BRAND GUIDE

HOW TO GET SPONSORED BY EIBACH

Eibach CEO Julian Gill, head of marketing Mark Krumme and national sales manager David Cardey explain what the spring maker wants from a race team, and Jason Coleman shows how a request for product turned into a title sponsorship.

By Alex Striler · 5 min read · Read online at sponsorshiptactics.com/library/how-to-get-sponsored-by-eibach

Eibach is a German spring maker that has been building race springs for decades, and its springs run in almost every form of motorsport, from Formula One to dirt ovals to the desert. The company works with roughly 200 drivers and teams, and it has more requests than it can ever say yes to. Over several of my Sponsorship Summits and Meet the Sponsors interviews, three Eibach executives explained how they choose: CEO Julian Gill, head of marketing Mark Krumme and national sales manager David Cardey. Their answers line up remarkably well.

PITCH A PARTNERSHIP, NOT A HANDOUT

Eibach's people don't love the word sponsorship. "The definition of sponsorship is to fund someone's ... endeavor," Cardey said. "I don't need to be handing out money to people... We like to use the word partnership." The racers he wants "should have a good knowledge of our company and vice versa," and "they need to be invested in the company. You need to treat it as a partnership and we're not just giving you money." ▶ WATCH DAVID CARDEY EXPLAIN THIS

Krumme goes further. "Nowadays it's almost like sponsorship equals discount code," he said. "Honestly, I kind of shut off the second I see the word sponsor in the first communication." ▶ WATCH MARK KRUMME ON THIS

CONTENT AND SCHEDULES ARE THE DELIVERABLES

Ask Krumme what Eibach wants back and he doesn't hesitate. "In this day and age content is king, so really teams who come to us with strong content deliverables, it really is what we're looking for," he said. "Show us the schedule, stick to your schedule when you can." ▶ WATCH THE CLIP

His model partner is Casey Currie, whose team never waits to be asked. "Casey and his team are constantly sending ... three-month schedules," Krumme said, "and then they always have a Dropbox link to whatever is fresh, and that has been a very valuable tool for us and ... worth its weight in gold."

▶ WATCH KRUMME TALK ABOUT CASEY CURRIE

Results matter, but less than you think. "Winning is important but it's not as important as the communication and ... getting content to your partners," Krumme said. ▶ SEE THE FULL ANSWER

Gill reads decks for one thing first: the audience. "There's this danger of being overbearing, but there's also the bigger danger of underselling yourself," he said. His advice is to lead with reach: "Say there are 20,000 people seeing this on ESPN or whatever every Saturday afternoon, because that gets your attention, not the fact that you're going to win every race, because you might be a race in front of three people."
▶ WATCH JULIAN GILL EXPLAIN THIS

KNOW WHAT YOU GET BACK

Eibach is often a product and technical partner rather than a check. What it adds is reach. "We may not be able to give dollars directly to you, but we're spending those dollars to amplify your results, amplify your team, amplify the brand and our partnership together," Krumme said. ▶ WATCH THE CLIP

HOW A PARTS REQUEST BECAME A TITLE SPONSORSHIP

Jason Coleman's trophy truck is the best example of how Eibach deals grow. He didn't ask for money. "My truck was purposely unbranded. I had no name on the side of the truck, and frankly all I was looking for was product," Coleman said. On the call, he asked about Eibach's business and its targets instead of reciting what he wanted, and the conversation grew from springs into the truck itself.
▶ WATCH JASON COLEMAN TELL THE STORY

Krumme remembers the approach. "He ended up reaching out to me, cold call. I got a very nicely put together deck and program. He has a giant red truck that had no logos on it, and it was screaming for an Eibach logo on it, so he was already performing very well using our product." It started as a small media partnership and grew into Eibach as primary sponsor. ▶ WATCH KRUMME ON COLEMAN

Gill explained why it got to his desk at all. His sales and marketing managers walked in together, and that rarely happens. "If the deck hadn't been presented properly, it wouldn't have made it out of the marketing department, and that is incredibly important," he said. The clincher: "Mark, our marketing manager, said to me, he's offering us stuff rather than taking stuff off us, and ... it was very much a two-way street." Gill also liked that Coleman's crew was "presentable and wholesome." As he put it, "We're a family brand, we want to be represented by a family." ▶ WATCH JULIAN GILL EXPLAIN THE DECISION

DO YOUR HOMEWORK, THEN REACH OUT THE RIGHT WAY

Krumme expects you to study Eibach before you contact it. "Learn to spell the name right, learn to say the name right. That's kind of a big deal to me. If you say that name wrong right away, it's like, you have to come two steps back." Timing matters too. Eibach budgets on the calendar year, and "the beginning of Q4 is when I have to send stuff to Germany," he said, which puts decisions right around SEMA.
▶ WATCH THE FULL MEET THE SPONSORS EPISODE

Email works best for Krumme, and the opening line matters. Instead of asking for a sponsorship, ask: "Are you the right person to speak with about any opportunities of working together?" ▶ WATCH THE CLIP

At SEMA itself, don't pitch. "The only purpose of that meeting at SEMA is just to schedule another meeting after SEMA or another call, or usually a face-to-face if I can, or a lunch or dinner or something," Krumme said. ▶ WATCH KRUMME ON SEMA

Eibach's website has a form for teams, but Cardey warned that it's only a start. "Don't just stop there. You need to get a hold of someone, you need to talk to someone, and you need to plead your case, because just putting in the information is great, but we get a list of those things." ▶ WATCH DAVID CARDEY'S ADVICE

WHAT TURNS EIBACH OFF

Gill named the oldest mistake: "The biggest problem is when people are very demanding and very pushy … and they just keep hounding you and hounding you and hounding you." He tries to answer quickly in return, saying "we also try to be very honest to people if it's a no and it's not going to fit for us this year."
▶ WATCH JULIAN GILL ON THIS

YOUR CHECKLIST FOR EIBACH

- Study the company first, and learn to spell and say Eibach correctly.
- Never lead with the word sponsor. Ask if you've reached the right person to discuss working together, by email.
- Offer something before you ask for anything, and frame it as a two-way partnership.
- Lead your deck with audience size and who's watching, not promises to win.
- Send schedules and a fresh Dropbox link without being asked.
- Get your proposal in before the fourth quarter, and use SEMA only to book the follow-up meeting.
- Follow up with a real conversation, not just a web form, but never hound them.

VOICES IN THIS GUIDE: Julian Gill — CEO, Eibach Springs · Mark Krumme — Head of Marketing, Eibach Springs · David Cardey — National Sales Manager, Eibach Springs · Jason Coleman — Off-road racer, Coleman Motorsports

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Alex Striler runs SponsorshipTactics.com, a video library of motorsports sponsorship sessions with the brands that write the checks. Quotes come from recorded Sponsorship Summit sessions and interviews, lightly edited for clarity and length. Click any "Watch" link to see the speaker say it.

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