

# FL○AT CONFERENCE

## Board Meeting #6 December 11, 2018 | 1 pm - 2:30 pm PST

### *Quorum Present*

#### **Present:**

- Ashkahn Jahromi (President) / Graham Talley
- Andy Larson (Treasurer)
- Tom Fine
- Kevin McCulloch / Jake Resch
- Matthew Smith
- Jeanine Bocci (Operations Team)
- Jocelyn Jester (Operations Team)

#### **Absent:**

- Gloria Morris (Secretary)
  - Jamie Phillips
  - Sean Lavery / Jesse Ratner-Decle
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#### **Agenda:**

1. Housekeeping
2. Asset Transfer from Float On to Float Conference
3. Sponsorship Structure
4. Final thoughts on dates and venues before crew goes to Denver

#### **1 - Housekeeping**

Jeanine, Jocelyn, Ashkahn, Jake and Kevin are all in Saint Louis together.

We won't have a board meeting two weeks from today because Christmas. We will meet back up on **January 8 at 1 pm PST.**

#### **2 - Asset Transfer**

To submit the Float Conference application for tax exemption we have to list what we are receiving from other companies. Graham and Ashkahn sat down and listed all the things that Float On has gathered for Float Conference over the years. The idea is that Float On receives a sponsorship in

exchange for the Float Conference things. Ashkahn wonders if there is even enough people on the call to discuss this.

Ashkahn and Graham put together the exchange by comparing the time they have invested and by calculating the monetary value as best as they can. This is flexible so that as sponsorship structure changes, the agreement can stay reasonable. In conclusion, this made sense financially and as a benefit for both Float On and Float Conference.

Andy did some math on sponsorships and ticket rates and the value came out to about \$130,000 - suggestion to remember that this might be taxable income on Float On's end.

Ashkahn said that they were not thinking they would get as high a value of sponsorships and that he calculated the sponsorship rate for tickets. He is not fully understanding of the tax implications for Float On, but is working with their CPA to figure that out. He thinks they can do this on a year by year basis.

Andy wants to have a better idea of the value of what Float On is requesting...It is understood that it is hard for the board to understand what the value of 7 years of investment can be. Suggests that Float On's sponsorship will not affect the conference's sponsorship income too much.

Ashkahn is comfortable putting in a clause that could protect the Conference in the event that it seems necessary - i.e. sponsorships being limited, etc. The lawyers say that we could bring in a professional to appraise the value of these things, but that is expensive. Alternatively, if the board feels good about the proposal, we don't have to go through the more formal route.

Andy has a contact that can give us some advice about this. He will run it by her.

### **3 - Sponsorship Structure**

The goal of this conversation is to brainstorm sponsorship structures and review our options. Ashkahn, Jake, Graham, Jocelyn, and Jeanine have been discussing this at length. References: 2018 Sponsorship structures and sponsorship income breakdown spreadsheet.

We have had a relatively similar structure for about 3 years. Last year was less successful than usual - meaning we didn't sell all the sponsorships. Basically, we had to take apart the sponsorships in an attempt to sell them, which made it difficult to show our income. The \$72,939 includes booths that came with higher tier sponsorships. \$58,000 came from companies that just had a booth. And about \$2,400 came from companies that didn't attend, but wanted their logo on the tote bag or similar. In addition, in previous years we had the 3 different floors and were able to sell booths at three different prices. Depending on the venue, we would like to ditch those tiers. In regards to lower tier sponsorships, the tote bag logos sell well, podcast sponsorships don't, and attendees don't really like things in the tote bag.

Packages we put together aren't always what the sponsors are looking for. In some situation, we are having to negotiate certain parts of the packages with people. After lots of discussion, we have come up with a general concept of a format to try. Essentially, we are looking at taking the individual sponsor

benefits and breaking them into a few different value categories. Then, we would sell these packages that give you your choice of these items, etc. We also talked about using a point system to sell the sponsorship benefits. From a marketing aspect, it's not usually recommended to list things as specific prices. Still having some sort of bulk discount feeling thing, but still having the flexibility for each sponsorship to avoid having these negotiations is the goal. These numbers are a little bit lower than they were in the past few years, to better align with the industry. We came up with these numbers based on last year's actual sponsorships.

#### *Open to comments*

Matt likes the simplicity of it. Andy confirms that the first company to purchase the Gold sponsorship gets first choices, and so on.

Selling the "Bronze" sponsorship is a goal to incentivize pulling booth sponsors up to that tier with an add on. The "booth only" cost is a bit lower than what we sold last year. These numbers are almost slightly lower than last year's totals, but there is room for discussion.

Matt suggests that this is a little easier than having so many options last year, and that the goal is about 80% of the "available" sponsorships, where last year looks like we reached 40%. In general, he likes where this is going.

Ashkahn says we also considered putting a price on things so that if someone just wanted to purchase one thing, that would be an option. He wonders if anyone has ideas on sponsorships that seem annoying or ineffective.

Matt doesn't feel like there are any annoying sponsorships. The swag in the bags felt wasteful, but that has already been taking care of. His thought is 'what is an effective means of return.' There seem to be less options than other conference out there. For example, podcast sponsor or web ads, people aren't really looking at banner ads anymore. But if a sponsor sees value in that and wants to buy it, then by all means.

Andy notices that we have 10 listed for promo materials in bags (Last year we had 6 items, in the past we had 40+ companies putting things in there) and brings up if people want to adjust the lists that they chose from.

Graham brought up earlier the option of having a token value or point system for each benefit. For example, Gold Sponsorship comes with 20 points and they can add things like Saturday Party for 6 points, web ad for 2 points, etc. Andy and Matt like that idea.

While we're on the topic, we have talked a lot about **tote bags**. We feel like some people like them, but some people just throw them away. It feels wasteful, but also gives us pretty consistent sponsorship sales.

General consensus that reusable bags are always handy, but can be wasteful if attendees aren't using them.

Ashkahn gives another idea we had to print a branded tote bag similar to how we do the t-shirts, which would give us some income and would limit the waste of giving tote bags to people who don't want them. Maybe we would have no year or sponsors on the bags and we could keep selling them the next year and end up with 3 or so different styles.

Matt suggests a digital/virtual tote/swag bag.

General consensus that that would save sponsors money, save printing things, and save us time with stuffing the bags.

### **Workshop Speaker**

In the past, we have sold a speaking spot during the workshop - Ashkahn was picturing selling that sponsorship, but just giving that income to the non-profit. And maybe this could be a consistent perk for the non-profit of having ancillary events.

### **Next steps**

We can spend a bit more time cleaning up the details about these and then send them out to the board for final decision making. Agreements. We also considered calling the bigger sponsors from the past few years to get their input on this. Graham is willing to help!

### **Who will be selling sponsorships?**

Graham mentions it would be helpful to have that person on board. Ashkahn says we haven't really discussed yet. Jeanine has a pretty good handle on it thus far. Ashkahn would love to have a subcommittee or group of volunteers to reach out to other sponsors in other industries. Jeanine feels comfortable with our current/past sponsors, but would love help with outside potential vendors. Ashkahn thinks we are not allowed to pay on commission - volunteers would be great, but otherwise we would have to pay an hourly rate. This takes another conversation to decide. Graham would like to have a brainstorm session to help decide on high level sponsors and maybe help reaching out to two or so companies that they have good relationships with to see if that brings in some sponsors.

## **4 - Final thoughts before Denver trip**

Thoughts on visions for venues?

Matt wants to know if there is a possibility of looking at some sort of cool warehouse space that we could rent out for the week and decorate ourselves?

Ashkahn says that is worth looking at and thinks a cool warehouse space would be better than a hotel. In the times we have tried to look at that, there have been difficulties. The chances are pretty slim as compared to a hotel. It's hard to find a warehouse space that also has a zone for the vendors. These often have fire capacities that limit us, even though they may look large enough. Finally, warehouses are often in a part of town that doesn't necessarily have a place to feed everyone and that isn't close to hotels and restaurants. It's not off the table.

### **Thoughts on Parties**

- Ashkahn has a lot of thoughts.

Do we want to try to pay for two parties?

Do we want to do one of the parties in the hotel, which would count towards our F&B?

*Friday party* - maybe have a few hours of drinks, and then people can move over to a few different bars. Could we do the Friday Party at the hotel bar? We generally have about 300 people on Friday. If we switch to having conference talks start on Friday, we anticipate that number going up. People party harder on the first night because they are excited. General consensus to do the welcome party on Friday Night.

Thoughts that getting the energy and comradery up on Friday night allows for organic meetings to come up on Saturday night.

Ashkahn has also been to conferences that have a short reception after the conference, which allows for those last minute networking opportunities.

*Saturday* - do we want to try to keep these formal? Or go with more of a casual, wacky, zaney feel, like a brewery? General consensus that we don't need tray passed hors d'oeuvres.

We will have some more thoughts after we do some site visits. As the first year as the non-profit, this is an easy way to change expectations.

### **Denver trip**

Jeanine and Jocelyn are going to be in Denver Wednesday (tomorrow) until Sunday and will visit 5 hotels, the Denver Athletic Club, and the Convention Center; and they will visit 5 different party venue options.

### **5 - Closing Comments**

**Next meeting: January 8, 2019 from 1 pm - 2:30 pm PST**

Look for a more detailed version of asset transfer from Float On.

Look for a more detailed version of sponsorship structure.

**Happy Holidays**