



WATL Guide to Player Sponsorships

Personal Branding

[4 Key Aspects of Personal Branding](#)

[What Does A Sponsor Say About Your Brand?](#)

Start Small and Build

[Getting Started With Social Media](#)

Sourcing A Sponsor

[Contacting Sponsors](#)

[Networking Tips](#)

Your Offer To Potential Sponsors

For More Ideas

As our sport grows, and with more and more official tournaments, primarily throughout the continental United States, the cost to compete is increasing. Sponsors can be a valuable resource in offsetting those costs for throwers.

While every sponsor is different, and there is no 'one size fits all' solution to sourcing, approaching, and signing a sponsor, there are some key components that throwers should be aware of that are universal to most sports sponsorship.

By the end of this article, you should have a clear idea of how to start your journey to being a sponsored Axe Thrower.

"Sponsors are looking for an ambassador of not only the sport of axe throwing, but for their brand. They want someone that is relatable and easily approachable. There is less hype over 'how well you rank' and more so if you can bring the needed social media and tournament presence that some of our sponsors are looking for."

Sarah Smith-Jahn
Section 715 Throwing Co.

Personal Branding

Sponsors are not necessarily looking for a high-ranking thrower, they are looking for an engaged member of the community that they would entrust to represent their brand. The key to exhibiting these traits of engagement and trustworthiness is by creating a Personal Brand.

A Personal Brand creates a set of expectations for the type of content that you generate. This doesn't have to be an overwrought online persona, a personal brand can be an authentic representation of you - people (and sponsors) will rally behind your enthusiasm for the content you create.

A prime example of a strong personal brand is Gary Vaynerchuk. The linked article below goes into detail about 4 key aspects of personal branding, explained using Gary's example:

[4 Key Aspects of Personal Branding](#)

1. Creating a clear narrative aligned to your target audience
2. Social media and content marketing strategy
3. Using a uniform set of visual assets
4. Building a personal website for your brand

What Does A Sponsor Say About Your Brand?

When courting sponsors - it's best to be aware of how your sponsors will reflect not just on you, and on each other. For example, it would not be recommended to solicit sponsorship from both a vegan bakery and a butcher shop.

As we discussed above, sponsors contribute to your public image and your personal brand. In creating a clear narrative, think of your sponsors as a reflection of you and your values.

Start Small and Build

Executing a small task well is better than doing a large task poorly.

Creating a list of your talents and passions will go a long way in defining what your personal brand will be. Marketing yourself is a skill like any other, and it will get easier as you go. Doing seemingly small actions, like getting a social media account,

developing your online voice, and posting regularly will get easier over time. There are endless creators online who offer tips and tricks to get you familiar with social media strategies.

By discovering your sponsor's goals, you can develop a relationship and create a plan that benefits both of you. When you meet or exceed your sponsor's goals, it builds out a resume of successful partnerships, which allows you to pursue larger sponsorship opportunities later.

Getting Started With Social Media

Social media will be integral to your personal brand, it's a further extension of how you want to present your ideas to the world. There is no right or wrong way to post online, as long as the post is an accurate reflection of how you want your personal brand to be seen.

That being said, there are a few tips and tricks that are good to keep in mind if you are getting started with posting on different platforms.

- Prioritize simple and clean images and videos with minimal text on them.
- Tagging 1 or 2 businesses or people is great if they're involved in the post.
 - For example, if you're posting about throwing in league, tagging WATL would be perfect.
 - Mass tagging people in posts doesn't usually return views and likes. When you tag lots of people, the post will seem like it's not personal to the people you tagged and they may take it as overly attention-seeking.
 - Facebook, Instagram, and other socials track how many people are tagged and if it's a lot the algorithm usually suppresses its reach (similar to hashtags mentioned below).
- Always use hashtags on Instagram and TikTok
 - Use no more than 4-6 hashtags per post.
 - The recent research in algorithms shows that posting too many hashtags actually hurts your visibility. Make sure to research which ones will get you on your main target's pages. #WATL #axethrowing #trickshot are all popular ones.
- Social media platforms will push for the adoption of new features. If you see that your preferred social media channel is showcasing a new way to post (ie. Instagram Reels or Carousel Posting), utilizing the new feature will push your post to more viewers.
- Make sure to follow the rules of the social media platform.
- If you want to take your social media up another notch, you can research the current algorithms for the social media platform you are using.
 - There are certain times each day that your followers are more prevalent online so it's best to post when it shows they're active.

- Algorithms change frequently and can be fickle. What would have worked well at one point may be completely different in a few months.

For more information on building your brand on social media: [Building Your Personal Brand on Social Media](#)

Sourcing A Sponsor

Not every potential sponsor will be amicable to your proposal. Seeking sponsorship is a numbers game, the more you approach, the better chance you have of finding that one needle in the haystack.

Talk to any business that gels with your brand, start with businesses you have a genuine connection to such as; your local auto shop, coffee shop, insurance company, hobby shop, hardware store, etc. Potential sponsors will be naturally drawn to your passion for the sport and being active in the community may even draw them into your next league season! Keep in mind that only a fraction of the sponsors you contact are going to be interested in your pitch, so you are going to pitch to a lot of sponsors depending on your goals.

The trick is to have a plan and stick to it. As practice, try pitching 3 sponsors a day for one week. If only 1 out of every 10 sponsors get back to you, the simple math dictates: **the more you contact - the more responses you will get and the higher your odds of gaining a sponsor.**

Networking and fostering a positive relationship with potential sponsors is key to building a sponsor portfolio. Don't expect that a sponsor will just say yes right away. Sponsorship is very much a relationship. Take the time to talk to them about their goals, identify where these align with your own, and express how you can help them reach their specific market. Keep communication clear and consistent, and work together to define attainable deliverables and goals.

Don't necessarily start by approaching Fortune 500 companies - start small and build up a portfolio of successes. Over time your brand will grow, and the value you have to offer to larger companies with deeper pockets will also grow.

Contacting Sponsors

There are incredible opportunities in your own backyard. If you do not know the sponsor you are contacting, make sure to reach out through official channels including email, phone, or even a social media direct message.

A large part of sponsorships is networking, don't hesitate to take the time to ask questions and discover who the best person is to contact regarding sponsorship opportunities in the company you are courting. More than likely, the person 'guarding the gates' of Online Media is not the decision maker you want to get in front of.

In cases where you have a connection to the business, you can also reach out in person. If you have a relationship with someone who has a contact in a company you are interested in developing a relationship with, it does not hurt to ask for an introduction.

Create a spreadsheet, keep a notebook or create a system to keep track of the businesses, emails, and names of the people you contact regarding sponsorship.

When contacting sponsors - make sure to follow up. Be persistent and be prepared to revisit potential sponsors in the future. It is important to strike a balance. Think of it as if you are applying for a job. You don't want to annoy them to the point of blowing you off, but you want to show that you are tenacious in your pursuit of adding value to their brand.

Networking Tips

- Start local
- Research the sponsor you are approaching
- Create relevant content to the sponsors you are contacting
 - Focus on storytelling and weave your sponsor into your narrative

Your Offer To Potential Sponsors

You can bring big value to a business through social media, product testing, and grassroots marketing. When creating your sponsor pitch you can offer:

- Shoutouts in your social media + traditional media
- Jersey placement

- Make sure to review the most recent WATL Jersey Guidelines
- Co-branded posts
- Highlighting your sponsor at events
- Personalized engagement opportunities
 - If you have a talent, such as trick shots, try and find a way to integrate your sponsor naturally in a video through subtle use of their brand.
 - Use their branded hat in a trickshot challenge
 - Pin a can from your local brewery to target
- Run a promotion or giveaway
- **Your creativity will be rewarded**

Use the [WATL Sponsorship deck](#) when pitching to potential sponsors, especially larger ones. The addition of this document will show your sponsors the reach that WATL (and WKTL!) have and will help entice them more. Bonus: if larger sponsors are also interested in sponsoring WATL or WKTL directly, you could get a share of the sponsorship! [Read more about that here.](#)

For More Ideas:

Check out this video by Mountain Biker Matt Jones ([How To Get Your First Sponsor](#)):

His takeaways are:

- Figure out where you fit in
 - Define your personal brand
- Find the right person to talk to
 - [Matt has some great advice](#) on how to reach out to brands via Social Media.
- Make the sponsorship manager's life easy!
 - Have fun promoting the product

Do you have a sponsorship success story you would like to share? We'd love to hear how you did it and share it with the axe throwing community! Feel free to send your sponsor journey to watl@worldaxethrowingleague.com. We'd like to thank the members of the community who have made this resource possible, and for helping it grow as we receive more of your stories!

