

Running Head: Sponsorship Programs vs. Sponsors

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Sponsorship Programs versus Sponsors

Being an international student in a foreign country would mean that you will have to be exposed to a different culture, education and various customs that you might not be aware of. The Army has in place a Sponsorship program that is designed to ease up your arrival in a new installation. Sponsorship being a program that relies on human behavior might have some syncope. What do you do when you are caught in the middle? How do you take your decisions? Who do you ask what is the best thing to do? Here are some questions that I gave some answers to in time, being my experiment exposed to the American civilization. A possible answer might be found out in the following pages, answer that might apply only to a certain individual – the author.

Sponsors versus Sponsorship Programs

On June 2006, I arrived to United States to attend the United States Sergeants Major Academy (USASMA) Class 57. I did not know much at that time about Sponsorship Program and the content of AR 600 – 8 – 8. Every international student that has arrived throughout the past years to attend USASMA were taken care by International Military Student's Office personnel and moreover were under their close supervision in the fields of: reception the students, housing - helping them finding one, useful information for the next period of time until graduation, and for the in processing – a process that was open for the international students before US Army Soldiers just because we were not used with the US Army, system that has proven effective for the past years.

Sponsorship program as it is described in AR 600-8-8 it is a program open “in the ranks of private through colonel” (par 2-2, p 3.) Until November 2006, I didn't think too much about what my sponsor has to do for me, what he is allowed by regulations, or what am I allowed to ask him to help me on. Then again, we the International students didn't fill out the form DA 5434, there was no need for that, IMSO Office took care again for us.

And then again, IMSO Office works under direct coordination of the Sergeants Major Academy. Slowly I started to realize the big scale of the whole image. Now comes the time when the Academy has to establish the Sponsor Selection Criteria.

Being a program that is based on volunteers at the Academy, the volume of the candidates/volunteers is scarce, experiencing difficulties in gathering a number of volunteers to cover the number of all international students. And this way we had our first problem, some of the sponsors have their families with them, and this is probably for many of them the first time in

their career after many years, being together with their families for a longer period of time. Who wants to cut in their family time?

First sergeant was responsible for the selection part of the process; he was also the one that assigned the US Sponsors to all of the international students. What can you do when you are listed as an international from Trinidad – Tobago and your sponsor selects you because he wants to know more about that country? And you can see his disappointment when he realizes that you're from Romania? All he can do is to go home and Google Romania to ease your conversation for the next day. And I have to give him credit for doing that again for a different country/international student.

On my first day when I spoke with my sponsor I was very happy that he is a ranger, especially because I have a good impression about these Soldiers. The biggest problem for me was the fact that sponsors arrived few days after our arrival, and that period of time was the most critical for me. It was the period of time when I had to buy a car, not knowing the state requirements on this subject, I had to sign contracts, and I had to start in a big scale a new life on a new country.

At that moment I was assuming that our sponsors where trained on how, what and when. Sometimes the assumption were right sometimes just in a big haze.

As the time went by, I wanted to find out how the sponsorship program is controlled. I didn't have the access to this kind of information, not that I needed it to much, just for my knowledge. Maybe some meetings with all of the parts involved would have been beneficial and would eventually lead us to a better understanding of how the program is evaluated and why not improved for the future. Until now, I have completed only two after action review's, one for the in processing phase and one for the first phase.

The most beneficial part of this sponsorship program is that it improves the cohesion between sponsor and sponsored. Sponsorship program also cuts down the barrier between two nations and helps understand the differences in culture and education of two nations, when reduced to two representants of two nations.

Also how motivated can a sponsor be without a reward for their meritorious activity? And on the other hand what kind of a reward can you give him, it is not one of those situations when he is in combat and receives an award for heroism or brevity?

Maybe a good answer on awarding a sponsor will be, whenever we – the internationals - present our country briefing in front of all of the students, and at the end of the briefing the commandant is acknowledging our efforts, and gives us a coin, sponsors should get one too.

The first thing that a sponsored student wants to do on the first day when he/she meets their sponsor is to find out in what fields can they cooperate? Maybe a good answer would be given in an electronic format with punctual answers, and detailed in two major parts. The first part would be the academic arena – the most time consuming one; the second part would be probably the one that covers the time outside the academic hours.

In some cases it can happen that the sponsor is not able to give you such an answer, not because he does not want to give you the answer, nor that he doesn't want to do that, but just because he did not get this kind of training during the in processing. Of course a normal reaction will be confusion, asking you if the program is so effective, how I can not fit in the program.

The best thing that I think this year happened, was that ISG was also a sponsor last year, and he was somehow aware of the issues of the system and work them out for a future improvement.

Then again in the absence of some guiding document, how else can you know what, and when to ask, if it is morally and legally right? Legally right, because there is a gap in our knowledge when it comes about US Army military regulations.

For me it is useful that I have a sponsor that is part of the elite ranger corp. A sponsor educated and trained to go for efficiency, and for a successful end state of every activity that he is leading or supervising. Is this program for him a drill that he has to conduct or it is a cooperation effort between the parts? I would go for a common effort to determine international best interest while we are guests in United States.

Slicing these problems into several other sub problems, made me ask myself what I would have done if I would have been in your situation and how I would have overcome the possible arising gaps. Our Army doesn't have this sponsorship program in place, and I am more than grateful for offering me the opportunity to get the benefits of it. A sponsorship program that was designed not for accommodating international students to US Army, but a program that was developed for the Soldiers and by the Soldiers of the US Army.

I am fully confident in IMSO's capability to pass on the information for the next classes. The only things that will have to be rebuilt every year is the open door toward all the international students and build their confidence in the people that are working for them, to make their life easier while at the Academy, to be able to focus on the academic requirements to become a more knowledgeable NCO.

Academy Staff and IMSO personnel will also work again next year to raise the level of their volunteers that will be involved in international students' sponsorship program for the following classes.

Improving sponsors feedback on their performance will force us, the international students to raise the standards again, performing together in an exemplar manner. Recognition of sponsors' activity would be a good incentive for their activity, and will make them even better NCOs. Receiving a welcoming letter from our sponsor will help also future sponsored students to realize that they have persons willing to help them, and that they understand what relocation means. That will also help to determine the needs of the individual, not to expose the Soldier to the transition period. The Academy has chosen to offer us a sponsor for more than the transition period, but for the whole period of the academic course.

During the time spent in several phases might appear also discrepancies between the two structures that are working for our benefit. These discrepancies can be easily eliminated by asking the "not asked question."

The base of the cooperation between sponsors and sponsored will be for both of them established by the common sense morality, values that have already been proven so far throughout various real tests, starting with relations developed in the past. These values can be highlighted by keeping and maintaining a close connection between The Academy and the sponsor on one hand, and between sponsors and sponsored on the other hand.

References:

Army Regulation 600 – 8 - 8