

# Actors' Influence on Sponsorship Decisions: Roles, Resources and Sources of Power

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Individuals rarely decide alone about sport sponsorships in a company. Sponsorship decision-making is mainly **group decision-making**. The so-called sponsor's buying center (SBC) describes the roles of the individuals involved in sponsorship decisions. These **roles** are the **deciders, signatories, initiators, experts, users, coordinators, negotiators, and networkers** (Schönberner, Woratschek, Buser, 2020, p. 10). Each role has its specific set of tasks in the SBC, but it remains unclear which resources the actors need in their roles.

## What resources are required for specific roles?

In this article, resources are defined as an individual's skills, competencies, and knowledge, which Vargo and Lusch (2004) refer to as **operant resources** (Woratschek, Horbel, & Popp, 2014, p. 11).

Resources	Roles							
	Deciders	Initiators	Users	Networkers	Negotiators	Coordinators	Experts	Signatories
Technical knowledge	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
General communication skills	○	○	●	●		●	●	
Negotiation skills					●			
Strategic thinking	●	●		○	○	●		○
Social competencies	○	○	○	●	○	●		
Analytical abilities	●	○	○				○	○
Networking capabilities		○		●			○	
Creativity		○	●					
Decision-making skills	○							
Implementation capabilities			●					
Affinity for sports			○					

○ = low degree, ● = moderate degree, ● = strong degree

Table 1: Required Resources for Different Roles.









































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In our empirical study, we revealed 11 different types of resources that are integrated into the SBC, namely **technical knowledge, general communication skills, negotiation skills, strategic thinking, social competencies, analytical abilities, networking capabilities, creativity, decision-making skills, implementation capabilities, and affinity for sports.** The results further show that several types of resources overlap in the roles of the SBC. Still, each role requires **different degrees** and **combinations** of the resources (see Table 1).

Actors who play specific roles need specific resource combinations. Additionally, **each role** is equipped with various **sources of power**, which exert a **leverage effect** on **operant resources**. Actors playing specific roles integrate sources of power in order to **significantly influence** a **sponsorship decision**. To examine the level of influence of each role, an analysis of the sources of power of the roles can be applied (Bonoma, 1982, p. 115).

### What sources of power are endowed in each role?

The five sources of power are **reward power, coercive power, attraction power, expert power, and status power** (French and Raven, 1959). Reward power is the ability to provide others with rewards, while the opposing coercive power is the capacity to punish. Attraction power refers to influence based on liking a person. Influencing someone's behaviour by specialised knowledge is called expert power. Status power is associated with the formal or informal position within an organisation.

Roles	Sources of power					Rank
	Expert power	Status power	Attraction power	Reward power	Coercive power	
Deciders						1.
Negotiators						2.
Initiators						3.
Coordinators						4.
Signatories						5.
Networkers						6.
Experts						7.
Users						8.
Rank	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	




 low degree, 
  = moderate degree, 
  = strong degree

Table 2: Sources of Power (adapted from Schönberner et al., 2020).

Schönberner et al. (2020) have shown in their study that **each role** of the SBC **uses** – to a certain degree – **each source of power** to influence sponsorship decisions (see Table 2). Furthermore, the **most influential source of power** is **expert power**, followed by **status** and **attraction power**. Reward and coercive power seem to be **no** significant determinants of sponsorship decisions.

The **deciders**, followed by the **negotiators** and **initiators**, are the **most influential roles** across all power sources, while the **experts** and **users** exert the **least influence** on sponsorship decisions (see Table 2). Accordingly, the roles of deciders, negotiators, and initiators are considered the **main drivers of decisions** in the sponsorship context.

The knowledge about the resources and sources of power is important for managers in order to understand better the actors' roles, resources and sources of power in the SBC. If a **specific role** in a company has **to be filled** in the SBC, it makes sense to **look specifically** for people who have the **necessary resources** to perform the role. For example, when individuals are required for the role of **coordinators**, it is recommended to hire someone who can integrate the following resources: **strategic thinking, communication skills, technical knowledge, and social competencies**. Coordinators should also have mainly attraction, expert, and status power. In comparison, persons occupying the role of **experts** integrate smaller sets of resources with a focus on **technical knowledge** and rely almost exclusively on **expert power**.

#### **To put it in a nutshell:**

1. **Sponsorship** decisions are mainly **group decisions** made in a **sponsors' buying center**.
2. **Actors play specific roles in** a sponsor's buying center.
3. **Each role** requires the actor to have and use specific **operant resources**.
4. **Sources of power** exert a **leverage effect** on **operant resources**, and therefore, significantly influence **sponsorship decisions**.
5. **Expert power, status power, and attraction power** are the **most influential sources of power** across all roles in the sponsorship context.
6. **Deciders, negotiators, and initiators** are the **main drivers** of sponsorship decisions.
7. Managers should ensure that the **person to be hired** has the **relevant resources** for a **specific role** in sponsorship decisions.

## References

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