with the purchase of product (the sponsor buys the tickets from you for a deep discount) is a win–win situation for everyone. If you can achieve this level of interaction between your event and your sponsor, you will have hit a home run.

You should not shy away from the many opportunities to run promotions; just be sure

you are familiar with the laws that govern them. In most states, for example, you cannot require a person to purchase something or pay to enter a promotion such as a sweepstakes. If you do, it is considered gambling. Check out the legal implications carefully before you institute a great offer; otherwise, you may find yourself in trouble.

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Your customers, the ticket-buying public, like nothing better than a good contest with a great prize. If people perceive that they are getting a good deal, they will certainly be attracted to your event, and the word will get around. A well-thought-out promotion can easily start a "buzz" about your event that affects its perception in the marketplace.

A positive buzz will lead to a hot ticket, which is, after all, what this is all about in the first place!

Charity Affiliations

Similar to promotion, charity affiliations are pretty easy to define and also fairly easy to implement. Over the years we have involved several charitable groups with our events, and every one has created a positive spin for the event while also making all of us involved with the event feel a little better.

I define a charitable organization as any group that qualifies to receive money with a corresponding tax deduction for the donor. The Internal Revenue Service calls this a 501(C)(3) organization, and most charitable organizations fall into this category (if they don't, you need to start asking a lot of questions!). Every one of these organizations operates differently, and you should check them out before you get them involved with your event. Assuming the organization you are considering passes muster, you will usually

> find them more than willing to help support and promote your event.

Don't be surprised if some charitable organizations don't jump at the opportunity to affiliate with your project. These groups hold themselves and their partners to high standards, and so they need time to research you as thoroughly as you researched them.

Once you and your chosen charity agree to work together, the benefits should be several.

Start by choosing a group that you feel some sense of commitment to personally. At times we have no choice but to make our charity the local volleyball, tennis, or figure skating club. That is fine, and in most cases we have a nice relationship with them. However, there often is no passion in these relationships. On the other hand, we have had affiliations with the Lion's Club, which does work for the blind; the American Heart Association; and Mothers Against Drunk Driving, each of which had a personal meaning for someone related to our company or the event. While almost any charitable organization will lend some benefit to your event, it is more rewarding, I think, to get involved with a cause that you are passionate about.

Don't be bashful about making your association with a charity a two-way street. You might be uncomfortable with this at first, but remember that charity organizations are businesses too and understand the need for the benefits to flow both ways. They will have mailing lists, newsletters, volunteer groups, and the like, all of which can be of major benefit to you in trying to build awareness for your event.

Certain organizations will give you a great deal of credibility in the marketplace and make your event more attractive to sponsors and the public. People are generally willing to pay more to attend an event that is raising money for a good and established cause than they would to attend one whose sole purpose is to line the pockets of the promoter.

Most charities will be well connected in the local marketplace, potentially helping you get better value with trades. They also can tap into their donor and membership lists to help you sell tickets, sponsorships, and so forth in an effort to raise money.

The charity will have an incentive to make sure that you do well. This depends on the deal you make with the charity (I suggest that they get a percentage of some portion of the revenues, such as a dollar for every ticket sold). Charities are used to fund-raising and in most cases are very good at it. Tap into their expertise. It can only help you.

Again, a charity affiliation serves a multitude of purposes, from making you feel

good to making the participants, sponsors, and spectators feel that they are contributing to a good cause. In the final analysis, however, no matter how much good feeling comes from the association, you and your charity are both looking to generate money for and from the event. Don't be afraid to use this tool to your advantage.

Ancillary Events

Along with the rest of your communications plan you have the opportunity to create activities around your event that have tremendous PR value and draw a lot of attention to the event that you are promoting. I call these ancillary events. They are not really necessary. They don't really add direct value to the event itself. But they are quite helpful in getting the word out that your event is coming to town or about to take place.

Ancillary events, which can take many shapes and forms, include the following:

- Clinics
- Autograph sessions
- Celebrity golf outings
- Bar, restaurant, or mall promotions (before Skating Goes Country we sponsored a booth promotion in conjunction with the Country Music Association [CMA] Awards in one of Nashville's most well-known bars)
- Pre-event parties to announce anything from sponsors to participants
- Grassroots programs that get kids involved before the event. This could include visits to schools, fund-raisers through ticket sales, ballboy/ballgirl training, and celebrity visits to schools.

 Contests (the Volvo ball-guessing contests were always a big success in drawing attention to the event)

Don't be bashful about making your association with a charity a two-way street.

In short, anything that encourages participation by your prospective audience can fall under the umbrella of ancillary activities. These do not have to be expensive. In fact, oftentimes you might get one of your sponsors to put up some extra money to under-

write something like this. The key is to make sure that your ancillary activities are well covered by the press and get people involved emotionally in your event. These activities are designed primarily to draw attention to your event and "hook" people into buying tickets or otherwise attending the event when it takes place; so the more "noise," the better.