sponsorships in 5 steps

Step 1. Build a real prospect pipeline

Progress beats pressure. Score small wins by moving every prospect one step forward each week.

- Track each company across columns: Prospect -> Reached out -> Meeting -> Proposal sent -> Decision.
- Start with a focused shortlist of 20-25 companies that already care about your cause.
- Set a weekly goal to advance prospects a stage - don't try to close on the first touch.
- Look at who sponsors similar nonprofits and events in your area.
- Put one relationship-building event on the calendar every couple of weeks.

Step 2. Inventory and price what you offer

Break each event into sellable pieces, then assign every piece a defensible number.

- List your events and programs as distinct sponsorship 'properties.'
- Break each property into individual assets - visibility, access, experiences.
- Give every asset a starting value you can explain (not a guess).
- Look past logos: think exclusive access, content, and audience experiences.
- Ask a few current and former sponsors what they actually valued most.

Step 3. Package it like a menu

Skip rigid Gold/Silver/Bronze. Let sponsors assemble what fits their goals and budget.

- Create one starting package per property, then tailor it per sponsor.
- Lead with who your audience is and why a sponsor should care.
- Show assets a la carte with values - everything stays negotiable.
- Send a draft and ask a handful of partners what they'd change.
- Frame every conversation as co-designing, not selling a fixed PDF.

Step 4. Earn the meeting, then listen

Open with a short, curious note. Show up to learn, not to pitch.

- Warm the intro: a referral, a mutual connection, or a 2-line email.
- Invite a conversation, not a 'sales call.'
- Don't lead with a proposal - bring questions, not a deck.
- Ask more than you tell; let the sponsor describe their goals.
- Always ask permission before you send anything formal.

Step 5. Deliver, prove it, and renew

Document everything you promised, report the impact, then ask for next year.

- Turn the package into a checklist with owners and due dates.
- Check in so the sponsor uses every benefit they paid for.
- Collect photos, screenshots and proof into a clean impact report.
- Meet to walk the report and ask how the experience felt.
- Invite the renewal - and schedule check-ins to stay top of mind.

The outreach: emails that get the meeting

The warm intro — Subject: Quick question

Hi Jordan,

Would you point me to the right person on your community-giving team? I'd love to share a quick idea that lines up with what you're already supporting.

Thanks so much,
Alex

Why: Short and specific. You're asking for a name, not a meeting - which is an easy yes.

The cold open — Subject: An idea worth 10 minutes

Hi Sam,

I saw your team backs local youth programs - that's exactly the audience we bring together each spring. Could I grab 10 minutes Thursday to compare notes?

Alex

Why: Flatter, connect to their priorities, and offer a time - turning 'yes/no' into 'does Thursday work?'

Why these work

- Short enough that it gets read before it gets deleted
- Leads with their work, not your ask
- Offers a specific time, so the answer is just 'when'
- Feels like a conversation, not a pitch deck
- Keeps the focus squarely on the sponsor

The discovery meeting: questions that uncover a real fit

Their audience

- Who's the customer you're most trying to reach right now?
- What does that customer care about most?

- Our supporters are mostly [X] - is that a group you're trying to grow?
- After someone meets your brand, what do you want them to do next?
- How much does audience data factor into your sponsorship decisions?

Their goals

- How do new customers usually find and choose you?
- What would make a partnership feel like a clear win for you?
- Where do you struggle most to connect with the right people?
- Any current sponsorships you're especially happy (or unhappy) with?

How they measure success

- What marketing are you investing in now - and how's it performing?
- Roughly what does it cost you to win a new customer?
- What signals tell you a sponsorship actually worked?
- Are there any must-have benefits you always look for?

Honest responses to every 'no'

'Just send me a proposal.'

Happy to - though I'd rather not guess. People usually ask for a proposal because they have something specific in mind. Tell me what a great fit would look like for you, and I'll build exactly that.

'Our budget's already committed.'

Totally understandable. Let's focus on whether this is the right fit first - if it is, we can time the invoice to your next cycle so budget timing never blocks a good idea. When does your cycle renew?

'We don't really do sponsorships.'

Neither do we, the old logo-on-a-banner way. We help brands connect with an audience that already trusts us. Let's set the word aside and talk about the marketing goals you're trying to hit.

'We just want a booth / a banner.'

Got it - what are you hoping that gets you, and how would you measure it? It sounds like you're after [X]. Mind if I share a way to reach that goal that usually works even better than a booth?

'We'd prefer to give product only.'

Product giveaways work best when there's a plan behind them - otherwise they get left on a table. To actually get your product into the right hands, a little budget makes a big difference. What feels reasonable to you?

'Let me think about it.'

Of course. Is there a specific question I could answer right now? Most of what you'd want to know lives in my head, so a quick back-and-forth usually beats waiting - what's the main thing on your mind?

The valuation: price your assets, never undersell again

Visibility assets (Awareness)

The most common - and the most competitive. Useful, but rarely the headline.

- Logo on your website
- On-site signage
- Social shout-outs
- Branded swag
- Press-release mentions

Engagement assets (Connection)

Worth more because they move your audience closer to the sponsor's brand.

- Stage / speaking moments
- Product sampling
- Sponsored content
- Media collaborations
- Experiential activations

Signature assets (Exclusive)

Can't be bought anywhere else. Hardest to deliver, highest return.

- Naming rights
- Vetted audience data
- Qualified lead capture
- New-customer introductions

The 7-step valuation checklist

01. List your sponsorship properties and decide what to bundle.
02. Inventory every asset - spend five minutes on logos, then move on to the good stuff.
03. Define three to five audience segments in real detail.
04. Find each asset's market rate: where else could a sponsor reach this audience, and what does it cost there?
05. Add a brand premium (often 10-30%) based on how well you can deliver.
06. Design a few turnkey activation ideas and price them too.
07. Spot the gaps, build your prospect list, and set your outreach plan.

Ready to put this to work? CharityFundraiser runs this whole method inside your dashboard - an AI proposal & package generator, an AI outreach writer, a sponsor prospect pipeline, and a valuation calculator. Free to start at charityfundraiser.com.