

## Guidelines for Commercial Sponsorship

Commercial<sup>1</sup> sponsorship of extension programming<sup>2</sup> is generally positive and encouraged by Cooperative Extension. It allows an effort or message to have greater impact by reaching new and larger audiences. It provides redundancy of the same message rather than competing messages, thereby increasing impact of the message. However, it is imperative that Extension not be placed in the position of appearing to support a particular company, product, concept or approach. Such appearance will reduce the unbiased nature of Extension, its esteem and, therefore, credibility with the public.

When working with commercial sponsors, it is not recommended to enter into 50/50 relationships - programs should be identified as either Extension programming or a company program. This does not exclude Extension participation in company programs. Further, it is strongly recommended that multiple sponsors be involved, if not for a specific activity then over a series of efforts.

A) Inevitably, no set of specific guidelines will anticipate every use or possible commercial sponsorship situation. Therefore, even though an effort may be in compliance with each individual component of the following guidelines, each commercial sponsorship must also meet the test of whether its **overall** character and effect is in keeping with the noncommercial nature of Extension. Also, it is realized that if external funding source requirements require you to adhere to a more restrictive policy, those requirements will take precedence over this policy.

B) All commercial sponsorship must be identified. It is preferable that only the sponsor's name be stated, though a logo may also be included.

C) Materials developed and produced by the sponsor may be distributed. However, such distribution should be for educational purposes and distributed materials should contain educational information not otherwise available. Note that use of penalty mail may be restricted for materials with commercial identification.

D) In general, any language, in presentation or Extension printed or electronic material that is gratuitously or blatantly promotional is not acceptable. Also, information construed as an advocacy of a company or product will not be acceptable. Technical corporate research results are acceptable, assuming the research was unbiased; testimonials of product are not acceptable.

E) Corporate spokespersons may provide introduction/welcome and provide funding credit. They may also be involved in educational presentations. However, corporate spokespersons should not advocate or give a product presentation that violates any of the next section.

F) Use of corporate slogans, taglines, product or organizational descriptions in Extension materials that are used to identify a company are acceptable so long as they do not include an explicit, specific, or blatant descriptions such as:

- Call to action (e.g., "Get Met. It Pays.");
- Superlative description or qualitative claim about the company, its products, or its services (e.g., "the most intelligent car ever built");
- Direct comparison with other companies, or with other companies' products or services (e.g., "when a Cadillac just isn't good enough");
- Price or value information (e.g., "only \$160 down and \$160 per month," or "7.7% interest rate available now," "affordable," "discount");
- Inducements to buy, sell, rent, or lease (e.g., "six months' free service when you buy," or "guaranteed for life");
- Endorsements (e.g., "recommended by 4 out of 5 doctors for headache pain") or testimonials. However, unbiased corporate technical test results are acceptable.

In cases where a slogan does not clearly violate the above standards, but is nonetheless questionable, consider two other factors that may mitigate the promotional effect of a slogan: (1) the extent to which the slogan is an established part of a corporate identity system; and (2) the extent to which the slogan supports specific product claims or promotion. Either criterion would prohibit use of a commercial slogan on Extension material/websites. Questions should be directed to program leaders.

G) The education benefit regarding a process demonstrated should also be considered. Demonstration of a single product is permitted as long as such use is not excessive, doesn't result in a demonstration of the comparative qualities or benefits of the product and does not appear to be an endorsement.

H) Donated products to be given to program attendees are acceptable as long as any commercial enterprise has equal access to donate products.

I) It is advised that all non verbal presentations contain the disclaimer "Mention of any product does not imply endorsement by University of Wisconsin Extension."

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<sup>1</sup> Commercial is defined as relating to non-University entities involved in the sale of goods or services. See also the UW policy on Advertising, Sponsorship, and Links on the Net (G43) at [www.uwsa.edu/fadmin/gapp/gapp43.htm](http://www.uwsa.edu/fadmin/gapp/gapp43.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Programming, for the purposes of this document, is defined as any verbal, printed, electronic or other extension endeavor.