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Case Study: Prospecting for Event Sponsorship

Crystal Leochko Johnston

About Crystal Leochko Johnston

- Prospect Research Consultant at Eclipse Research Group
- Board Member for Rossdale Ukrainian Dance School
- History buff
- Dance mom
- In the prospect research field since 2009



About Eclipse Research Group

- 1 full-time prospect researcher; part-time assistance
- Works with organizations in the following sectors: the arts, education, food insecurity, animal welfare, social services and healthcare.
- Prior to Eclipse Research Group Crystal was a sole prospect researcher at a small private school in Winnipeg.

Learning Outcomes from This Session

- How to identify potential corporate prospects whose giving interests are aligned with your event
- How to assess the ability and affinity of the identified corporate prospects
- How to map out clear entry paths to decision-makers using targeted prospect research

The Goal

- Identifying, analyzing & prioritizing potential corporate partners whose business goals, target audience, and philanthropic interest align with your organization or event
- Looking beyond the usual local sponsorship prospects and instead identifying grants and corporations with shared values and community investment to build a sustainable sponsorship pipeline

The Case

- Client: a health clinic located in Winnipeg
- Event: a free, all-ages outdoor event in Winnipeg with activities & food
- What they're looking for: financial sponsorship of the event & in-kind donations

Learning the Backstory

- Before you can research potential sponsors, you need to know the details about the event including:
  - Where and when will it be happening?
  - Why is it happening?
  - Who is organizing and are there partners?
  - Is there a cost to attend?
  - Who is attending?
  - What happens at the event?
  - Has this event happened before?
  - If so, who has sponsored?

Finding The Right Matches

- Start by looking at:
  - Local & Canada-wide grants that may be a good fit for the event
  - Local corporations who have given to similar events/would have interest in the event
  - Canadian corporations to have given to similar events who have previously given in Winnipeg and would have interest in the event
  - Previous sponsors

Sources for the Search

- Provincial & city government websites
- Programs & sponsor lists for similar events
- Corporate donor list for similar organizations (iWave, GrantConnect, etc.)

Assessing Ability and Affinity

- Ability:
  - Review financial information & wealth indicators
  - Look at the amount of their previous donations, grants or sponsorships
  - Look at whether or not they're accepting requests
- Affinity:
  - Review who they have made previous donations, grants or sponsorships to
  - Read their community investment guidelines
  - Have they had any connection to your organization in the past?

Finding a Path to the Decision Makers

- Unless the organization is applying to an open grant call or filling out an online sponsorship or donations form, your organization will need to find a path to connect with the decision makers
- These decision makers change, depending on the size of the company

Small and Local Businesses

- Contacts would be a local store manager, or the owner/general manager

Mid-Sized Regional Companies

- Contacts would include the marketing director, community relations manager, marketing managers

Large Companies

- Contacts would include the corporate social responsibility manager, sponsorship coordinator, community investment specialist
- For some major entities proposals would only go through a formal online portal

Results

- Seven online applications for sponsorship of the event were submitted with two applications approved – Downtown Biz/ Manitoba Government
- 17 small to medium local companies also sponsored the event

Questions?

Crystal Leochko Johnston, MA
(204) 990-4830
crystal@eclipseresearchgroup.com