

Because of all the previously mentioned clutter within sponsorships, sponsors are searching for ways to make their sponsorship “stand out” or differentiate themselves from the rest of a particular property’s sponsors. As discussed in the last section, the creation of an activation plan is how the sponsorship comes to life in a relevant way for the target audience. In developing the plan, you can create promotions, events and other ideas that are unique to the property’s sponsor family.

As part of creating the sponsorship activation plan, another way of creating differentiation is to develop what is called an “ownership position” or “signature property.” Creating this signature property is usually most effective if it’s done in conjunction with the property that the company is sponsoring. As with most ideas in sponsorships, the idea can come from the sponsor, the property or a joint effort between the two organizations. The property adds credibility or legitimacy to your program as you’re trying to impact fans of the sport with whom the property has already established credibility. When creating the program, keep in mind that it should be **relevant** to and **meaningful** for each of the following groups:

- *Sponsor*
- *Property*
- *Target audience (fans of the property)*

#### SPONSOR

What does it mean to be relevant to or meaningful for a sponsor’s brand? Most importantly, the signature property should meet one or more of the corporate or sponsorship objectives and/or communicate information about the company or brand to the consumer (e.g., product features, corporate tagline, etc.). The reference can either be very obvious or a subtle reminder.

#### PROPERTY

The next step is to ensure that the program is relevant to and meaningful for the property. As you learned in the “Negotiating” section, properties have a handful of priorities they’re working to achieve. From a property’s standpoint, anytime a sponsor helps it achieve, or take steps to achieve one of its priority areas, it is a big win for the property. Of course, all properties have the opportunity to approve sponsors’ use of its marks. If the property doesn’t like the program, the sponsor won’t be able to implement it.

#### TARGET AUDIENCE

The final step, and arguably the most important one, is ensuring that the program is relevant to and meaningful for the target audience, or fans of the sport. Many sponsors typically conduct consumer research to obtain feedback on their concepts prior to the launch of a new program. The purpose of this research, obviously, is to eliminate any concepts that don’t resonate with the consumers. The advance research won’t guarantee that the program will be a success, but it’s always helpful to have feedback prior to launching anything new to help ensure a higher rate of success.

## Section 9 – Importance of Research & Testing

### SELECTION PHASE - PROPERTY RESEARCH

The most important consideration when selecting a property for a company to sponsor is that the fans of the property (e.g., attendees, viewers, listeners) must be the same as the company’s target audience. If the fans aren’t the company’s customers, it doesn’t matter how good the activation plans are because they’ll be targeted

at consumers who aren't your customers.

How do you determine if the fans of the property are your company's customers?

There are numerous resources in the form of research companies and studies that can provide the information you're looking for. In order to make an informed decision, the following information is needed:

- 1. The size and avidity of the fan base*
- 2. Breakdown of the company's target audience within the fan base*
- 3. Likelihood of the target audience to purchase a company's products or services*

#### SIZE AND AVIDITY OF THE FAN BASE

In terms of the fan base, **avidity** refers to how consumed each fan is with a particular sport. ESPN's annual Sports Poll breaks down avidity into "casual" fans and "avid" fans for each of the top properties. In this poll, "casual" refers to those that have watched or attended one game or event of a particular sport/property in the last 12 months, and "avid" fans are those that watch or attend one or more games per month. A property's total fan base is determined by adding the casual and avid fan bases together.

Let's assume 15-year-old Mary Smith in Dallas, TX, watches an NBA game because she happens to be in the living room while her dad watches his favorite team play. According to the methodology of the ESPN Sports Poll, she would be considered a "casual" fan, but nevertheless, a fan of the NBA. Although this example could be a little extreme, you can see the huge gap that can exist between a casual fan (Mary Smith) and an avid fan (who watches at least one NBA game per month). Categorizing Mary Smith as a fan of a sport is quite a leap because she might not read, watch or pay attention to anything else pertaining to that sport for the rest of the year. However, since all leagues/sports are measured in the same way, the poll provides a fair comparison between properties. Keep in mind, though, that the number representing the total fan base might be somewhat skewed because it includes people like Mary Smith who could hardly be considered a fan.

Size and avidity are both important considerations when selecting a property. Size provides the overall number of people within the fan base. Avidity refers to the consumption level of people within the fan base. The more avid the fan base, the more opportunities the sponsoring company will have to interact with the fan base because the average fan will be more consumed with the sport.

For example, if "casual" fans attend/watch as few as one game per year, that doesn't provide many opportunities to interact with that fan. Depending on whether the fan watched or attended the event, your company can reach the fan through the TV broadcast (e.g., commercial spot, in-broadcast feature/billboard, product placement, etc.) or at the game or event (e.g., in-game on-field/on-court promotions, booth/display, signage, fan giveaway, etc.). Conversely, "avid" fans attend/watch once per month and each occasion provides an opportunity to showcase your brand. In addition, if a fan attends/watches one game per month, chances are he/she will also follow the property in other ways – radio, website, newspapers, ancillary programming, licensed merchandise, etc.

## Section 10 – How to Measure the Value of a Sponsorship

In Section 6, we discussed how to evaluate a sponsorship package based on the assets within the package and the planned activation. That evaluation is used to estimate the value of the sponsorship to a company and is used to negotiate a deal. This process to evaluate the actual value to the company is very similar. The main difference is that this process uses the actual activation results in the evaluation. When evaluating a sponsorship's value to a particular company, there are two different schools of thought – "Return on