

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.

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,

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