



A GOOD PROBLEM TO HAVE... **BUT STILL A PROBLEM!**

Dear Sponsor Doc:

We produce a peach festival in a small town in Texas and last week the Ford dealership reached out to us regarding being our “transportation sponsor”. I set a meeting with them for next week to discuss the sponsorship.

Well, yesterday we finally received confirmation that the local Chevy dealer is renewing as our Title Sponsor which includes automotive exclusivity. As we had not heard back if they were going to participate again, I took the call from the Ford dealership. How should my conversation go with Ford in letting them know that Chevy will be back as our Title sponsor, and I don't have an opportunity for them? Good problem to have right?

I really would appreciate your input on how to handle this conversation.

G.M.

Dear G.M.:

Thank you for reaching out and indeed it is a great problem to have. But it is very important how you handle it as you live in a small town, and you don't want to create any ill will with a business with which you might become a future partner.

First, I would be sure to have a signed deal with Chevy or at least a MOU (Memo of Understanding) to secure their commitment in writing. Nothing could be worse than saying “adios” to Ford and Chevy changing their mind.

Assuming that is in hand, prior to taking the meeting, I would want to give Ford a heads-up of the new circumstances since your original call. As uncomfortable as it is, you need to inform them that the Chevy Dealers has just been confirmed as Title Sponsor and that their level of sponsorship includes category exclusivity for automotive.

This is key...Being candid and transparent in your negotiations is essential in sponsor sales. Your integrity and reputation in your town depend on it!

I would try to come up with other options as well. They might have an interest in sponsoring a different event which you produce. You can also offer them the opportunity to come to them first in 2024 if Chevy does not renew.

Further, as a thank you for their interest you could offer some VIP passes to the festival. Just be gracious, candid, and appreciative in your turnaround.

Finally, once you have your meeting with Ford, I would let Chevy know that you just turned down a competitor in deference to their

sponsorship and to protect their exclusivity. You will likely find they are both grateful and their commitment to you is strengthened.

Next year, give Chevy a clear renewal deadline date and remind them of other interests!

Best of luck with the call.

The Sponsor Doc

Bruce L. Erley, CFEE, APR is the Founder and President of Creative Strategies Group, a consultancy based in Denver, Colorado which he founded in September, 1995. Creative Strategies Group (CSG) specializes in sponsorship and event marketing consultation for events, festivals, nonprofit organizations and other properties as well as municipalities and for-profit companies. With more than four decades experience, Erley is considered a master in the field. In 2012, Erley served as the World Board Chairman of the International Festivals & Events Association (IFEA). He is a 2015 inductee into the IFEA Hall of Fame. He is Accredited in Public Relations (APR) by the Public Relations Society of America and a Certified Festival & Events Executive (CFEE) by the International Festivals and Events Association.

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