

CASE STUDY

Ally Financial and Hendrick Motorsports

Partnership Overview

Element	Details
Sponsor	Ally Financial
Team/Driver	Hendrick Motorsports / Alex Bowman
Sponsorship Tier	Primary
Duration	2020 - Present
Estimated Annual Investment	\$20 million a year

Partnership Context

Write 3–4 sentences answering: Why did this sponsor choose NASCAR as a marketing channel?
What business objective were they trying to achieve?
How does their brand connect to the sport and its audience?

Ally Financial chose NASCAR as a marketing channel because the sport provides access to a large and engaged fan base, which creates opportunities to build awareness through racing. This partnership supports Ally’s goal of increasing brand awareness and networking with consumers in a competitive market. Ally’s focus on being a digital financial service company fits within NASCAR’s audience and the sport’s emphasis on technology and innovation. By partnering with Hendrick Motorsports and branding the No. 48 Chevrolet, Ally could connect its brand with a popular team and driver while building experiences that go beyond traditional advertising.

Success Factors Analysis

Brand Fit: **Strong** / Moderate / Weak]

Write 3–4 sentences explaining your assessment. Consider:

- Does the sponsor's brand identity align with NASCAR's audience?
- Is there a natural connection between the product/service and racing?
- Does the driver/team personality match the brand's positioning?

Ally Financial has a strong fit with NASCAR because it provides access to a large audience that includes many potential banking and financial-service customers. Although banking does not have a direct connection to NASCAR, Ally has built a strong connection through its long-term presence in the sport. Hendrick Motorsports is recognized as one of NASCAR's most successful teams, giving Ally a strong platform for advertising. This partnership allows Ally to build trust with NASCAR fans.

Activation Strategy: **Aggressive** / Moderate / Minimal]

Write 3–4 sentences on activation activities beyond car placement. Look for:

- Retail promotions or in-store displays
- Hospitality and B2B entertainment programs
- Social media campaigns or content series
- Driver appearances and ambassador activities
- Product integration or sampling at races

Ally's activation strategy would be considered aggressive. The company has pushed further than just having their logo on the No. 48 car. Ally has used social media, NASCAR-related content, fan experiences, and driver-focused promotions to engage audiences throughout the season. Ally also utilized Alex Bowman and Hendrick Motorsports for marketing activities that give fans more chances to interact with the Ally brand outside of race broadcasts. This strategy has helped Ally turn its sponsorship into a more broader fan engagement platform.

Performance Context: **High** / Medium / Low Performing]

Write 3–4 sentences on team results and visibility. Include:

- Notable wins or championship runs
- Average finishing position or consistency
- High-visibility moments (Daytona 500, crashes, controversies)
- How performance translated to TV camera time

During Ally's sponsorship, the No. 48 team has achieved multiple wins and remained competitive in the NASCAR cup series, including Alex Bowman's four-win 2021 season and multiple playoff appearances. Bowman also earned several front-row starting positions for the Daytona 500. These accolades have increased opportunities for the Ally-branded car to receive television coverage.

Visibility Indicators

List 3–4 specific, measurable indicators that demonstrate the partnership’s visibility success or challenges. Be specific—avoid generic statements.

Examples of strong visibility indicators:

- “Driver won 2 races in 2023, including the All-Star Race which averages 4.2M viewers”
- “Sponsor logo appeared in 15+ national media stories after Daytona 500 crash”
- “Team’s social media posts featuring sponsor averaged 2x engagement vs. non-sponsored content”
- “Partnership lasted 10+ years with 3 renewals, suggesting positive ROI assessment”

1. Alex Bowman won four NASCAR cup series in 2021.
2. Bowman was in the front row of the Daytona 500 for seven consecutive years from 2018-2024.
3. Ally and Hendrick Motorsports extended their partnership through the 2028 NASCAR season.
4. Bowman won at Las Vegas Motor Speedway in 2022 while driving the Ally-sponsored No.48 Chevrolet

Key Insights and Lessons Learned

Write 4–5 bullet points capturing what you learned from this case. Each insight should be specific and actionable.

Weak example: “Brand fit matters for sponsorship success.”

Strong example: “FedEx’s B2B focus on logistics executives may generate more value through hospitality than consumer awareness, explaining their 15+ year commitment despite limited retail activation.”

- Ally’s long term partnership with Hendrick Motorsports shows that sponsorship value can extend further than just sales, with brand awareness, fan engagement, and repeated exposure contributing to the partnership’s value.
 - Bowman’s performances in races demonstrate how driver success can increase sponsor visibility.
 - Ally’s marketing goes beyond logo placement, showing the importance of sponsorship activation. Social media content, fan experiences, and driver-focused promotions allow Ally to engage with NASCAR fans outside of racing.
 - Events such as the Daytona 500 can provide sponsors with unequal visibility, meaning strong performances can be valuable to the sponsors.
 - Ally’s partnership demonstrates why NASCAR should look at multiple indicators rather than relying on just sales ROI.
-

How This Informs Our Work at NY Racing

Write 2–3 sentences connecting your analysis to NY Racing’s situation.

What lesson from this case study could Sarah Mitchell apply when pitching sponsors or measuring ROI for the #44 team?

NY Racing can use the Ally partnership as an example of how sponsorship value can be measured in multiple different ways, not just race results. When pitching sponsors for the #44 team, Sarah Mitchell could present factors such as TV exposure, social media engagement, and fan interactions to demonstrate value even when direct sales ROI is difficult to calculate. Having strong activations beyond logo placement could also contribute to NY Racing having longer-lasting sponsorships.

Sources

1. Alex Bowman NASCAR Stats - <https://www.nascar.com/drivers/alex-bowman>
2. Ally, Alex Bowman Extend with Hendrick Motorsports - <https://www.hendrickmotorsports.com/news/2023/2/15/alex-bowman-ally-hendrick-motor-sports-extensions>
3. Hendrick Motorsports taps Alex Bowman to drive No. 48 Ally Chevrolet in 2021 - <https://media.ally.com/2020-10-06-Hendrick-Motorsports-taps-Alex-Bowman-to-drive-No-48-Ally-Chevrolet-in-2021>