



Branding of Youth Sports Teams Provides Great Benefits

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Over the last three decades, sports specialization for children and teens has exploded, becoming more popular, intense and expensive than ever before.

Overall, ESPN shows that youth participate significantly in sports teams. Approximately 30 million US children ages 5-18 are involved in organized sports. Participation in youth sports has increasingly become a part of the American fabric over the past century—with an estimated 30 to 40 million American children from the ages of 6-17 participating in some form of athletic activity on a regular basis. According to a 2014 survey by the Sports and Fitness Industry Association, 53 percent of 'Generation Z,' 6 to 14-year-olds, play team sports.

Increasingly, youth athletes also look to sports for self-identity and social interactions. In this way, 61% percent of boys in grades 3-12 say sports is a big part of who they are. The result is that there is an increasing demand for communication tools to make planning and social interactions easier and more efficient.

It's also becoming increasingly expensive to participate in team sports, so many local school and community sports organizations ask savvy small businesses to help lessen the financial burden through sponsorships, and also by actively seeking donations. Some businesses consider the sponsorship a charitable contribution and others, a form of advertising. Either way, it's a mutual relationship that pays off for the sponsor, the team, and the community.

Here's why teams get branded sponsors for youth sports organizations:

- **Increase awareness of the team and associated company's products and services.** Each sponsorship package has benefits built in: field signage, website advertising, company name on uniforms, etc. Through a sponsorship, a brand will be in front of the youth sports market of parents, coaches, teachers, program organizers, players and fans.

- **Support the community's future—its youth.** Businesses, individuals and organizations that support local schools and their teams enhance both their public image and increase loyalty and morale in their employees, players and families.
- **A welcomed form of advertising.** In most settings consumers are inclined to tune out branding. However, youth sports brands are a particularly positive and engaging way to build awareness. Parents like to see that companies, schools and other community organizations are supporting local sports.
- **Help keep the cost of youth sports programs low.** Player participation fees cover the majority of the costs of a youth sports program but support from sponsors provides additional resources which can help keep participation fees low. With lower fees, more families and communities are able to afford to sign-up and that means more children have an opportunity to receive the many benefits of team sports activities.
- **Build goodwill.** Companies that sponsor youth sports programs make a positive contribution to their community. Overall this can evoke a community-wide feeling that a company understands the impact and importance of sports for its youth.
- **Contributions.** A well-branded sports teams gets more contributions, a key source of funding to keep the team functioning

To help parents, educators, coaches and students make the best use of their commitments to youth team sports, many are turning to technology to save time and enhance communications. Many technologies are available: website builders, registration programs, payment apps, and youth team management apps. Teams see value in the brands and this value should be enhanced through the technology tools. Because of the value associated with the youth team's brand, the technology should also be branded with sponsors' guidelines.

In addition, the technology should be free whenever possible, so that sponsors' money isn't going to pay for apps that could be advertising supported—particularly with the sponsors' messaging.

For example, the youth team management app should be branded specifically with a team's logos. Not some technology company's branding. In addition, mobile apps can be advertising supported, not rented with hard to come by cash.

The proliferation of school and parent-run youth leagues has dramatically fed this rising participation. Those worried about keeping their kids safe, off the streets and active, have found a variety of ways to engage their children in team sports. While participation in team sports may not suit every child and every family, the opportunity to engage in group activities surely can benefit our communities and its citizens, today and tomorrow.