

“Reports Make the Grade with Sponsors”

By: *Pete Robbins*

Once you've grabbed the brass ring of sponsorship, the fun has just begun. Now you have to prove to your sponsor that you're worthy of their continued support. One critical link in that endeavor is consistently and comprehensively reporting what you've achieved on their behalf.

Whether you call them progress reports, status updates or anything else, if you don't get them in the right hands in a timely fashion, all of your efforts on the company's behalf will go unrecognized and uncompensated.

Some sponsors require them once a year. Others want them quarterly or even monthly. It may be spelled out in your contract or it may be more informal, but no matter what the details, it's your job to please “the boss” or they'll find someone else to take your place.

There are a lot of myths and misconceptions about these reports, and there's no “one size fits all” approach, but I enlisted the advice of two industry professionals for their take on the topic.

Clifford Wiedman of Kistler Rods and Chris Brown from Strike King Lure Co. work with two of the most accomplished pro staffs in the business. Their sponsored pros include anglers that range from top regional sticks all the way up to Tour championship winners. Here are their basic thoughts on progress reports:

How Often?

Wiedman offered the first commandment of progress reports: “The biggest mistake fishermen make is that they don't turn in anything at all. We don't put it in their contract, but we expect that they'll give us updates at least two times a year. Quarterly is ok, too.”

At Strike King, the standards vary from one sponsorship level to another. “The regional pro-staff, the product-only guys, we require them to do it fairly regularly because they're spread out all over the country and they're a harder group to keep track of,” Brown said. “But the national guys, we recognize their time constraints so an annual overview may be enough.”

What Should It Include?

“With our national guys, we probably already have their tournament statistics and I try to keep track of their promotions for us,” Brown said. “But there may be promotions for other sponsors. They may speak at different functions. I want to know about those, too.”

Wiedman said that the list should include “anything they've done to promote. Certainly that includes articles and TV appearances, but any sort of word of mouth or other activities, especially if you mention our products, I want to know about it.”

He added that it's definitely a bonus if you make his job easier: “If you provide an article that has your name, you can highlight where Kistler is mentioned.”



How Should It Be Packaged?

The key word here is simplicity. The pro-staff coordinator is likely exceptionally busy, so the bottom line is that if you can include all of your achievements succinctly, then you've done him a favor.

"I shouldn't have to pull teeth to get the information," Brown said. "I'm glad to see it if you send clippings or photocopies of your articles, but most writers will send us tearsheets.

"I'm not so worried about the packaging," Brown added. "We get some that are very elaborate and some that are as basic as a word document attached to an email. As a general rule, more refined is better, but the key is that everything is there."

Wiedman agreed that substance trumps style, but also mentioned that a professional-looking package can earn points. "We look at the effort, who has tried the most. Simple cutouts and printouts don't help me do my job efficiently. It should be short, sweet and to the point."

He also said it doesn't matter if you construct the reports yourself, or enlist the help of a friend, a wife or a professional. "It doesn't matter who does it, as long as we know what you've done."

Vertical Mobility

Brown said that he's never had a tour-level angler get dinged for inadequate reports, but noted that several anglers have increased their stead by pairing quality tournament results with tremendous promotional skills.

"James Niggemeyer and Debra Hengst are two anglers who have given us a pretty good feel for how much they do for us and how well they do it."

Kistler's staff also has some promotional superstars. "James Kennedy didn't have a great year on tour, but he does a great job for us," Wiedman said. He also cited Mark Tyler and Jimmy Mason as being "real good at keeping in contact with magazine articles and always getting pictures with the Kistler logo. Chad Morgenthaler also does a really good job. He sends us everything on a DVD."

"We keep a file on each angler from year to year, and if at the end of the year, you haven't provided us with much, then it makes it tough to come in and ask for a better deal," he added. "The sponsor shouldn't have to go and ask what you've done."