

Maintaining Commercial Partner Engagement

In what are undoubtedly tough times, it is critical to continue working with your commercial partners (sponsors) to ensure they continue to see value in their relationship with you. While the face of their partnership may have changed temporarily, they invested with you for a reason and it's important as we move beyond lockdown to adapt and adjust your offering and look creatively at ways to maintain engagement. Below are some key considerations for maintaining your commercial partnerships during COVID-19.

Remember their marketing objectives

Always come back to your partners marketing objectives / their reasoning for entering into partnership with you. What are they hoping to achieve and what can you do in your current state to help this? Have their objectives shifted during this time of shutdown? It may be that some (or all) of your commercial partners are not trading due to the different alert levels – and may not wish to utilise any commercial activity during this time. Can you accrue these deliverables until a time that they are trading?

Identify your commercial inventory

Take stock of your commercial inventory (signage, social media, website banners, email newsletters etc) – what is still in play that you can offer to your commercial partners during the differing alert levels? Be honest and transparent around what you are capable of delivering throughout this time. Be flexible where you can. Can you add value to your commercial partners through other areas than what is contracted ie. social media, website, email.

Communicate

If you haven't already, reach out and communicate with all of your commercial partners personally – keep them updated as things progress within the industry ie. Turf Maintenance Exemption. Form an activation plan with each for when they, and you, are both open for business again. Remember that you will play an integral role in driving business your partners way once they are trading again.

Be Flexible

Be sympathetic and accommodating around payment if you are able to, your commercial partners will appreciate any support you can provide during these tough times. In the long term this will strengthen your relationship and help provide a basis for ongoing discussions / renewals.

Get Creative

Can you introduce new initiatives where you can create an alignment / add value to your commercial partners. Invite input from your partners, they may have some ideas that they would like to run past you.

- Member of the Month – brought to you by [insert commercial partner here] – this can be alternated each month using a new commercial partner each time.
- Help your members get to know your commercial partners – highlighting a different partner in your monthly member email newsletter with a short blurb on each partners business, and why they are partnered with your club - or this might take place on social media via a weekly post.
 - Make sure you include links so that you can drive traffic to their website.
- For those that aren't sending out a regular member email newsletter – now is a great time to begin doing so. A great way to keep your members engaged, as well as adding value to your commercial partners via advertising banners, or ownership of individual newsletter sections.
- If you haven't done so already, can you establish deals or offers available exclusively to your members via your commercial partners – this will help with brand loyalty.

Your commercial partners may be struggling. A creative and understanding approach that continues to add value to their business could form a strong bond long term.