

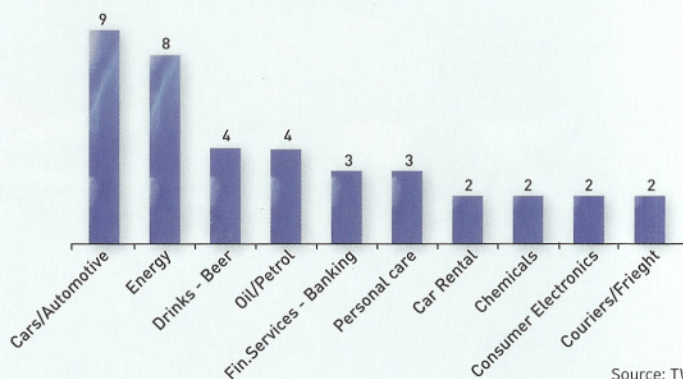
INCREASING GREEN ACTIVITY

Business and sports are using the environment to construct a new generation of sports sponsorship, says **William Fenton** of Sponsorship Ideas.

CONCERN FOR THE environment and the need of business to be involved has if anything worked in sports favour. Proof that the environment is being built into sports sponsorship came earlier this year as The World Sponsorship Monitor (TWSM) produced by Sports Marketing Surveys showed an almost quadrupling in 2008 from previous years of those sponsorships containing some environmental element.

The reality is that industry and business has been thinking hard about climate change for some time. Major issues like public opinion, future regulations and last but not least, the possible revenue opportunities, have pushed business to be in many ways at the fore of the whole process. Companies are using sponsorship as one of the ways to communicate that message, and the last year or so has seen some very innovative sponsorships some of which we highlight here. The common thread is that these best of the breed sponsorships manage to benefit as many different groups as possible. The sports bodies find new sponsors, and often operating cost

Environmental Sponsorship Top 10 Industries 1998-2008



savings, the fans see increased club or event revenue, and the brands find a relevant and fresh way to communicate. Sponsorship is an incredibly flexible and sensitive tool which reacts speedily to big changes in society and there are now plenty of opportunities for both sponsors, and those sports properties who can build a convincing green platform to help a sponsor get their message across.

It is perhaps too early to discern clear trends, but on the evidence of the sample of deals seen in TWSM, the industries most involved so far are the car and energy industries, both of whom have an economic interest in reducing emissions. It is very likely that car related sectors such as car rental and oil will continue to increase their activity. Enterprise Rent-A-Car, the largest rental car company in North America, and an established sponsor, for example, is actively promoting carbon credits and alternatively powered vehicles.

The US provides some great instances where the business benefit of being green drives the sponsorship. IBM's sponsorship of the US Open is admired as an example of effective leveraging, and this year's edition built in a new layer demonstrating environmental concern by showing IBM can

handle increased demand for the infrastructure it provides - with decreased power consumption. reducing the number of servers required at Flushing Meadows from sixty in 2006 to six this year. They also point to a reduction of energy consumption of 23 per cent, and a cost per visit to the digital information services they provide to the event reduced by 38 per cent during the same period.

The New Jersey Nets NBA team had the 449 tons of carbon produced by their game against the Philadelphia 76ers offset by credits in Chinese hydroelectric plants paid for Barclays, the naming sponsors of their new arena in Brooklyn. This allowed the team to claim to be the first carbon neutral team and for Julianne Waldron, the Nets' environmental manager to claim. "It's not a donation; it's actually an investment in clean energy." In fact the Nets are not the first as Formula One was one of the earliest carbon offsetters and most motor sport series such as AIGP have an active offsetting scheme. Sports like Formula One and PI Powerboat, which don't seem naturally to be low carbon activities, can argue that racing provokes accelerated development of leaner engines and fuel saving technology.

Stadia operators and teams are producing enormous savings in energy and hence costs while providing a platform for sponsors to do some marketing.

The MLB club Seattle Mariners say they have saved \$146,000 in electricity through energy efficiency while Ipswich Town Football Club worked with sponsor E.ON to talk about energy efficiency to the fans and saved 20 per cent of the club's energy bill through a green energy tariff, fitting the floodlights with low energy light bulbs, and ensuring that catering kiosks fridges were emptied and turned off between fixture.

Sharp Electronics are using the San Francisco Giants stadium and the Stade de France to sell its solar panels (and TVs) to fans. This seems to be sponsorship at its best, gaining massive visibility and engaging with fans by saving their club money, and giving them fun features like a solar powered Crowd Noise Meter.

A simple idea which could be copied elsewhere was the Bali Coastal Clean Up Day when Coca-Cola and Reef Check Indonesia Foundation partnered to clean up Bali's beaches. Group Managing Director of Coca-Cola Amatil, Terry Davis told Asia Sponsorship News. "We want to remind and encourage everyone who enjoys our drinks - locals and visiting tourists - to do the right thing and put their drink containers and other rubbish in bins, and even better, make sure it goes into recycling."

Finally hats off to Harlequins rugby club and their clever 'Go Green Programme' which has been implemented to help the club achieve its goal of becoming Carbon Neutral by 2012.

As part of this Harlequins also ingeniously created a whole new sponsorship category appointing BRITA, a water filter company as "Official Water Hydration Supplier" for all team training, matches and events. They were previously throwing away over 25,000 plastic bottles a year, equivalent to five tonnes of carbon every year. The club also linked up with Eurostar, the carbon neutral train from London to Paris, giving the sponsor guaranteed traffic carrying the team and fans to matches in France in the Heineken Cup and fitting in with a consistent vision from the rights holder.



New Jersey Nets carbon credit - Getty Images Sport