

# Tactical war rooms: The key to sponsorship success

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The Super Bowl. Football, rugby, and cricket world cups. Awards ceremonies. Fashion launches. Everywhere you look, and on almost every day of the year, there's a sponsored event, occasion, or tournament taking place. Brands from around the world regularly spend colossal amounts of money to simply associate their names with these moments - the teams, experiences and memories that their target markets really care about.



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It seems a simple recipe – attach your brand to the thing that your customers care about, and they'll care more about you, right? Take it a step further and create some content about the things that they care about so that they notice you. The end goal? Cultivating brand love, being top of mind, and ultimately generating commercial value.

## Uncharted space

Does it work? Well, yes and no – it works to a certain extent. Just because Joe Blog sees your logo on a bit of padding wrapped around the upright at Loftus doesn't mean they'll care enough to buy what you're selling. Firstly, you're competing for their eyeballs with hundreds and sometimes thousands of other logos and messages.

Secondly, most customers are so desensitised to established methods of brand marketing that the effectiveness of those more traditional sponsorship strategies has diminished drastically.

Finally, the closer you tie your values and priorities as an organisation, with those of the property you are sponsoring, and then with the audience who is consuming both, the better your chances of success are. This trifecta is rare.

This reality hasn't changed the fact that most leading companies still spend ridiculous amounts of money simply tagging their name onto a sponsorship property – without any real idea of the benefit or return on that investment. They don't do much to strengthen their association or amplify their message to adequately leverage the rights they have paid for and derive business benefit in turn. Sometimes it's because they don't know how, and sometimes it's because they don't care – but either way this is uncharted space in many respects.

## An independent and fully functional command centre

However, there are brands that stand out from the crowd, by using digital platforms in innovative ways—with increased reach and compelling content that doesn't have to cost you an arm and a leg. These brands have devised tactics that create new conversations with a set of customers beyond the stadium or venue, and even beyond television and radio.

One of the more recent and more powerful of these tactics is to design and deploy an independent and fully functional command centre (centre of excellence, news room, war room – there are many names). These agile, multi-skilled teams of analysts, designers, copywriters, strategists and creatives, sourced from the sponsor company or from a partner agency (or even better, from a combination of both), are empowered to create and deploy compelling content within minutes of key moments and events occurring.

We had the privilege of helping one of our key clients execute this strategy during the recent 2018 Fifa World Cup in Russia. Our tactical command centre helped them hold an average share of voice of 63% throughout the tournament, and our live content during matches was among the top 5 most retweeted content pieces globally. We also maintained positive brand sentiment of 62%.

## Five steps

How does it all come together? You can enjoy the same tactical success by following these five steps:

1. **Planning is key.** Look at the scale of the sponsored event and pinpoint what resources you'll need to have in the room to provide the most value. Set out timelines and ensure that dates are booked in team members' diaries well in advance
2. Once the resources have been scoped and deadlines have been determined, **set clear KPIs** and decide how you're going to measure success. This depends on the type of event you're covering and what your brand wants to get from their association with the specific sponsorship property.
3. After the admin has been taken care of, **decide which space would be most authentic and rewarding** for the brand to play in. What is it that you want to say during the live matches or event? How frequently do you want to post content? Which assets (imagery, videos, etc.) do you have at your disposal? The bigger the event, the more resources you'll need. The more complex and specialised the event, the more senior resources you'll need.
4. Once you've built your war room and it comes to the actual execution, you need to **be agile**. Constant reporting is key because it helps to pinpoint what resonates with the community and what doesn't. Listen to the data and adjust the content where necessary—ensuring that you get to a place where you're having authentic conversations while engaging with your community on a personal level. Great insights mean great content.
5. At the end of the event, **look at it in its entirety**. Compile an after-action report. Not only will this conclude the event, it will also give you the insight you'll need for the next event and ultimately show you if you have met your KPIs.

This is uncharted territory for many, but if executed correctly, the rewards are far-reaching and demonstrate exponential value within existing sponsorship agreements and commitments.

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