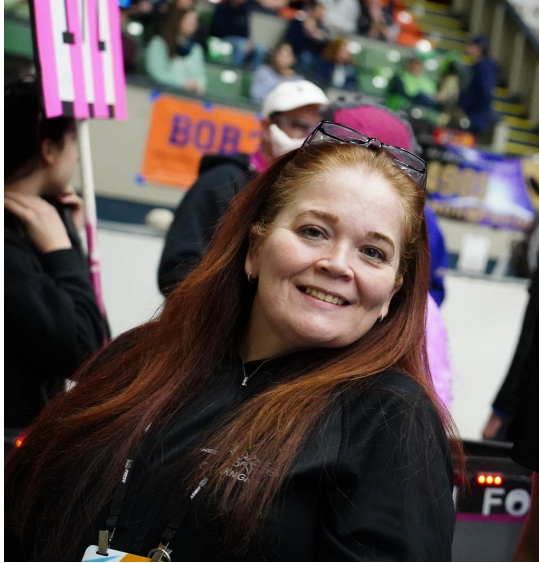




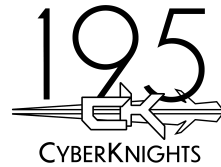
**SUSTAINING  
SUCCESS:**

**Mastering Sponsorship  
for FIRST Robotics**

# About Me



Senior Mentor, CT



Lead Mentor  
Team 195 - The CyberKnights

# MASTERING SPONSORSHIPS

The focus of this presentation is going to be how to MASTER sponsorships (and raising funds) for your FRC team. So, we're not going to go too deeply into what sponsorships are and why you should have them because I assume we all know the answers to those questions. But, if not, there will be a questions portion at the end.

## Sponsors vs Fundraising

There are key similarities between the two, but often organizational leaders make the mistake of treating the two as the same or equals, which they are not.

- The purpose of FUNDRAISING is to generate funds through donations to support your team's mission or goals.
- SPONSORSHIP creates a partnership with a company or organization that provides financial support *in exchange for pre-determined exposure or promotional benefits (let's remember this part for later).*



FUNDRAISING

# FUNDRAISING EXAMPLES

- One day events
  - Carwashes, restaurant “percentage” nights, pasta dinner type events, etc.
- Sales
  - Holiday item sales, team merch sales, etc.
- Pail Shaking
  - Setting up outside of a restaurant or other establishment with a donation bin

Each of these types of fundraisers are great to do. You can even do every single one of them each year. But, they won't be enough. For that reason, you should not rely solely on fundraisers. Fundraising should be a part of your strategy - not your entire strategy.

Here are some tips on each of the fundraisers mentioned above.

# FUNDRAISING TIPS

One Day Fundraisers	Selling Items	Pail Shaking Collections
Several chain restaurants offer fundraiser nights which donate a small (very small) portion of a nights profits.	Selling team merch Bonfirefunds.com Shirts are drop shipped and you earn a portion	Bring a Robot
Pasta dinners - use a free location, use donated food, use <b>all</b> volunteers, seek event sponsors, thoughtfully set ticket prices, have donation bins & online donations onsite	Pies, other holiday items, Offers online sales/shops (Lyman's Orchards does this)	Staff enthusiastic students & an adult.
	Wreaths, poinsettias, etc. Contact local businesses for opportunities and info.	HAVE A METHOD FOR ONLINE DONATIONS
Carwashes & tag sales		Try to book high traffic locations & times
		Book way in advance



**SPONSORSHIPS**

# Who Can Be a Sponsor?

- ANY Company (from small, local businesses to large corporations)
- Individuals, such as friends, family members, and neighbors
- Other organizations

## Identifying Potential Sponsors

Because there are so many different types of potential sponsors, there's countless ways to find them.

- Mentors employers
- Parents employers
- Everyone that you meets employers
- Local businesses (this is simple):
  - Use Google Maps (search locally, search by industry, get creative)
  - Go to town/city Chamber of Commerce page
  - Approach local businesses that you use regularly



# HOW TO APPROACH A SPONSOR



NO, BUT REALLY...

# PRETTY BASIC TIPS

- Get VERY comfortable with talking about your teams needs, what it takes to sustain a team, and why you *always* need money
- Program yourself to think of every new business you encounter as a potential sponsor
  - Businesses that you use, that you drive by, that your friends work for, that you see ads for on social media, you name it
- Don't just promote yourself to sponsors as a high school team that builds robots - talk about all that you do within your community. You're raising money for an entire program - not just a team
- Literally, always be on the lookout
- Be prepared to put in the work in securing sponsors AND keeping them
- Carry *\*updated\** Sponsorship Packages (or a business card) in your car/bag
- Share these tips with your students, their parents, and other mentors (you're just one person)
- Don't just get mad at teams with a lot of sponsors - figure out what they're doing

# SPONSOR PACKAGES

- Ask for key information: company name & address
- Collect name of specific contact person (this is crucial)
- Donation Amount or type (in-kind)
- How did you hear about team (more on this later)
- Find out if they'd like to stay in touch
  - Collect social media info
- Information on who to make checks payable to or how to pay online.



**195**  
CYBERKNIGHTS

## SPONSORSHIPS

COMPANY NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY, STATE, ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

CONTACT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please include a company business card with your donation if possible.*

Donation Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Gift In-Kind Donation \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about our team? \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to know about team news and events? Yes No

Company Social Media Handles:

Facebook: \_\_\_\_\_ TikTok: \_\_\_\_\_

Instagram: \_\_\_\_\_ YouTube: \_\_\_\_\_

Make Checks Payable to:  
Southington Robotics and Technology Education Association  
PO Box 826 - Southington, CT 06489

# SPONSOR LEVELS

- These levels will vary from team to team - based on your goals
- Do not be afraid to change them from year to year until you figure out what works best for you
- Make it interesting w/ color and pics, get their attention
- Be creative with level name but don't get too weird
- Put actual thought into what you can offer and why it would be attractive to a sponsor (in 2023-2024)

## SPONSORSHIP LEVELS

**PLATINUM**  
\$5000+

- Company name announced as part of team introduction at competitions
- Robot demo at your company
- All **GOLD** level benefits

**GOLD**  
\$3000-\$4999

- Company logo prominently displayed on robot
- All **SILVER** level benefits

**SILVER**  
\$2000-\$2999

- Custom sponsor social media post
- Thank you plaque/picture frame
- All **PURPLE** level benefits

**PURPLE**  
\$1000-\$1999

- Name on team competition shirts
- Two tickets to annual gala
- All **BLUE** level benefits

**BLUE**  
Up to \$1000

- Digital yearbook documenting the season in pictures
- Company name and logo on website



Let's look into this more 

# PUT YOURSELF IN THEIR SHOES

Imagine you're a business owner, or the person who makes sponsorship decisions. What would be most important to you in selecting who/what to sponsor?

- Community impact / missions aligned
- Local reputation
- Recognition and affiliation

In all cases, the *most important way* to entice and ensure continued sponsoring, is by offering rewards of actual value **AND THEN FOLLOWING THROUGH**

SO. Many. Teams don't follow through. Raise your hand if you know for a fact that your team followed through on promises to sponsors this season.

# Sponsor Engagement Tracking

## JUST KEEP TRACK

Create a spreadsheet that tracks the following items and CHECK AND DATE when these things are done.

- Which sponsors go on team t-shirts
- Which go on the website
- Which go on the robot

Create a file that has sponsors logos (only necessary for the ones you need them for)

Did you promise SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS? Have that on the spreadsheet and CHECK IT OFF when you've done it.

Involve business & media students in this process. It's valuable experience. But don't rely solely on them - have adults checking that it's being done in a timely, and correct, manner.

# SPONSOR RELATIONSHIPS

It's embarrassing (and rude) to go back to a company year after year, asking for funding, if you haven't held up your end of the bargain.

Remember, it's a partnership. Don't take the money and run. Those social media handles you asked for on the forms - USE THEM!

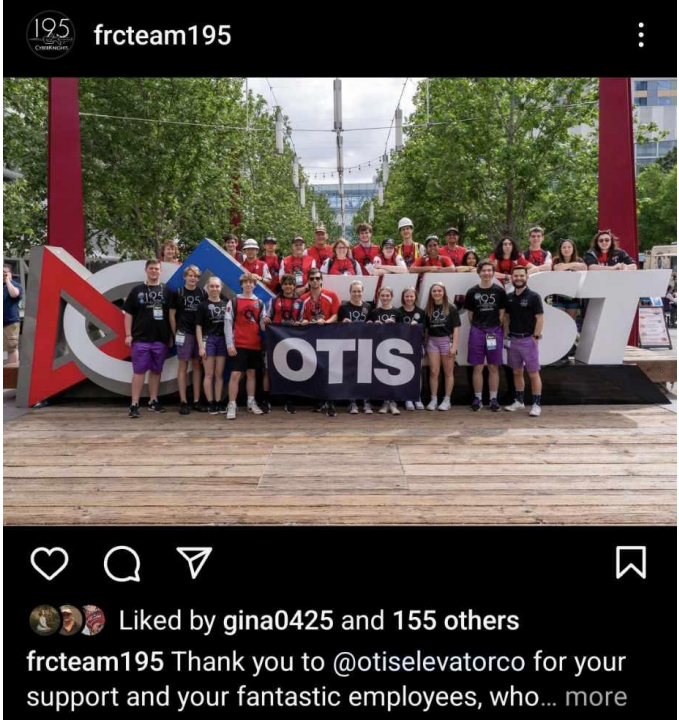
Tag them in posts during build season sharing updates.

Tag them in posts during competitions to share successes

Every so often, like, comment, or share their social media posts

*#thatsoursponsor*







# Other Ways to Engage

- Sponsor Newsletters
  - We do bi-weekly during build and competition and monthly all other times
  - Share content like - competition dates, any gofundme or other fundraiser plans
  - Share dates/invite them to competitions (contact NEFIRST or me about VIP at events)
- Sponsor Demos or Appreciation Visits
  - Visit a company with robot and some team members
  - Give robot demos and answer questions
  - Provide with a token of thanks - this can be:
    - An award/trophy from the season
    - Something simple like a framed team photo with 'thank you'
    - Keep in mind not to give things that cost more than they donated
    - Invite them to YOUR space
- Sponsor Highlights or Appreciation Posts
  - Share a sponsor of the month or other highlight of sponsors in newsletter or social media



HERE'S WHAT WE DO

# STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

Team 195 implemented an innovative and successful Sponsorship Program, long before I became lead mentor of the team. It was shared with me years ago, and I thought it was brilliant. I also thought it would be impossible to implement on my team at the time.

What the CyberKnights have done for years, successfully, is utilize student incentives and student sponsor recruitment. It works like this -

- Early September - New Students are recruited onto the team.
- Mid-September ALL new students & parents attend a **MANDATORY Sponsor Recruitment Presentation** where we explain:
  - ◆ How sponsors impact our teams goals and abilities
  - ◆ How students earn travel credits through recruiting sponsors
  - ◆ How to identify, approach, follow-up with, and engage sponsors
  - ◆ How sponsors from the past years graduates will be distributed to new students through a Sponsor Raffle
  - ◆ How our student-led Sponsor Groups work

# TRAVEL CREDITS

Students who bring on new sponsors receive a percentage of the donated amount as travel credits. Incoming funds are tracked and monitored for each student as they come in. Credits are applied to the final travel cost.



This personal, monetary incentive encourages students to try to fund as much of their travel as possible. This works because parents actively encourage and assist their students in finding new sponsors, to reduce travel costs.

# RETAINING SPONSORS

We currently still have *several* sponsors that were recruited this way, dating back to 2011.

## ***HOW?***

- As students graduate, sponsors they recruited are “raffled off” (no cost raffle) to new students.
- Sponsors are passed on to siblings/family members on the team as others graduate
- We ALWAYS fulfill Sponsor Recognitions, providing value and building a strong relationship, making them want to continue supporting our team

# STUDENT SPONSOR GROUPS

Each year, we identify **5 students** that excel at finding new sponsors. These students are made **LEADS of Sponsor Groups**.

Students are split into equal groups of students who work together to reach milestones and earn prizes as they recruit sponsors both individually, and together.

Student Sponsor Group Leads are responsible for:

- Answering any questions that students have about how to approach sponsors
- Assist students in drafting emails or letters to potential sponsors
- Approach potential sponsors with a student if they'd like assistance
- Motivate and keep tabs on students sponsor efforts
- Report back to Lead Mentor if a student is not reaching out to their sponsors or any other issues

# SPONSOR LEADS

Students in this role take part in weekly Leadership Training alongside our Sub-Team Leads and FTC Captains.

In doing this, they learn how to motivate & engage students in their groups. They also become more invested, and take the role very seriously.

Sponsor Groups provide an update EVERY WEEK at a weekly meeting and report all incoming funds. Students who brought in sponsors are recognized.

# SPONSOR GROUPS continued

Some examples of targets are:

- First group to hit \$2500
- First individual to bring in over \$1000
- First group to bring in ten sponsor donations/checks
- First individual to bring in 4 sponsor checks
- ....and so on.

Some examples of prizes are:

- Team merch that we order extras of for this occasion
- Team merch that is donated by parents, alumni, etc. from previous years (ooh vintage)
- One-of-a-Kind team merch that mentors make and donate for this such as;
  - Water Bottles
  - Hats
  - Belt bags (fanny packs)
  - Custom team shirts

*We regularly "check in" with the Sponsor Leads for their feedback & opinions on what is considered a high value item to encourage the friendly competition among groups.*



# Why it Works

## Parent Buy In

- Parents are motivated to help their kids find sponsors, to lessen the travel costs
- Lots of parents will start asking their employers and often find out that they offer donation matching
- Parents check in regularly to see if funds have come in

## Student Buy In

- Their parents are urging them, to lessen travel costs
- Their Sponsor Group lead is urging them and there is accountability within the group
- They have SUPPORT from me, their parents, and their Sponsor Group/Lead
- Fun/competitive spirit with the Sponsor Groups

## Sponsor Retention

- In most cases, sponsors stay on long after the student that brought them onboard has graduated
- Sponsors feel more connected with the team due to having a sponsor student



**SIGN UP FOR  
MORE INFO**

# Get on the Team 195 Schedule

New this Season! We will be sending out email reminders as we go through the steps of our own sponsorship program sending you real-time updates of what we're working on as a reminder to be working on sponsors also.

We'll share:

- Sponsor Newsletter Templates
- Info from our New Student Sponsorship Presentation
- Our timeline for designing sponsor logo layout for t-shirts & the robot
  - We'll send reminders that we're getting started or we have finished, etc.



**SIGN UP HERE!**



**THANK YOU!**  
***QUESTIONS?***