

Making the Sponsorship Sales Pitch Handbook



Welcome. There is one thing that we should agree upon right from the get-go:

1. Even if you and I were pitching the same sponsorship package, we'd probably pitch it differently with different styles. That's okay.

This booklet is *my* style. This style is what I taught our sponsorship salespeople when I was with the Portland Trail Blazers, the New Jersey Nets and Mandalay Baseball Properties.

Some of my style may make perfect sense to you. For other parts, you may say, "*Are you kidding me? I can't do that.*" However, suspend disbelief for a while and practice my style. Implement as much of it as you feel comfortable with. I promise once you get comfortable with this style of selling sponsorships, you'll see tremendous results.

The sponsorship product that I'm going to use as a sales pitch example is *PlayBall*, our game program. With *PlayBall*, and the elements that are part of a *PlayBall* sponsorship, you'll get a terrific feel for how to pitch an Anchor Sponsorship in my style. *Get ready.*



Jon Spoelstra

Steve DeLay

HOW THIS BOOKLET WORKS

There are two sides to each page. The left side (what you're reading right now) is me talking to you, explaining why I say certain things at certain times.

The right side is the basic pitch that I would use for *PlayBall*. This is the sales pitch I used to pitch *PlayBall* when I was President of Mandalay Baseball Properties. I include **Stage Directions** to help you understand my sales pitch. Those **Stage Directions** will be in **bold**.

There are three things that I would bring with me on any sales call:

1. **Tools.** I would also call these props. These props helped me emphasize a point. The tools could include our Season Ticket delivery box, oversize pictures of the ballpark, a sheet of covers of *PlayBall*, ticket booklets, promotion examples, etc. You should determine your tools in advance and practice when you'll deploy them during your pitch.
2. **Style.** I like to *discuss PlayBall* with the prospect. I'm not going to read from the presentation. I'm not going to use PowerPoints. I'm not going to pull out my proposal, flip it upside-down and go page by page with the prospect. I'm going to *discuss* the sponsorship package. So, I bring my discussion style.
3. **Leave-behind presentation.** This spells out everything in writing what I discussed with the prospect in the meeting. I give this to the prospect at the end of our discussion. I don't give this earlier under any circumstance.

SIX PARTS TO THE PITCH

You asked for 15 minutes of the prospect's time. That's doable, even though you're rarely there for less than 30 minutes. If you use the Anchor sponsorship package approach, the prospect will enjoy listening to all the detail that goes into such a complete and thoughtful sponsorship. Here are the six parts to your pitch:

Part 1: Team intro. This could take just a minute or two. For instance, if you're the Dallas Cowboys do you really need much of an intro?

Part 2: Sponsorship intro. There is no 'Needs Analysis.' You start in telling (and showing) the prospect the sponsorship product that you think is right for that prospect. This could take 5-6 minutes.

Part 3: Segue into sponsor's promotion. This could be the most interesting part of the presentation. 4-5 minutes.

Part 4: The Summary. Two minutes.

Part 5: The Close. 30 seconds.

Part 6: Questions you might get. 3-4 minutes.

Okay, let's go.

Part 1: Team intro.

When I was President of Mandalay Baseball Properties, we owned and operated seven minor league baseball teams. Since our home office was in Los Angeles, none of our teams had ‘local ownership.’ We felt that at the beginning of the pitch, we needed to identify who we were.

We didn’t have any visible warts or pimples at Mandalay, but that wasn’t always the case with teams I had been with. When I was a consultant to the New Jersey Nets in the early 1990s, the Nets didn’t present nearly as nice a portrait as Mandalay. The seven owners were labeled ‘The Secaucus Seven’ and the team had the worst won-lost and attendance records in the NBA for the previous seven years. My first two years as a consultant, we worked on selling more tickets and we achieved terrific results. The team was still lousy and the owners were still controversial, but we had an impressive uptick in ticket sales. We called that uptick an *updraft*.

Now, our pitch to prospective Nets sponsors started with how we were a team in the updraft, how we sold tickets and how a company could benefit by sponsoring the team. We later used that same updraft pitch for some of our Mandalay teams. You can find the *Updraft* leave-behind piece on our website, and you can download it, tweak it and make it work for you.

(Stage Direction. I’m now in the prospect’s office, XYZ Company. I’m settled and here we go.)

“We’re Mandalay and we do two things:

1. Make movies.
2. Run minor league baseball teams.”

“In running our teams, we do a lot of things far differently than other teams. Those things that we do different I think help make our sponsorships work a lot better.”

“The most important thing we do differently is the positioning of our product. We target families, families, families, and when we get tired thinking of families, we think of families some more.”

“This positioning dictates our ticket marketing strategy. For instance, we’re about the only team in the world that *de-emphasizes* season tickets.”

“We will, of course, sell season tickets—mainly to corporations that can use them. But, for families, a season ticket isn’t the right product for them. It’s not the money, but how in the world could a family go to 70 games?”

“We sell 18-game plans. This works out to about three games a month, which is just about perfect for a family. And, we sell a ton of them!”

The key here in your intro is to start off with something positive. Ideally, that something positive translates to a benefit for the prospect. Your intro could provide the prospect some insight about the way your team does business that is positive. It could include ticket sales strategy, impact in the community or some other positive story.

DO YOU HAVE TO MEMORIZE?

You do *not* have to memorize your sponsorship pitch. However, I would recommend this: I recommend that *you write out your pitch*, just as I have done here for our *PlayBall* pitch. Then, I would practice your sponsorship pitch so often that it was relaxed and conversational. Your words might change a little bit depending on the sponsorship package you are presenting or the prospect's history with the team. However, you should know by heart the key points in your intro and in your description of the sponsorship elements that you want to hit on.

I've heard teams complain about how much time it would take to write out the pitch and then practice it. Really? Is it too much time to get fully organized in selling a large Anchor sponsorship? I think not.

"For instance, in Dayton, we sell the equivalent of over 10,000 17-game plans. And in Frisco, Texas, we sell more than 12,000. Nobody in the major leagues does this many. And, because of these thousands of game plans, we sell out every game in Dayton, and average 104% capacity in Frisco."

(Stage Direction. I show an oversized aerial photo of a sold-out stadium and then either give it to the prospect or lay it down on the desk.)

"By selling game plans, we cut down on the no-show rate. This is important to us. We feel that the fan is part of the show. And, if a fan buys a ticket, but doesn't go to the game, we've got an empty seat. An empty seat sure isn't very entertaining. And, a sea of empty seats sure isn't much fun. And, for our economics, an empty seat doesn't buy hot dogs and sodas and caps."

"What we've found is that with a ton of game plans, we have more fans that have a vested interest in the team."

"When more fans have a vested interest in the team, it's far easier for them to get involved in a sponsor's promotion."

"Another thing we do differently is that we have far fewer sponsors than other teams. For instance, a typical minor league baseball team will have over 400 sponsors. A Major League team will have 250 or more. We have 35. By doing this, we completely eliminate clutter and we eliminate your competition."

"Let me show you how we do this..."

Part 2: Sponsorship intro.

By embracing Anchor sponsorships, we eliminated most small dollar sponsorships. For example, most ads sold in the traditional game program were for small dollars. A lot of times, the expenditure was more like a *charitable donation* than it was a tool to help that company's business. We turned the traditional game program into a sponsorship program that only featured Anchor sponsors.

In the first year we did *PlayBall* at Mandalay, we had no samples. What we did have was a mock-up of *PlayBall*, what it would *look* like. If you're selling *PlayBall*, your printer can give you a pretty good mock-up.

(Stage Direction. Bring out a copy of *PlayBall*. Hold on to it—don't give it to the prospect. You need to explain it first. Hold it so the cover faces the prospect.)

"We give this to every man, woman and child who comes to our game."

"When I was President of the New Jersey Nets, my wife and I went to a play on Broadway. When we entered, they handed us a *PlayBill*, and everything we wanted to know about the cast we could read in ten minutes before the curtain went up. On our way back home, I asked my wife, 'Why don't pro teams do this?' She said, 'What are you mumbling about?'"

"*PlayBill...PlayBall...every* fan wants to know *a little bit* about the players, but not a lot. And nobody buys a program for \$5 which is like telephone book."

"I started *PlayBall* in New Jersey and have really refined it for Mandalay's teams."

"Let me walk you through this. We have a different cover for every game."

(Stage Direction. We did an 11 x 17 fold-out that featured 70 Dayton *PlayBall* covers in miniature. There were 35 on one side of the fold-out and 35 on the other. Spread it out.) on the desk.)

As you can see, instead of flipping pages in a PowerPoint, we're bringing out props and handing them to the prospect.

"This is the first half of a season in Dayton. Take a look at the covers. It 'says' families, families, families. Sure, we occasionally feature a player on the cover, but look, we feature mascots...and fans. If you looked at this as a mosaic of our games, you would *think* fun."

(Stage Direction. Flip the fold-out to the other side.)

"And here's the second half of the season."

(Stage Direction. Leave the fold-out on the desk.)

(Stage Direction. Open up to the first page of *PlayBall* and show it to the prospect. You still haven't handed *PlayBall* to the prospect.)

"This is the *PlayBall* for our game on **(WHATEVER DATE IS ON THE COVER)**. The copy on this first page is about the game last night. We printed *PlayBall* at about two this morning with all fresh stuff."

"Here we have the probable starting pitchers. We have the full rosters."

(Stage Direction. Turn a page.) "Here we have bios of the players. It's short, snappy stuff, more in the style of USA TODAY."

(Stage Direction. Turn some more pages featuring players, then open *PlayBall* to the center spread.)

"Here you can keep score. On the page in front, we have up-to-date stats on our players, and (OPEN TO VISITORS

STATS) here are the stats of (NAME THE OPPONENT). This is probably the only place on this earth where the Clinton LumberKings (or whoever the opponent is) stats are published.”

(Stage Direction. Open to the 2-page feature story.)

“We have one feature story—and our feature story is again like USA Today, in this case, being a maximum of just two pages.”

(Stage Direction. Flip to the back inside page.)

“We take digital pictures at our games every night. These pictures are of fans from last night’s game. If you and I went to a game tonight, you’d see people receiving *PlayBall* as they came through the turnstiles and it would seem like about 80% would flip to this last page...to see if they or somebody that they know were in it.”

(Stage Direction. Now, hand the prospect *PlayBall*, and bring out two or three different issues of *PlayBall* and lay them on the prospect’s desk. Pause while they look at them.)

“Let me show you how a *PlayBall* sponsorship works.”

“The ads are all 4-color.”

“You can change the ad frequently. As you know, the typical program has an ad for the full season. Well, if you want to feature different products or different sales, no problem with *PlayBall*.”

Now is when I start talking about the different elements in the Anchor *PlayBall* sponsorship package. Here I'm explaining the Title Nights, which includes the backs of tickets for those designated games. Then, I'll explain the radio spots, ticket backs and other elements.

When I was with the New Jersey Nets, we had a separate Anchor Sponsorship for radio. Thus, we didn't include any radio spots in the *PlayBall* sponsorship.

"We rotate the ads throughout the season—nobody has a fixed position."

"Actually, there is one fixed position—the back cover. We rotate the *PlayBall* sponsors to be the Title Sponsor of *PlayBall*. You get your logo on the front cover (POINT TO IT) five times a season, or about once a month. You also get the back cover during your Title Sponsor night. You'll still get your same ad inside *PlayBall*, and now the back cover."

"You get the double-truck masthead on the scorecard. So, in those games, you really *dominate*."

"Let me explain what else goes into a *PlayBall* sponsorship."

"You get *exclusivity* in *PlayBall*. This locks out your competition. We limit the number of *PlayBall* sponsors to just 14, thus keeping it manageable, useful and handy."

"We believe for you to make an impact with our fans, it's vital to extend your message beyond *PlayBall*."

"For instance, we rotate our sponsors on the back of our tickets." **(Stage Direction. Hand over a ticket book.)**

"You'll be on the backs of the tickets for three home games. If you want, we can coordinate that with your Title Sponsor nights of *PlayBall*. In that case, make sure you take some important people to the game because you're going to be on the back of the tickets, on the front of *PlayBall*, the back cover of *PlayBall*...everywhere."

"Since we sell a ton of 18-game plans, there are a lot of people that follow our games on radio. We're on _WWWW_____, the leading sports radio station in the market. Unlike most teams, we don't sell that separately—

Part 3: Segue into sponsor's promotion.

The promotion for the sponsor could be the most important part of the sponsorship. However, unlike a sponsorship product like *PlayBall*, the sponsor promotion is highly individualized. So, at this point of the pitch, you have two options:

1. **Pre-prepared individualized promotion for that specific sponsor.** You've read *The Sponsorship Promotions Bible* and have had a ThinkTank session where your folks have come up with a promotion for the sponsor you are pitching. It's fully detailed, written up and included in the leave-behind piece.
2. **Examples of how powerful a sponsor promotion can be.** This could be a promotion that was highly successful for one of your other sponsors or one of the promotions that we have written about in *The Ultimate Toolkit* and posted on our website, www.theultimatetoolkitsponsorships.com.

Here is a sample of a real promotion run for Home Depot in Frisco, Texas.

When you are explaining a promotion you did for another sponsor, you'll want to use props. In this example, I would always bring out the RoughRiders hat we used for the promotion. The hat was really different.

you'll receive a 60-second spot in each game."

"As you can see, there are important elements in this sponsorship that goes *outside* the stadium. The most important one is where we try to recycle all of our fans to become your customers through a consumer promotion."

"Pro sports teams have a great power to motivate their fans to action to support the sponsor. We use that power. Let me give you an example."

"When a sports team is popular in a community, it can be the most powerful marketing tool for a sponsor **if** the team knows how use that power, and **if** the company knows what it wants."

"Let me give you a couple of examples. These are just examples; they aren't what I'm recommending for you, but it gives you an idea of the power of a pro sports team if used as a marketing tool."

"We approached Home Depot as a sponsor with our Frisco, Texas team, the Frisco RoughRiders. The Regional VP told us that he didn't need help with his Home Depot stores, but needed help with the Tool Rental Centers that were next to the Home Depot stores."

"He told us that contractors used the Tool Rental Centers to rent backhoes and power sanders and other power equipment. But, he told us, the 'weekend warrior' wasn't renting tools."

"He said, 'Use your team's power to get your fans to rent a tool at our Tool Rental Centers.'"

It had the head of Teddy Roosevelt graphically superimposed on a baseball, playing off the Teddy RoughRiders theme. I would also use pictures of the ushers wearing the hat and the pin for credibility and pictures of the hat display in the store.

For whatever promotion you're explaining, have some props to give to the prospect. The prop could be a premium, a picture of a POS display or a testimonial from the sponsor.

"We asked him, 'How many tools do you want to rent?'"

"He said that if we could have our fans rent 2,000 tools over a six-week period—and where it could be tracked—they would build a statue of him back in the home office in Atlanta."

"We said that we'd get back to him and we set an appointment for a week later. A few days later, we called him and asked him if he would be willing to give a one-dollar discount to any fans that rented a tool?"

"He laughed and said, 'That's your promotion idea, a *dollar discount*?'"

"We said, 'Humor us for the moment,' which he did and said that he would give a dollar discount. We came back a week later. We had created a secondary logo of the Frisco RoughRiders and put it on a hat. It was a really cool logo. We kicked off the promotion on a Friday night in June—to get the weekend warriors. Our ushers were wearing the hat. They also wore a pin that said, 'Ask me how to get my hat for free.'"

"In our team shop, we built a display reaching from floor to ceiling with hats. It had a sign: 'The coolest hat you can't buy. Get it for free when you rent a tool.' There was a list of about 400 tools. There was a price tag on each hat of \$22."

"So, the only way you could get this cool \$22 hat was to rent a tool at a Home Depot Tool Rental Center. The hat, by the way, cost 93 cents—that was the dollar discount—but it had a real value of \$22. More importantly, it was *exclusive-exclusive*, meaning that the *only* way you could get that hat was to rent a tool."

If you want to use a second example of the power of a sponsorship, here it is.

“Well, instead of renting 2,000 tools in six weeks, the promotion ended after a week. After a week, Home Depot was out of tools and out of hats.”

(Stage Direction. Bring out the hat and hand it to the prospect.)

“This was a case of getting a portion of our fans to do something that was not unreasonable. In my case, renting a tool would have been unreasonable—I’m not a home fixit guy—but to a portion of our fans, it was not unreasonable to rent a tool to get the hat.”

“A different example is how our Dayton Dragons team worked with our naming rights sponsor, Fifth Third Bank.”

“It was before our first season in Dayton and Fifth Third Bank said they didn’t want the usual promotion where fans would open up checking accounts. Fifth Third wanted us to get some of our fans to take out a \$15,000 home equity loan.”

“We asked them how many of these loans they wanted to get. They told us 30. We told them that we would get back to them the next week.”

“This certainly was a different type of challenge. We couldn’t just pull out a template and apply it to Fifth Third Bank.”

“There was a lot of excitement about the team coming to Dayton. So, we recommended that Fifth Third offer our fans a team jacket.”

“The only way you could get this team jacket was to be a player or coach or get a \$15,000 home equity loan at Fifth Third.”

Once you explain your idea for a sponsor promotion to your prospect or give examples of other promotions you've done, your prospect will give you some feedback. They might tell you your promotion idea is perfect or it might be a little off.

If they tell you it's a little off, they'll give you some reasons why. Don't get bogged down adjusting the promotion on the spot. Tell the prospect, "That's great feedback. Let me talk with my people back at the office and make some adjustments on this idea. Before I do that, I'd like to walk you through the other elements in the sponsorship."

"The jacket cost \$55, which was well within their acquisition budget. When Fifth Third Bank reached 50 homeowner loans they tracked to this promotion, they celebrated. Then we reached 100 homeowner loans. It ended up with over 500 homeowner loans. Again, this was a case where we offered an exclusive-exclusive product. The only way you could get this jacket was to be one of our players, a coach or get a \$15,000 home equity loan."

(Stage Direction. Bring out photo of the jacket and hand it to the prospect.)

"Now, I don't believe that a lot of people woke up one morning and said, 'Gee I want that jacket, so I'm going to get a loan I don't need.'"

"What I think happened was that there were plenty of people who were going to get a \$15,000 home equity loan and the Dayton Dragons team jacket promotion nudged them over to Fifth Third Bank."

"This is another case of how a pro sports team can influence *a portion of their fans* to do something that is *not unreasonable*. To those fans that had plans of getting a home equity loan, it wasn't unreasonable for them to get that loan at Fifth Third Bank in order to get an *exclusive-exclusive* Dayton Dragons team jacket."

"So, we'll work with you and create a promotion that really helps you accomplish your goals."

"Besides the promotion, you'll also receive the use of our ballpark for a day. Let me tell you how some of our sponsors have used this."

"Kettering-Medical Center is a large hospital complex in Dayton. They have 8,000 employees. Every year they have

As you go through each element in your Anchor sponsorship, you should touch on specifics of how the prospect can use the elements. This way, they don't think you are just throwing things in to raise the price. You want them to truly see and feel how each part of the sponsorship will help them.

a summer picnic. They've gone to theme parks; they've done everything with modest success. Now they have their summer picnic at the Dayton Dragons stadium. They had people picnicking all over the infield and outfield. Then they cleared them so they could have a softball game. Their CEO said that he had reports from all levels that it was the best summer picnic they've ever done."

"Another sponsor in Dayton has a small trade show every year. Every year, he would rent the same hall. People from around the country would come in, but each year, there we're fewer and fewer coming. Until he said he was going to have it at Fifth Third Field. He did this after the season, in September, when the weather was really nice."

(Stage Direction. This is a good time to bring out a picture of a sponsor holding a special event or picnic at your park.)

"You'll also receive a suite at our ballpark for five home games. We can coordinate this on the nights that you are Title Sponsor of *PlayBall*. This is a terrific opportunity to invite clients and prospects or just key employees."

"You will, of course, receive four choice season tickets to all of our home games."

"With those season tickets, you receive membership in our Founders Club. This is a private club behind home plate where you can watch the game, eat dinner—it's terrific for entertaining."

"Along with the Founders Club, you'll receive two preferred parking passes for our home games."

"Also, you'll receive 100 group tickets."

"And lastly, you receive passes to our Sponsor's Kids Day. Sponsor's Kids Day is not a consumer promotion. This is for

Part 4: The Summary.

In this pitch for an Anchor sponsorship, we've covered a lot of ground. It's time to summarize. This is the time that I bring out the leave-behind booklet. I go to the last few pages where the summary of items is located.

With the leave-behind booklet in my hand, I quickly read through the items, boom-boom-boom.

You may discover you missed an element. That's okay. You can simply say, "Oops, I forgot one element that you'll really like," and then explain that element. For the other elements that you did mention, you can simply read through them for the prospect.

your employees' kids from the ages of 8 to 14. They can get autographs and pictures, and it's just a lot of fun."

"We've talked about a lot of things, so I would like to just summarize these things."

(Stage Direction. Open the leave-behind booklet to the last few pages titled *The Opportunity*. DO NOT GIVE THE BOOKLET TO THE PROSPECT.)

"As we discussed, you'll receive:

One full-page 4-color ad in each copy of Frisco RoughRiders *PlayBall*. Frisco RoughRiders *PlayBall* will be distributed free to 95% of the fans who attend Frisco RoughRiders home games at Dr Pepper Ballpark. 70 home games.

- *Title Sponsorship* designation of the Frisco RoughRiders *PlayBall* at five regular season home games. Included in the Title Sponsorship will be:
 - *Masthead identification*. Your corporate name (or product) will be featured in the Masthead on the cover of the Frisco RoughRiders *PlayBall*.
 - *Back cover 4-color ad*. You'll receive the back

cover in the Frisco RoughRiders *PlayBall* as well as your regular inside ad.

- *Inside double-truck roster pages.* You'll receive the sole and dominant corporate identity on this double-truck area.
- *Product exclusivity* among all Frisco RoughRiders *PlayBall* sponsors during the length of your contract.
- *Ticket backs.* XYZ Company will be the exclusive sponsor on the backs of tickets for three home games.
- *Frisco RoughRiders radio.* XYZ Company will receive one 60-second commercial in the pre- or post-game of all Frisco RoughRiders radio broadcasts.
- *A custom promotion.* XYZ Company will receive a consumer promotion from the Frisco RoughRiders specifically designed for XYZ Company. As part of the promotion, the Frisco RoughRiders will provide full support that will include the following:
 - Game broadcast "drop-ins" during the promotion period.
 - Your promotion will be featured during the promotion period on the *Frisco RoughRiders Midgame Show*, aired during the radio broadcasts.
 - Public Address Announcements featuring the promotion.
 - In-concourse identity where possible.
 - Your promotion will receive Frisco RoughRiders-produced radio commercials

aired on our flagship.

- Your promotion will be featured in newspaper advertising during the promotion period.
- *Ballpark private usage.* XYZ Company Name will be able to use the ballpark for a company event one time per season.
- *Ballpark suite.* You will receive the use of a suite at the ballpark for five Frisco Professional Baseball home games. Catering will be additional.
- *Season tickets.* You will also receive four season tickets to the Frisco RoughRiders home games.
- *Founders Club passes.* With your season tickets, you will receive four Founders Club passes for Frisco RoughRiders baseball games.
- *Preferred parking.* You will receive two preferred parking spaces for all Frisco RoughRiders games.
- *Group nights.* XYZ Company will receive 100 group tickets.
- *Sponsor's Kids Day.* Passes issued to a closed practice for your guests.”

Part 5: The Close.

You do three things in presenting the price of the sponsorship:

1. Make sure that the page that has the price is open.
2. Hand the opened booklet over to the prospect and say, “And here’s the price.”
3. Don’t say a word. Just watch. You’ve said everything you needed to say. *Just watch.* Let the prospect be the next person to talk.

If you modeled your sponsorship after the Anchor sponsorship presented here and explained in these workbooks, you’ll often get the response in reference to the price, “That’s less than I thought it would be.”

YOU: “And here’s the price...”

Part 6: Questions you might get.

This isn't a one-call-close type of sale. However, you'll have a pretty good idea of how close to the mark your sponsorship presentation was based on the questions that the prospect asks.

The question on the right is my favorite question: How soon do you need an answer? I've talked to sponsorship salespeople on how they answer this and it varies from several weeks to several months.

I would prefer to know what the prospect is thinking. So, I ask, "How much time do you need?" Almost always, the amount of time that they need is far *shorter* than I was thinking about. (It's usually two weeks or so, unless the prospect isn't interested at all and they'll say something about *next* year's budget.

If the decision time is reasonably short, I always bring *exclusivities* into the equation.

This usually helps in drilling down how serious the prospect is. If the prospect asks the question on the next page, I'm feeling pretty good...

Prospect: "How soon do you need an answer?"

YOU: "How much time do you need?"

Prospect: "Two weeks or so."

YOU: "Well, as you know, we protect category exclusivities, and there is one other person selling our sponsorships, and whoever comes in first gets it. If you need two weeks, I can keep you posted on any competitors that are interested between now and then. Why don't we schedule a meeting for two weeks from today to get this nailed down?"

If the prospect is asking about payment terms, then the prospect is at least thinking about buying the sponsorship.

The example on the right is for a minor league baseball team. But, I had similar billing cycles when I was in the NBA.

I'm relatively flexible in payment plans. However, I felt that we should always avoid monthly payments over 12 months. The problem with the monthly payments is that they would be paying during the off-season when there is no activity and they could feel they're getting nothing for their investment. In the off-season months—where they would be paying the same as during the season—they would be right.

The question about negotiating is another *good* question—the prospect is thinking about the cost. This is where the Favored Nations Clause really helps you. You should re-read Chapter 17: *Negotiating*.

Prospect: “What are the payment terms?”

YOU: “One-fourth payment is due in February, one in April, one in June and the last in August.”

Prospect: “How much room is there to negotiate?”

YOU: “We have a Favored Nations clause that protects each sponsor. Basically, what the Favored Nations clause says is that every sponsor pays the same rate for this particular sponsorship. If one sponsor pays less for the same sponsorship, you get yours for free.”

Often you'll get a stray question about Official Status. It's not that the prospect really wants it or knows what to do with it, but they feel they should negotiate *something*. While it seems like an easy throw-in, giving up Official Status can cause you major problems with other sponsors. Re-read Chapter 18: *Why You Don't Sell Official Status*.

Prospect: “Do we get Official Status with this sponsorship?”

YOU: “We don't allow any sponsor the ‘Official’ status. The reason is simple—while we protect sponsors from their competitors in a medium (like *PlayBall* or Dominant Identity), we could have one car as a Dominant and one as a *PlayBall*. Is it fair that one is deemed ‘official’ and one is not? We just don't do ‘official status.’”

The next two questions are not my favorite questions to get, but you'll get it frequently enough. These questions are just another angle on trying to negotiate the price. Or, they just want you to dig your own grave.

What you're trying to learn here is if the prospect is just trying to negotiate out of habit or is the sponsorship package truly too expensive?

With a little jousting about cost, you might have to ask the question, "If the price is too high, I could prepare a different sponsorship for you. What amount would you be more comfortable with?"

Often, the price is about 20% less than the price I was asking for. Many salespeople I know would just cut the price by 20%. However, you can get full price if you remain firm.

Set an appointment and come back a week later with a different proposal with different parts. Now you would have the prospect *choosing* between two sponsorships instead of a 'yes' or a 'no.'

Prospect: "Can you break out the values of each item in the sponsorship?"

YOU: "I know that other teams do that, but we don't sell the components individually, so we don't have individual price tags for these items. I would, however, recommend that your ad agency could put different values on the items. But, we look at this as a sponsorship and what it's going to take to make this successful for you."

Prospect: "I like that package, but I can't afford it. Can't we cut some of those things out? Can we pick and choose different elements? For instance, we don't really need the ticket backs for those three games."

YOU: "We've crafted this sponsorship where each element works with the others. However, you don't have to take every element here. The price of the sponsorship would be the same because of our Favored Nations clause."

"If the price is too high, I could prepare a different sponsorship for you. What amount would you be more comfortable with?"

Don't be worried that your promotion didn't get a standing ovation. If it didn't (they rarely do), you did get valuable feedback. You'd get valuable feedback even if it was a lousy idea, so take that feedback and turn it into a gem of a promotion.

Nailing down the next steps: Before you leave the prospect's office, you want some clear next steps. It may be a follow-up meeting with a new proposal, a follow-up meeting with a revised promotion or a meeting following the prospect's decision making timeline. Ideally, you want to have a follow-up meeting scheduled before you leave their office. If you don't, you may spend the next three months trying to get the prospect back on the phone.

Prospect: (A price that is about 20% less than the price of the sponsorship you pitched.)

YOU: "Let me prepare an alternative proposal that would fit your budget a little better. Can we get together next Tuesday at 10:00am?"

Prospect: "That promotion idea doesn't quite work for me."

YOU: "Based on your feedback, I have some thoughts on how we can make it better fit your needs. I want to talk with my staff at the office and get back to you. Can we get together next Tuesday at 10:00am?"

Prospect: "I need some time to talk to some of my people."

YOU: "When do you think would be a good time to get back together?"

Prospect: "Give me a call in a week or so and we'll set something up."

YOU: "Let's set something up right now for two weeks from today. That way we don't do a lot of voice mail tag. How about Tuesday the 16th at 10:00am?"