**Why sponsor the arts?**

What a question! So many wonderful reasons; so many business benefits; so many excellent examples.

We should start by asking you what it is you need right now?
–
to grow business?
–
to improve staff interaction and communication?
–
to engage customers in new and innovative ways?
–
establish or develop a brand in a noisy market?
–
to raise your profile in the media to source opportunities to get your message out?
–
to root your premises as strong in its links to the local community and economy?
–
Have customers stopped attending your events?
–
Need innovative sampling opportunities?
–
Looking for a unique event to attract that one elusive high-roller?

Almost any business need you can suggest, we are confident we can find a cost effective sponsorship opportunity in the arts to deliver on those needs and exceed expectations.

Sponsorship describes the relationship between a company and an arts organisation or individual artist, where the sponsoring business pays a cash or in-kind fee for commercial benefits. It goes beyond fundraising, to where a partnership develops between an arts organisation and a business. Working together brings added value to an arts event, where its success brings genuine business benefits to the sponsor.

**What to sponsor?**
Think about your customer or target audience – it may well not be everyone in Ireland, it might be much more niche than that. What kind of arts activity will they care about? If your businesses main customer is from your local community, why not seek out an event that gives you an opportunity to raise your profile to that community, such as a local festival, where you can showcase your product or service in a social way, and interact with your customers in their leisure time? You could also get closer to your local community by becoming involved with sponsoring outreach programmes at already effective local arts organisations. More and more companies and organisations are putting the arts higher on the agenda of their Community Investment Programmes. Partnerships with arts organisations have shown to deliver results, in education, community development and regeneration.

**Make the most of it!**
It’s worth considering the fee you pay to sponsor an event as only the start – think about leverage, that is, what can you add to that event to capitalise on your involvement? Some business sponsors put marketing resources to advertise and promote the event, help with media relations to ensure a higher-profile, others provide appropriate product or services to help make the event a success.

**Was it worth it?**
It’s important to evaluate any sponsorship activities you do. Arts sponsorship can have unexpected benefits. You may have set out to develop unique networking and corporate hospitality situations, but at the evaluation stage, find that you have also managed to motivate and interest staff, increase sales or change consumer perceptions of your product. Choosing to put a value on such things as editorial, direct mail, sponsor branded ads, ads in programmes, data capture etc, can also be a useful exercise to justify further investment in arts sponsorships.

**Don’t forget the staff!**
One of the under-utilised potential values to supporting the arts is the opportunity to involve staff. Although 80% of companies provide tickets to events for their staff, only 1 in 3 provide opportunities for staff to volunteer in some way. Only 15% of companies encourage staff to mentor an arts organisation or arts professional. Mentoring can be a great way to give staff a fresh perspective on their day-job. Working, for instance, on the marketing for an arts event, can be a great way of using skills in a new way and reinvigorating key staff.

For a lot of arts sponsors, their involvement is the key to influencing and interacting with their customers in their leisure time. We all get bombarded with marketing messages in the office, and at home on the television. But while visiting a stunning art exhibition you note that your favourite newspaper was involved with bringing the show to Ireland – well that’s going to reflect nicely, isn’t it?

If you’d like a mountain of ideas on how to leverage or get the most from your sponsorship budgets, why not speak to *Business to Arts*.