

Becoming an LSR Sponsored Athlete

It seems that the Golden Snitch for those in the fitness industry these days is to become a 'sponsored athlete'; the ultimate goal to be able to list a long line of companies at the top of their social media bio.

We totally understand, being sponsored helps! Competing or even training at an elite level is expensive, there are gym membership fees, nutrition, supplements, bikinis or trunks, entry fees, travel expenses, time away from work and your tan to name just a few overheads!

Sponsorship can really help you fulfill your dreams, support you financially, provide resources and make your journey to the stage that little bit easier. It can open doors for you and enable you to get more social media or mainstream media coverage. Some athletes have even become household names not based on their stage achievements but purely by being 'the face' of their nutrition or clothing sponsor.

Big brands in the industry will receive dozens of applications every day, hundreds, possibly thousands over the course of the year, your application needs to stand out!

If you're looking for sponsorship for the year ahead; do your research.

Find out about the products and services the company offers. This matters to the company you approach, they will want to know you are familiar with their products and their ethos. Determine if their ethos matches yours; don't sell yourself out just to be able to list their name on your social media profile. Stay true to your own beliefs; approach brands you know and truly love and will be proud to represent.

Find out who to contact; is there a specific process you need to follow? Addressing your letter to the right person, the person responsible for sponsorship, not simply to a generic information or customer service email not only gives your application more chance of being seen, it shows you have made the effort to find these details out. If there is an application form, make sure you fill it in as a bare minimum for your application, attach a cover letter, attach a photo.

Add detail but keep it snappy. Companies who receive hundreds of applications simply might not have time to read every letter or email they receive in depth. Cover your main points in the first few paragraphs. Talk about your plans for the future and don't be afraid to give them a snapshot of who you are off stage and what your journey to stage may have involved. Companies like to work with people they feel that their target market can connect and associate with. Make sure that any attachments are in an easy to open format.

Think about what you can offer to the company you approach, this should be a two way partnership. Consider the value of your social media presence? Do you even have a presence? Anyone can buy a following, but do you connect with your audience, do they trust you, Do they value your advice and opinion? Do you take time to give back to that audience? The number of likes on a post is not always reflective of your engagement, to influence followers and be valuable to a sponsor you need to engage with your followers. Do you

present yourself in a way that reflects the company's own ethos? Look at who else they work with, is there a gap in their reach? Can you fill that gap? Let them know! Are they a company you can see yourself growing old with? A good sponsorship/athlete relationship is like a marriage; give and take, loyalty, commitment and mutual respect.

Use this research when you make your approach; no company wants to receive a generic email with a vague and open request for 'sponsorship'. Tell them what you know about them and tell them what it is about you that makes you a good fit for their brand. Be open, be honest, create a connection. If you have the opportunity consider sending a video application. Videos are a great way to showcase how you can connect with a company's potential audience and provide a great opportunity to make a strong impact very quickly! Keep it to the point, be conversational and let your personality come through, be polite and be eloquent, practise!

Remember, results matter but winning isn't everything in the world of sponsorship and business, there are plenty of athletes both amateur and professional with beneficial sponsorship packages that aren't always taking home the gold. A sponsored athlete is selected on so much more than just results.

Follow it up; if you don't hear back don't be despondent, a polite request for feedback on your application should be well received. Your response to this feedback should remain positive, while there may not be any openings at the specific time companies often keep athletes' applications on file and watch them through the coming season. Remember that when you are at shows or voicing your opinions and charting your progress through social media. Find out what a company's hashtags and tags are on social media and use them regularly, be polite and courteous any time they share or comment on your photos.