

Sport sponsorship and event hospitality is a great platform to build business-impacting relationships through shared out-of-the-office experiences. We all know the scrutiny from Congress, the media and elsewhere that made companies hide sponsorships and hospitality programs in 2009. Despite this, the value of sponsorship as an appropriate marketing vehicle was always going to drown out those who exaggerated isolated examples and it has been good to see the second half of 2010 featuring a flurry of major deals signed, even including companies from the banking sector.

However, ROI has a renewed focus to protect ourselves and our companies to justify the expense of sponsorships. You need to be confident that the dollars you are investing are being spent effectively and that every asset received is being maximized.

Here are three key areas to increase the ROI from your sponsorship ticket and hospitality assets:

**1) Reduce ticket and hospitality waste.** Do you know which tickets and hospitality were used and not used from your 2009 and 2010 sponsorships? For many sponsors, it is typical to have 20% of tickets go unused and wasted\*. Ask yourself the following questions and ensure you have a sound basis for your answers: Are all tickets and hospitality seats being used? If not, why not? How many employees or business units utilized these assets? Did some business units use more than their “share” of these assets, or did others not participate at all? Who used each and every ticket? For each, was that person a customer, a prospect or an employee? These questions must be answered, not only for internal ROI review, but for internal audit and even for the IRS since how each ticket was used, who used it, what facility the event was held in, and even the level of ticket affects IRS reporting requirements.

**2) Ensure assets are being used for the best business purpose.** If the primary objective of a sponsorship investment is business to business relationship building, then without fail, tickets and hospitality should be used by valued customers, prospects and appropriate hosts from your company. Your company must have processes and controls to ensure that tickets and hospitality benefits further your business and were not simply given away just to ‘fill the seats’. The best practice is to internally publicize these assets so that more requests than tickets are collected and then evaluation and allocation can be done based on the best business purpose. Consistent collection of the necessary justification for each ticket request is critical to this process. Lastly, post-event data must be collected to evaluate business changes and value against the business objectives from having that customer or prospect on site. Aggregate reporting on this data will also provide the basis for intelligent renewal decision making.

**3) Reduce the costs of handling tickets and fulfilling hospitality.** Streamlining ticket management and hospitality fulfillment provides greater control, improved efficiency and cost savings, therefore again increased ROI. A single, consistent process for publicizing assets, accepting requests, evaluating and allocating assets and reporting on usage and ROI is the key starting point. Ensuring your hospitality event invitation, registration and guest data management process is clear, collaborative and efficient is next. Can appropriate employees easily submit requests with business justification and receive communications about allocation decisions and distribution? Does all event hospitality staff have access to real-time guest data at any time and location that they need it? Then put yourself in the shoes of your guests, do you see impressive, brand-consistent invitations and communications? Is the event website informative and compelling? Is it easy to register? Was I consistently thanked for my participation and asked for feedback on improving the guest experience?

Sponsorship marketing is a significant investment. Deciding to deploy this tactic is only step one; effective activation that ensures maximum return on the investment is the key to success.

Top agencies and sponsors use Sports Systems for efficient online sponsorship asset and hospitality data management. Agencies including Octagon, Elevation, IMG, GMR and Velocity/Team Epic, and companies such as AT&T, Visa, UPS, Allstate, Motorola, MillerCoors, Shell Oil and Intel rely on Sports Systems for proven systems that simplify and streamline ticket and hospitality data management. For more information on Sports Systems visit [www.sportssystem.com](http://www.sportssystem.com) and be sure to connect with us via [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

\*PricewaterhouseCoopers published a study in 2009 that pointed to entertainment assets (tickets, passes, suites, etc.) as the single greatest ROI increase opportunity of the asset categories it reviewed, finding a 15-25% increase available on average.