Sponsorship Leadership Brief

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25+ Years on Both Sides of the Sponsorship Equation

- Understanding what sponsors need because I have been the sponsor.
- Understanding what properties need because I have sold and produced them.

Select Brands Represented

Cadillac • Discovery Communications • Nickelodeon • Nike
Snapple • The Weather Channel • Uber • Verizon

Select Platforms & Event Properties

Super Bowl • MLB • PGA Tour • NHL • FIFA
SXSW • Coachella • CES • Advertising Week
Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade • American Music Awards
Owned and operated regional endurance and festival properties

Sustained Partnership Excellence

- 19-year agency partnership spanning Cadbury Schweppes → Dr Pepper Snapple Group → Keurig Dr Pepper
- Full lifecycle ownership: ideation, negotiation, budget stewardship, event selection, activation.

Property & Revenue Growth (Sell-Side Leadership)

- 10-year ownership of the Long Island Marathon post-race festival
- Grew to 50+ sponsors, 20,000+ attendees, 400%+ sponsorship growth
- Generated $1M+ annually in VIP hospitality & sponsorship revenue for H.I.T.S. equestrian

25+ years of experiential marketing and experiential networking built:

- access to C-Suite decision-makers across brands, properties, and media
- Cleverness, client trust, and accountability....always

Full case study with visuals: *Snapple: 19 Years of Keeping a Legacy Brand Relevant*

Additional case studies: *Clever Doesn't Have to Be Costly | H.I.T.S. | Long Island Marathon*

Networking philosophy: *Networking as Experiential Marketing*

The Snapple Partnership: 19 Years of Unified Ownership

Winning the Business

Deutsch Advertising recruited us to pitch and execute *Fruit on the Loose*, Snapple's national tour. That morning, I had just led the live premiere of The Weather Channel's *Your Weather Today* in Grand Central's Vanderbilt Hall. We built the set in 2 hours with 5 AM access because the client wouldn't pay for a two-day rental, so we made it work with a tight 2-hour build window and zero margin for error. We ad-libbed the script live, carried one of the staged morning live scenes we built, a bed with actors out onto the sidewalk, and got the weather reporter to jump in to report live from the streets.

Pure controlled chaos that delighted the client. Hours later, still riding the high, my team of three walked into Deutsch's massive downtown office floor, popped open oversized Weather Channel umbrellas in the waiting area like we were a 1,000-person agency, and pitched with zero doubt. They loved the confidence and vision. We won the account.

Many years later, Deutsch LA won Snapple's creative. I met their CEO at a conference and told him about our Born and Bred program. He said, “That's a big one, don't F it up.” After launch I sent one line back: “We didn't.”

What follows is the deeper story of one brand partnership illustrating what unified sponsorship ownership looks like in practice.

How We Made Investment Decisions:

We built a decision-making approach from what was accessible: distributor reports on local sales velocity and trend intel, direct consumer observation at activations (questions about new products, repeat interactions, competitive mentions), client messaging priorities from brand managers, and program goals tied to launches or retail pushes. We layered these signals together to make efficient resource allocation calls, protect spend, and drive impact. That pattern of treating client money like our own is what allowed this partnership to mature from activation support into full budget ownership and national program strategy.

Sponsorship Negotiation & Budget Stewardship

Snapple signed a 5-year contract to be the official beverage of NYC. NYC & Co. (NYC's official tourism and sponsor agency) would lead the program, and we were brought in to activate the sponsorships. A glaring example of the disparity in efficiency of the two agencies was their agreement to pay $175k for a Big Apple BBQ title sponsorship, no negotiation. They did not treat the client's money as they would their own. Once I took over the sponsorship buys, strategy, and negotiations, I kept the title sponsorship of the Big Apple BBQ for $20k in product that the event could sell for its own revenue. Same title. Same visibility. From $175k cash to $20k in product.

That savings pattern repeated across every sponsorship buy: they quoted high cash, we intervened with strategy and leverage, and freed up dollars that went back into deeper activations, more events, and broader integrated reach. Cadbury/DPSG/KDP saw we treated their money like our own: protecting spend, repurposing assets, reinvesting savings into deeper activations and broader reach.

Retailers, independent route owners, sales teams, and brand managers deferred to my calls on where to invest. That trust is what let the role mature from activation support into full budget ownership, national programs, and large-format media sponsorships.

Multi-Brand Sponsorship Activation

QuickChek Balloon Festival: Snapple's signature annual sponsorship, their biggest flagship event outside of that huge spend on Big Apple Barbecue, drawing 250,000 attendees watching 100+ hot air balloons launch. Brands were spending $80-100k on custom balloons to stand out in addition to brand activations. Instead of matching that spend, I tethered a Snapple helium inflatable on a 150-foot rope to the event truck, placing it first in the crowd's sightlines.

We managed 80 feet of exhibit space for 6-8 brands annually at this event. The most important part was designing the activation so that each brand was still able to get its unique messaging to consumers and take full advantage of the sponsorship buy. Creative activations included DJs, games, and a 3D artist. When Snapple switched from glass to plastic, we adapted the dunk tank to use bottles instead of balls for playful interactivity. Hijacked a "Balloon Festival" with strategic creativity, not budget. The client came to expect that level of clever amplification every year.

Creative Amplification on a Budget

#LOVESNAPPLE Letters: Snapple's "Born and Bred in NY" campaign had a major outdoor/TV/digital buy, but Texas HQ made the decision to launch it in winter. They did not understand that kicking off a sampling program in NYC's snow was impractical. I led the pivot: make it about neighborhood connection. The key component would be giant yellow #LOVESNAPPLE letter sculptures that I purchased with my own money. That $3k turned out to have a great return on investment...22 feet long, painted in dry-erase for daily stories. We toured them through Queens, Astoria, Coney Island, Staten Island, Chinatown, the Lower East Side, and Chelsea, with messages in multiple languages and local shout-outs unique to each neighborhood. Something so New York happened: artists tagged them, people took ownership, and it got that cool old school NYC graffiti look. We added branded swag (gloves, sunglasses), a Snapple Love Fest, and swag people would wear and post.

Social engagement spiked across Snapple's channels with organic shares and local trending. More importantly, retailer orders spiked in the specific neighborhoods we visited with the letters - something we could track because neighborhood programs gave us attribution that commuter hubs and citywide events couldn't provide. Broad events drove impact, but we couldn't isolate our activation as the cause when people came from everywhere. Neighborhood programs gave us the measurable proof we needed. That's why we invested in targeted local activations alongside larger events. The neighborhood data justified the broader strategy when attribution wasn't available elsewhere and it reinforced the tagline.

When we supported PR or media-covered events, the ask from the client became simply “bring the letters.” DPSG used our Manhattan skyline + letters photo internally to signify a job well done. A $3k personal investment became the star of a million-dollar campaign and the footprint for PR and social media programs including AGT activations. It was later carried into the annual sampling season for years, extending the campaign's life months beyond the original media buy.

Media Sponsorship Activations & Executive Trust

I led activations tied to Snapple's primetime media sponsorships: *America's Got Talent, Amazing Race, and Celebrity Apprentice*. For AGT, I convinced the client to buy permits for one day but sample for two in the same format. We always stretched permits and allocated space creatively to maximize education and repetition exposure, why? Because we could with our relationships with police. We took over the city with large-format sampling. A cop came up on horseback; the client got scared, but I walked over, handed him a Snapple, and he rode off drinking it. We were street smart, and our client knew it. We were also early adopters of Police Night Out "Take a Bite Out of Crime" sponsorships, and my brother-in-law's role as a Midtown Inspector gave us extra trust and leverage when navigating city logistics.

For Celebrity Apprentice, we built finale tasting sets from repurposed rebrand assets. No direction from the client, pure creativity. The morning after it aired, at 5 AM, while we were setting up a NYC takeover, the DPSG CEO, Larry Young, tapped me on the back to say thanks. He knew how crucial we were. They were heading from their after-party to morning show appearances with Bret Michaels. Meanwhile, we street-sampled 50,000 bottles synced to their media day.

These touchpoints demonstrate integrated sponsorship execution: coordinating brand activations in the field to amplify primetime media investments, syncing sampling with broadcast schedules, and building executive-level trust through consistent results.

Relationship-Building to Revenue

Walmart Executive Activation: I heard the National President of Bottling would be visiting a new local distributor at 7 AM. This wasn't a campaign or an official event, but it was an opportunity to connect sales to promotions. Overnight, I led the building of 70 feet of full branding outside the building to greet him. A surprise that showed we were serious partners invested in their success. He arrived, spent a good deal of time with me walking through our strategy for each brand, a deep discussion on how we aligned activations with sales goals, distribution, and promotions. That built real executive trust.

Same week, while overseeing a routine activation (not typical for an agency president to be on-site, but good fortune aligned that day), the regional Walmart manager came out, saw our display, and asked about products for kids. I jumped in on the conversation, and he loved the idea of a smaller-sized bottle for kids, like his own. He agreed to take 3 SKUs in, a back-to-school feature pallet, and asked for a trailer of product for a test that could expand to the entire region. Unheard of for an agency.

Strategic relationship-building and field presence converted directly to retail expansion revenue.

Crisis Management: NYSE Bell Ringing

Cadbury Schweppes CEO Todd Stitzer was flying in to ring the NYSE opening bell, a high-profile corporate sponsorship moment. This was a company-wide event requiring coordination across 7 brand managers spanning their confectionery and beverage portfolios. Who to call in a panic? Of course, PACE. Nothing was coordinated: artwork delays across brand managers who were dragging their feet, and the printer quit after two weeks of waiting for approvals. No worries, hire a printer the day before, have someone waiting to deliver to costume maker who will work overnight. One small problem…At 4 AM driving the Snapple promotional truck to Brooklyn for character costumes, I hit the biggest fire in NYC since 9/11, only to find out the fire was directly across from the costume makers. The entire area was blocked by police and fire crews.

You have to use your assets and in this case the commodity was product. Brought cases of Trident to police who connected me to firemen. They escorted the costume makers through the fire zone with the outfits. At Wall Street, Snapple cases expedited security. I even brought outdoor furniture from my home for the lounge area. The CEO rang the bell on time. Program unified across all 7 brands spanning confectionery and beverages. The client never knew the full story until much later, just seamless execution and an example that multiple brands need a point person and a coordinated effort from production to execution.

Building an Owned Property's Sponsorship Pipeline

Long Island Marathon Post-Race Festival: I inherited 5-10 media trade sponsors and a finish-line setup that cleared out immediately. Within a few years, I grew it to 50 vendors/sponsors generating actual revenue and 20,000 attendees staying for a 4-hour destination event. I maintained that scale over 10 years of ownership. Running events are a commodity. There are a hundred of them every weekend. I built a 50-sponsor pipeline for 10 years in a category where brands can jog across the street for the same finish line banner. Tiered packages across multiple categories and anchor sponsor integration (Snapple throughout the course without blocking other categories), and year-over-year value demonstration drove renewals and growth. We signed a title sponsor of the festival that would eventually become a six-figure sponsor of the entire race.

After we stepped away and the organizers bid out production, they've never replicated that sponsor depth or scale at the festival. [Festival Video]

How We Measured Impact

We tracked what we could tie directly to our activations: distributor reports on local sales velocity, social media engagement spikes around activations, foot traffic and booth interaction rates, consumer education signals (questions about new products like Bai, Vita Coco, a lower-sugar Snapple), PR impression counts, and sponsor renewal rates. A PR activation offering free pizza + Snapple moving through NYC boroughs generated 7 million impressions at a time before social media had today's viral reach. These proxy metrics informed real-time decisions on resource allocation, event repetition, and integrated amplification. And the ultimate metric was a 19-year partnership that survived 3 corporate acquisitions.

Past success is the greatest predictor of future success. After our 19-year partnership ended, KDP eliminated Snapple's programs in metro NY and nationally. At Advertising Week, I discussed the Snapple brand losing market relevance with KDP's CMO. He let me know that they wanted to fix this. I offered to give him 20 years of meaningful connections with their consumer fans. The programs we built weren't just supporting their strategy; they were what kept Snapple visible and connected to consumers for nearly two decades. When sustained sponsorship activation stopped, market presence declined. That pattern reinforces why long-term strategic vision is so important for owned properties.

I welcome a discussion on how this experience applies to your brand's marketing campaign and event portfolio.

- Chris Pace

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