

Sponsorship needs to be there at the start of the race

 By [Richard Clarke](#)

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Potential sponsors need to remember the Stones and Beatles also struggled once upon a time. Any company or organisation going into sponsorship in order to position and entrench the brand further in a target community always end up balancing budget with exposure.

This is not as easy as it seems and involvement with a large profile sport may have to be given up due to budget constraints. The other decision is whether to spend millions to have a small slice of big sport action or spend less to gain a bigger share or even total ownership of a smaller sport.

The debate over what brings bigger returns has been thrown into the limelight by our Olympian swimmer, Roland Schoeman and his comments in Athens.

As a sportsperson he was obviously way down the list of priorities compared to cricket, rugby, soccer, golf and others. But now with the win in the relay and other medals he should be high on the wanted list for large corporates.

That is the way it works in theory, however, the South African sponsorship animal does not always dance to that kind of logical thinking.

Sponsorship is targeted mostly at sportspeople and entertainers that are already successful. This means that it costs more and competition for exposure is huge.

The music industry is also adversely affected by this kind of thinking. Locally established rock bands like Wonderboom and the Springbok Nude Girls, together with BOO, who have made it overseas and Seether, currently plying their trade in the US will get sponsorship far easier than up and coming talent.

Before the reader despairs and says this is all obvious, my point is that it is cheaper and less competitive to start lower down the ranks. This is quite a challenge though as it means a bit more work.

The advantages are that a sponsor gains ground with a target market that will support them even further when the sportsperson or band makes it big and other mercenary organisations come running.

Rest assured I understand the economics behind sponsorship decisions, but any organisation that had spotted the fact that Schoemen was woefully under sponsored could have earned mega kudos at the games in Athens.

I was at a music festival over the weekend run by Emerging Sounds that provide a platform for up and coming bands to perform and learn the ropes. Funny thing is they struggle for media coverage and of course sponsorship.

People should remember that the Beatles and Stones struggled in pubs once upon a time and that Schoeman, if he is wise, will resist signing with the first opportunistic mercenary that arrives on the scene.

ABOUT RICHARD CLARKE

Richard Clarke founded Just Ideas, an ideas factory and implementation unit. He specialises in spotting opportunities, building ideas and watching them fly. Richard is also a freelance writer.

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