

Securing personal sponsors can be a vital aspect of sustaining your archery career. This guide provides information to help you understand opportunities in the industry, how to approach manufacturers and what you need to bring to the table to present yourself as a candidate for sponsorship and maintain valuable relationships. Read on for insider knowledge and tips from USA archers who have been successful navigating personal sponsorships, and insight from sponsors themselves.

WHAT IS A SPONSORSHIP?

In the archery industry, it's important to understand that the majority of sponsorships readily available are with endemic partners. These can come in a huge variety of shapes and sizes, from free range time at a local pro shop, to product discounts or free product, to contingency funding opportunities, travel stipends or salary.

ATHLETE INSIGHT

TIPS FROM BRADEN GELLENTHIEN

The first sponsorship for any archer should be one between themselves and their local pro shop or range. This will involve spending time helping fletching arrows, working on bows, cleaning up after hours, etc. Give back in any way that you can to the shop so that the owner sees that you care for the sport and want to leave things better than you found it.

As you build these local relationships, start creating a resume. Write down your hopes and dreams for the sport, your plans to achieve them and keep track of your local, regional or national results. Pick companies that you believe in and whose products you use... and at the beginning, products that your local shop sells. By choosing these products you can directly help create business for the local shop and show your worth to them.

Work with the shop to submit your resume to your local reps or regional managers so that you can get on their radar. To be honest, when first starting out, a solid recommendation from a pro shop is worth more than its weight in gold as compared to a pile of gold medals. Winning is nice, but a reputation for work ethic and passion for the sport is often what it takes to get your foot in the door.

As these relationships grow and shops and manufacturers meet you and see your willingness to help and work, sponsorship opportunities increase and grow. Discounts are often given and then free equipment as time passes.

It's a long road to become a professional archer. Professional level sponsorships are rare and come together when an athlete who has created successful relationships with shops and manufacturers achieves success on the range.

In these situations, manufacturers will provide a shooter with completely free equipment, contingency payments for podium placements and in extremely rare cases, archers can be paid for the use of their likeness in marketing. These offers increase over time as an athlete brands themselves with the company and consumers begin to associate that person with the company. The biggest mistake I



often see with younger professionals is bouncing around between companies for small gains when in the big picture they make themselves seem wishy-washy to manufacturers and investment in branding seems like a waste of money.

My biggest piece of advice to a young shooter either looking to advance to their first sponsorship or to those looking to break through with a paid gig is quite simple; be original, be humble and be honest. Our sport is a beautiful thing – a balance of grace and aggression coupled with an archer's own integrity. The only other sport like this is golf. Don't look for shortcuts. Instead, be gracious, be grateful and give back. Those are the qualities that pro shops and manufacturers look for and, in the end, will bring you that much closer to gaining, and keeping, sponsorships.

TIPS FROM PAIGE PEARCE

The first thing I think people need to realize is that there's a difference between professional and promotional shooting staff. Promotional staff is what 99% of the sponsored archery shooters are, which is basically a deal where they are given product for a heavy discount, or for free, that they are expected to promote to the general population. Promotional staff is always the first step to getting a professional sponsorship and is your foot in the door to working closely with the archery companies and building that relationship. The keys to getting on a promotional staff are going to tournaments and performing well, being an outgoing, positive and helpful individual to others in the archery community and running a good social media.



From the time I started to now, so much has changed. It used to be that you just had to shoot well. Now there are so many more requirements and it's wild that its two totally separate things; you have to be good at shooting a bow and you have to work at your presence with companies at events and your presence on social media. You don't necessarily have to be the best at all three (performance, personality and online presence), but do your best if you want to be noticed by sponsors because if you're trying in all areas, you're going to stand out.

Very few people actually make it to professional staff, which is where you are paid travel stipends as well as a salary and contingency. Promotional staff may also get contingency, but likely no salary or travel funding. When someone is going to ask a company for a sponsorship, I always tell them to ask themselves the hard question: What ROI (return on investment) are you going to offer this company? If their giving you product isn't going to generate them sales or benefit the company directly, you shouldn't ask for any level of sponsorship. You need to be knowledgeable about their equipment, and be able to speak about it correctly, confidently and positively to influence others to purchase the product. At the level you think you can actually give back, then you are at the point you can ask for product sponsorship. You have to bring value.

TIPS FROM JACK WILLIAMS

When you are starting off in building sponsor relationships, it is good to aim for product sponsorship so you can build a good foundation with the brands that want to support you. These will probably be the same companies that support you monetarily when you are more experienced. In my experience, the main thing that the companies look for to bump you up into financial sponsorship is international exposure. This can come from winning large competitions that have a lot of exposure on TV and the internet. The other thing they look for is a good personality and social media presence. You have to be a good representation for the brand and the sport. Then with a good social media presence you also have a chance to get sponsors outside of the sport of archery as well, but those can be more difficult to get. The main thing is to be a good representation of the companies that support you and contribute to the sport of archery and the sponsors will see that and want to support you.



INDUSTRY INSIGHT

TIPS FROM DOUG DENTON, HOYT

At Hoyt, we look to sponsor athletes that stand out from the crowd. It's fantastic when that means an athlete on the podium, on their national team, getting media recognition for their accomplishments on the target. But we also look to sponsor athletes that stand out in their own right, and that may not mean score-based achievements.

We look for good people, with a positive attitude, who make a positive impact on their local community. We want to partner with people who share our brand values and will represent Hoyt well.

My advice to archers is to build relationships in your community, and let your reputation help you get a foot in the door with sponsors. When you approach a sponsor, your reputation and social media presence should speak for themselves. It's great to have strong analytics and metrics such as a large, engaged following, but we also want to see that you are creating unique, interesting content.

We want to see archers who are knowledgeable on their equipment and technique and are sharing that information to influence and support the next generation of archers. We'd love to see educational video content in a format that excites your audience. If you have an inspirational story or a background that is relatable or interesting to others, share that. We love a good story and content that will benefit others while showcasing the values Hoyt stands for and support the products we put into the industry.

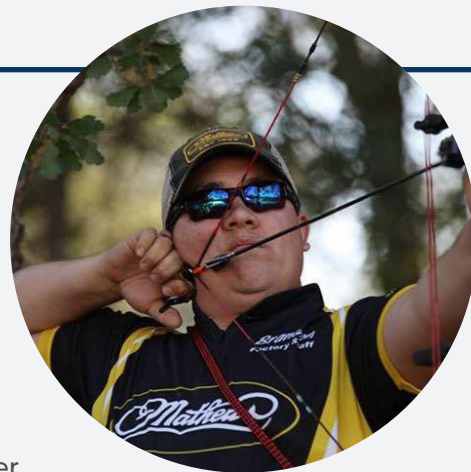


TIPS FROM BRANDON REYES, TRUBALL/AXCEL

As a sponsor, I like to see someone who's been active. I'm not necessarily someone who wants to see someone finish on the podium every time, although that's great, but I want to see their schedule, I want to see where they're going, what they're doing. In addition to that, I want to see them on social media promoting brands, or putting images out there that show the brands that they are representing. That goes a long way.

It's also very important to understand your equipment. Even before people reach out to me, I like to see them using the product and demonstrating understanding of how it works and how to adjust it. You should be able to carry a conversation and answer general questions about the equipment. Having that understanding goes a long way. That's just being a good bow mechanic really, or archer mechanic, as opposed to having someone who does it all for you. I like the people that are hands-on.

While there is room in sponsorship opportunities for both the social media blaster and the top archer, it's becoming more vital to have strength in both areas. The best thing I can say, and it's what I did when I was younger, is to track the events you attend and your progress and placings so you can build a resume. When you decide to go forward with approaching sponsors, the better notes you have kept, the better off you're going to be.



ADDITIONAL TIPS

DEFINE YOUR BRAND IDENTITY, VALUES & WORTH

Whether you are looking for sponsorships within the archery industry or outside of it, a brand identity can be extremely helpful to set yourself apart. Take a look at your personal and athletic achievements, dive into your back story, find what makes you unique, or highlight the values you embody as an elite archer. Be able to clearly articulate what you stand for, your goals, and the benefit sponsors would gain from associating with you.

IDENTIFY POTENTIAL SPONSORS

Start small and local: who do you have access to and where can you get a foot in the door? Look for businesses and brands that align with your values, interests, and the archery community. Local business support can range from a nearby pro shop offering range time, to a pizzeria or sporting goods shop helping build the dreams of a hometown athlete.

BUILD AN ONLINE PRESENCE

See USA Archery's Guide to Building an Effective Social Media Presence for more in depth information. Know it is important to have a digital presence. It may help you to create a digital resume or website showcasing your achievements, upcoming events and media coverage.

CRAFT A COMPELLING SPONSORSHIP PROPOSAL

When you decide to reach out to a potential sponsor, be prepared to speak professionally. Youth archers should be prepared to speak for themselves, instead of relying solely on their parents to make the ask (although it's great to have a parent present!). If you are making an ask in writing, begin with a personal introduction, highlight your achievements and dedication to the sport and be sure to clearly outline the benefits you have to offer a company in return for their support. This can include exposure, positive brand association, engagement with your fanbase, a large local audience, marketing usage of your NIL (name, image, likeness), logo placement on a jersey, support at local or larger events, etc. Tailor your ask to each specific brand you approach to showcase how you complement their values and target audience. Understand their goals and demonstrate how you will help them achieve those.

KEEP SPONSORS UPDATED

Once you've obtained a sponsorship at any level, be sure to interact regularly. Provide a detailed schedule of your upcoming events and share your positive results. Most sponsors will want a picture of you representing their brand on the podium. Be humble and gracious – show gratitude for the support you receive, both publicly and directly to your sponsor. When a sponsor can see that their investment is appreciated and has positive impact, you may be able to strengthen and grow your partnership over time. Put in the work to keep them invested in your journey.

LEGAL AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

When securing sponsors, ensure that legal agreements clearly outline expectations, deliverables, and compensation. Uphold the values and standards expected by your sponsors. Your behavior both on and off the field reflects on the brands supporting you. Likewise, only align yourself with brands that have a message and a mission you want to support. If a product does not work for you, it's best not to promote it – be genuine and true to yourself and your values.

Remember, building relationships with sponsors takes time and effort. Be persistent, professional, and authentic in your approach. By following these steps, you'll be well on your way to establishing meaningful partnerships that benefit both you and your sponsors.