

The Big Sponsorship Survey Season 2025/2026

The state of sponsorship in sports clubs — what works, what hurts
and how to improve

855

participating
sports clubs

31

questions about
sponsorship

25/26

season

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This report is based on 855 completed questionnaires from sports clubs, collected during the 2025/2026 season. The research was completed in December 2025. All percentages are rounded to whole numbers.

Privacy: this report does not include individual club names or contact details. All quotes are anonymised.

Executive Summary

In the 2025/2026 season we surveyed 855 sports clubs about their sponsorship policy, administration and acquisition. The result is clear: sponsorship is crucial for the financial health of a club — but most clubs are still leaving significant money and opportunities on the table.

Three quarters of participants know they could do better. Only 7% describe their own sponsorship policy as professional. The rest work with loose files, manual invoices and personal inboxes as archives. This leads to missed renewals, volunteers burning out and sponsorship income falling short.

At the same time, the signals are encouraging: 40% of clubs saw sponsorship income rise last year. Sponsors are loyal — 60% of clubs retain more than 75% annually. And 39% say sponsorship will receive higher priority next season.

The five key findings

1. Administration is the biggest pain point

Over 60% works without a professional system: Excel, loose emails or no central overview at all. This costs time, leads to errors and causes chaos with every board changeover.

2. Lack of time holds everything back

Time is the most frequently cited bottleneck — 101 times as a frustration and 112 times as a desired improvement. Volunteers simply do not have enough hours for sponsorship work. Automation is the fastest solution.

3. Acquisition remains difficult for most

60% finds it difficult to very difficult to find new sponsors. Making the first contact, articulating the value convincingly, keeping up with follow-up: every step costs energy without the right structure.

4. Professional clubs demonstrably outperform

The 7% with a professional policy are on average 4x more likely to have 50+ sponsors, 53% achieve a renewal rate above 90%, and 82% experience acquisition as easy or manageable.

5. There is a strong willingness to improve

70% want more structure, better communication or a tool that lightens the workload. The motivation is there — what is missing is the right approach.

What this report shows

Clubs that professionalise their sponsorship — with a central system, automated invoicing and structured relationship management — demonstrably achieve better results. More sponsors, higher renewals, less stress for volunteers. And it does not have to be complicated.

Key Statistics

The research figures at a glance



What stands out most?

Professional = better results	Time is the scarce resource	Excel is the biggest threat
Clubs with a professional sponsorship policy are 4x more likely to have 50+ sponsors, and 53% achieve a renewal rate above 90%.	Both in frustrations (101x) and desired improvements (112x), "more time" tops the list. Automation is therefore the fastest route to improvement.	38% work with Excel or Google Sheets. With every board change, all knowledge, context and history disappears — and so do sponsors.

01 Participant Profile

855 clubs participated in this survey — a broad cross-section of sport, from large to small.

Participants represent all types and sizes of clubs. Football is the largest group (41%), followed by volleyball (12%), tennis (6%) and hockey (5%). The remaining 36% is a mix of korfbal, athletics, basketball, rugby and other sports.

Number of Members



70% of participants have between 100 and 800 members — the typical mid-sized sports club. Results are most representative for this group.

Annual Budget



The budget distribution is remarkably even. Clubs above 100,000 euro (43%) are slightly over-represented — logical, as larger clubs generally have more stake in and experience with sponsorship.

Sport Distribution



02 Sponsorship Income & Importance

For most clubs, sponsorship is a substantial part of the budget. For 40% of clubs, that income grew last year.

Sponsorship share of total income



For 45% of clubs, sponsorship makes up 10–30% of total income. Together with the 21% where this is 30–60%, sponsorship covers a serious share of the budget for two thirds of clubs (66%). Every missed renewal or unfound sponsor directly impacts what the club can offer its members.

Development of sponsorship income last year



For 40% of clubs sponsorship income increased, for only 15% did it fall. Growth is genuinely possible — for clubs that actively work at it.

“We started working more consciously on sponsorship. By keeping track of everything and following through on commitments, we gained three new sponsors this year and almost all existing sponsors renewed. That gives real peace of mind.”

- Mid-sized sports club

Number of active sponsors



There are two clear clusters: clubs with few sponsors (< 10) and clubs with an extensive network (50+). This flywheel effect shows that once a club takes the step towards structure, it quickly builds a larger sponsor portfolio.

03 Administration & Tools

More than 60% of clubs work without a professional system. The price is high: missed renewals, forgotten invoices and knowledge lost with every board changeover.

How is sponsorship tracked?



38% work with Excel or Google Sheets — familiar, but vulnerable when people leave. More worrying: 16% have no central overview at all. Sponsor contacts, contract data and agreed arrangements are scattered across personal emails, WhatsApp and loose notes.

“During a board changeover last year we completely forgot to send a few invoices. And two sponsors we could have retained simply slipped off our radar.”
- Chair of sponsorship committee

How are invoices sent?



54% send invoices manually by email. This not only costs a lot of time, it also creates a vulnerable situation: if the person sending the emails leaves, all context disappears. Only 10% have automated this.

How much time per month goes into sponsor admin?



65% spend less than 2 hours per month — but those hours are almost entirely spent fighting fires. Barely any time remains for what truly adds value: proactively maintaining relationships and acquiring new sponsors.

The real problem: the time that does NOT go in.
Most sponsorship committees are so busy with administrative hassle that relationship management and acquisition are structurally neglected. Automating that wins back those hours.

04 Sponsor Acquisition

Six in ten clubs find it difficult to very difficult to find new sponsors. Lack of time and the absence of a clear approach are the biggest barriers.

How difficult is finding new sponsors?



60% experience sponsor acquisition as difficult or very difficult. Only 5% find it easy. Clubs with a professional policy experience acquisition as easy or manageable in 82% of cases — compared to 34% for the rest.

“Approaching sponsors too often feels like begging. You put in a lot of energy and still get a no. That does not motivate you to do it more often.”
 - Sponsorship committee member

What makes acquisition so difficult?

Obstacle	How often	What clubs say
Lack of time	105x	Too little time to approach businesses, prepare pitches and follow up.
Making first contact	192x	Getting in front of businesses without an existing relationship feels like a high barrier.
Articulating value	19x	Putting into concrete terms what sponsorship delivers for the business remains hard.
Limited network	26x	Reliance on personal contacts of board members limits growth possibilities.
Competition	-	Businesses are approached by multiple clubs and are more selective than before.

What would help with sponsor acquisition?



More time and a better network top the list — understandable. But more time is not coming. What can help: working smarter with the time available. A platform with templates, prospect lists and automatic follow-up solves both the time problem and the approach challenge.

05 Sponsor Retention & Loyalty

Good news: sponsors are loyal. 60% of clubs retain more than 75% of their sponsors annually. Clubs that manage this proactively do even better.

Renewal rates



60% retain more than 75% of their sponsors — a strong foundation. But 9% do not even know their own renewal rate. You cannot improve what you do not measure.

“Honestly, I did not even know exactly how many sponsors we had or when their contracts expired. Last year that cost us two sponsors we could have kept if we had approached them in time.”
 - Club treasurer

Professional policy = higher renewal

The data shows a clear difference:

Renewal rate	Professional policy (n=45)	Other clubs (n=810)
More than 90% renewal	53%	29%
75-90% renewal	29%	30%
Less than 75% renewal	18%	32%

Retention is 5x cheaper than acquisition.
 Investing in relationships with existing sponsors delivers more than constantly chasing new ones. Three steps that work immediately: proactive contact outside invoice moments, the renewal conversation 3 months before expiry, and a concrete overview of what the sponsorship has delivered.

06 Online Visibility

81% consider online visibility important — but almost a third have no up-to-date sponsor page. A missed opportunity for both existing and prospective sponsors.

Status of sponsor page on website



71% have an up-to-date sponsor page. But 19% have one that is outdated: sponsors may no longer see their logo, or see names of businesses that stopped long ago. And 10% have no page at all. Together that is 29% of clubs failing to deliver on their digital promise to sponsors.

How important is online visibility?



81% consider online visibility (very) important. This aligns with what modern sponsors expect: online exposure is the main argument for many businesses to support a club. An up-to-date, well-maintained sponsor page is therefore not a nice-to-have but a baseline expectation.

Online visibility is also an acquisition argument.
 Prospective sponsors google your club before deciding. A professional website with an up-to-date sponsor page increases the chance of a yes. Presenting existing sponsors well simultaneously builds your pitch for new sponsors.

07 Organisation & Maturity

Only 7% describe their own sponsorship policy as professional. But most clubs know they can do better — and are open to taking that step.

Sponsorship policy maturity (self-assessment)



Only 7% (45 clubs) call their policy professional. 36% are in the "advanced" category: there is structure, but much is still manual. Another 36% have basic management without clear structure, and 20% are effectively starting from zero. That is enormous improvement potential — and the exact reason why Sponsorvista runs these surveys.

What does the professional 7% do differently?

The data shows a consistent and compelling pattern:

Indicator	7% professional	93% other	Difference
More than 50 sponsors	80%	21%	+59 ppt
Renewal > 90%	53%	29%	+24 ppt
Acquisition easy or manageable	82%	34%	+48 ppt
Income increased	69%	38%	+31 ppt

Number of people actively involved in sponsorship



18% of clubs have no fixed committee or rely on a single person. With every change, all knowledge is lost. A central system that is independent of individuals is not a luxury here, but a necessity.

“We know we can organise this better. Right now it is all a bit ad hoc, while sponsorship is a major part of our income. We are looking for a way to tackle it structurally without it costing even more time.”

- Chair of mid-sized sports club

08 Conclusions & Recommendations

The challenges are clear and the solutions are available. Clubs that take the step towards better structure see immediate results — in sponsorship income and in peace of mind for their volunteers.

This survey paints a clear picture. Sponsorship is crucial, but most clubs work in a way that leaves opportunities on the table. Those who take the right steps demonstrably achieve better results.

Five concrete recommendations

1

Centralise your sponsor data

Stop using loose files. One central place for all contacts, contracts, agreements and deadlines — accessible to everyone in the committee — prevents chaos with every board changeover.

Saving: an average of 3–5 hours per month

2

Automate your invoicing

Manual invoices are the biggest time waster. Automatic invoicing and payment reminders keep your cash flow healthy — and the relationship pleasant. No more awkward payment chasers.

Effect: fewer late payments, less stress

3

Set up a renewal calendar

Approach sponsors 3 months before their contract expires. Not with an invoice, but with a conversation. Clubs that do this systematically lift their renewal rate from 75% to 85%+.

Impact: 10–15% higher sponsorship income

4

Make online visibility concrete

Update your sponsor page every quarter, mention sponsors on social media and send a periodic reach report. This makes the value of sponsorship measurable and tangible for the business.

Effect: higher satisfaction, better conversion in acquisition

5

Ensure knowledge is not held by one person

Sponsorship must not depend on one person. A system that preserves knowledge and distributes tasks lowers the barrier for new committee members and prevents volunteers from burning out.

Result: continuity through every personnel change



Ready to take the step?

This survey shows what is possible when clubs take sponsorship seriously. More sponsors, higher renewals, less administrative burden — and volunteers who can work with genuine enthusiasm.

Sponsorvista is the platform for clubs that take sponsorship seriously. Not as a nice-to-have, but as the way it should be done: structured, automated and built on what clubs actually need. We run surveys like this one and talk to clubs around the world to understand exactly what is happening — and translate every insight directly into improvements to our platform. Every season, again.

The result is a platform that brings everything together: from contracts and invoicing to relationship management, online visibility and renewal reminders. Simple enough for every volunteer to use. Complete enough that nothing falls through the cracks.

<p>Central overview</p> <p>All sponsors, contracts and agreements in one place — accessible to your entire committee.</p>	<p>Automated invoicing</p> <p>Invoices are sent automatically and payments tracked. No more manual work.</p>
<p>Renewal reminders</p> <p>You are automatically alerted when a contract is about to expire. Never miss a renewal again.</p>	<p>Online sponsor page</p> <p>Professional presentation of all your sponsors on your website — always up to date.</p>
<p>Knowledge retention</p> <p>With every board changeover, all context transfers seamlessly. New committee members can hit the ground running.</p>	<p>Acquisition support</p> <p>Templates and tools to approach new sponsors professionally and efficiently.</p>

Sponsorvista: the standard for clubs that take sponsorship seriously.
 Clubs that get it right — more sponsors, higher renewals, less administrative hassle — use Sponsorvista. Sign up for a free trial at sponsorvista.com or email us for a personal demo at support@sponsorvista.com