

NEMO White Paper: Creating a Killer Team Packet

1. Why have a packet?

- (a) The point of having a packet:
 - i. Convincing sponsors to attend an event
 - ii. Convincing sponsors to give to the team
- (b) Benefits of having a solid packet:
 - i. Presents a professional, more solid message to the community.
 - ii. Provides the team a moment to gain perspective about who they are and what they are really trying to accomplish.
 - iii. Once made, is easy to add to/recreate for further sponsorship/PR needs.
 - iv. Information found here can be split up to be cross-functional. It can be used...
 - A. on the website
 - B. in presentations
 - C. in press releases
 - D. for award entries
 - v. Serves as a historical reference for the team for its own records.

2. Things you will need to make the materials for your packet:

- (a) Computer & Printer (pref. color)
- (b) Team Material
 - i. News articles featuring your team
 - ii. Pictures of your team - Look at the picture as it would print out and ask yourself "If I knew nothing about FIRST, could I get some benefit out of the picture?" Good pictures are: structured photos such as team group shots or robot shots, action shots such as "student fixing robot", "students driving", "team with technical drawing behind them during a brainstorm session".
 - A. Side note: Realize that if you use FLL pictures, the eye will be drawn to them more frequently because Legos are more generally identifiable than metal. This could be good or bad; good if you are using this to also solicit about your FLL program, bad if you distract the potential sponsor's time and resources towards FLL when you really need it for FRC.
 - iii. List of team expenses
 - iv. Team Description & History
 - v. FIRST Description & Brief History

3. Materials you will need for a basic packet:

- (a) Notes on all the materials:
 - i. Style of writing: This should be done in a combination of short paragraphs and bulleted lists to make it easily accessible to the reader.
 - ii. Pictures: This shows the excitement of the competition and the hard work of building and preparing for it.
- (b) List of materials for a packet:
 - i. Info/History of the team (includes team articles)
 - ii. Info/History of FIRST (can be pulled from FIRST marketing material/website)
 - iii. Student Impact/What's in it for the students (from FIRST website/ChiefDelphi.com)
 - iv. Sponsor Impact/What's in it for the sponsor (check out NEMO's "Ways Sponsors Can Help" white paper as an addendum to the benefits of sponsoring)
 - v. Team budget
 - vi. Business cards (go to Staples and print these out yourself, or search Google for "free business cards" (note: these will have a bit of advertising for the company you received them from on the back))
 - vii. Executive Summary: This should be one page only. Think of it as a resume for support. You want the sponsor to read it and want more information (which should be provided in the

remainder of the packet). If you don't sell the sponsor in one-page, they won't want to spend their time reading the remaining information.

4. Materials you can use to soup-up your packet:

- (a) DVD of this year as a fun way to get potential sponsors engaged.
- (b) Giveaways such as team promotional material (pins, buttons, etc) or "trophies" out of parts of this year's field elements so they are reminded of the team.
- (c) Different colored or textured paper. Stick to a light version of one of your team colors: Using Buzz as an example, they can sparingly use a light canary-colored sheet mixed in with the white pages, preferably on the right hand side. Be sure to look at the sheet objectively and think: "Am I more drawn to the page color or to the content?" You should be drawn to the content.

5. Putting together your packet

- (a) The Placement: For a two-pocket folder, break up the information into these two groups: Who we are and How this affects me (the sponsor). It has been visually proven that in a two-page environment, people look at the top right side of something and then down the right side before they look at the left hand side (Ever open up a New York Times and wonder why Tiffany's has owned the ad spot on the top right hand corner of page 3 for the last couple of decades? This is why.) So, "Who we are" goes on the right hand side.
 - i. Who We Are: This should contain in this order: Executive summary/welcome letter, team Info/History (with team articles), FIRST Info/History
 - ii. How This Affects Me: This should have: Benefits/Testimonials, How to Sponsor, Team Budget. I suggest a colored page or a picture on top so that the eye doesn't forget that it needs to look at that side of the folder as well.
- (b) Packets
 - i. The Packet Itself
 - A. Colors: No matter how beautiful the insides are, if the outside is bland all it will become is a paperweight.
 - Folders should be in a bright color, preferably in a solid color matching a team color, but if not, then in Red or Blue (FIRST colors). White, gray, or manila will only get lost in the shuffle.
 - B. Other Defining Materials: If budget allows, get a glossy or textured folder. Again, it will stick out more than anything else on the desk.
 - C. Functionality: It really doesn't need anything but two pockets and slots for a business card.
 - You should have something on the front of the packet describing what the folder is for (something along the lines of a team logo and "Team 47: Pontiac Central High School FIRST Robotics Team" is plenty, and the paper itself does not need to be larger than a small index card). You don't have to spring for something with a window on the front, but a cheaper option is cut glossy paper held by scrap booking corners.
 - ii. The Guts
 - A. Paper Colors/Textures: Don't feel the need to stick strictly to white, but don't OD on color, either.
 - The executive summary/letter should be on white paper with the team letterhead in color. Try not to put two colored sheets next to each other - they'll blend in as much as two white sheets together would.
 - Stick to black & white printing and logos on colored sheets of paper, and photos on white sheets (which can be printed in color).
 - If including an article on the team, put that on white paper (pref. glossy), with the publication logo in color on the top of the page.
 - B. Paper Size: Make it interesting! You want the reader to want to look at all the pages in there, and your printer is up to the task! A way to baby step into this area is using half sheets.

- iii. Putting the Packet Together: Get the whole team involved! Plan a “Collating Party” with everyone from the team. Collate by side: lay out the left hand materials, and a gap at the end to put the finished product. Do the same with the right. Assign students to the left side, the right side, or to stuffing the folder. The student stuffing the folder will then take the finished products of both side into the folder. Buy a couple gallons of soda, turn on the radio, and have fun with it, it will go faster that way!

6. Evaluating your packet:

(a) Why Evaluate?

- i. The best thing you can do is get feedback! Test your packet out on a friend or someone who is already a sponsor; most importantly, they need to know (or act like they know) nothing about the program, since this is how your potential sponsor will be seeing the packet. Let them be honest with you, constructive criticism is your friend!

(b) Questions to ask your feedback person:

- i. Did you like the packet?
- ii. What was the first thing that caught your attention?
- iii. What's the one thing we could do to make the packet better?
- iv. How did you feel about the colors? Context? Use of pictures?
- v. (Without looking at the packet) What's the one thing that sticks out in your mind about the team?

(c) Making your packet better

i. Where to look for ideas?

- A. Request packets of information from other national non-profits. They're the masters of packets.
- B. Request packets of information from other non-profits that you know companies in your town donate to. If they're already donating to them, then there's something about their packet that works.
- C. Request packets of information from places that are making packets for the same purposes. Think back to the purpose of these packets, and brainstorm other companies/non-profits that are doing the same.

ii. How to evaluate:

A. Questions to ask:

- What draws you to the packet?
- What's the first thing that you notice when you open it?
- What's the last thing you remember once you close it?
- What's the main point that the packet is trying to make?

B. Then, apply these to your own packets.

7. How to follow up on your packet:

(a) Keep a listing of who, where, and when your packets are given. This will not only save you from being redundant, but will aid you in knowing when to follow-up.

(b) Add a “call to action” sheet. This can be a part of your executive summary, or in a separate letter.

i. If not part of your executive summary, either place it on top of the packet, or inside the packet (but not in either pocket).

ii. This should describe major dates for your team (competitions, kickoff, fund raisers, etc), and recognize the need for donations, and that they are directly affecting the lives of students in their own town.

(c) Don't expect them to call you. Announce a planned follow-up date and time and then do it (follow-up as planned)

(d) Be patient. Work toward scheduling a presentation, then prepare the students to present to the potential sponsor. FIRST students have this incredible ability to present the program.