

## NCAA chooses BDA to develop activation programs for sponsors involving merchandise

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The NCAA has selected Seattle-based Bensussen Deutsch & Associates to be its preferred premium vendor for licensed merchandise.

BDA, which also has vendor relationships with Major League Baseball and NASCAR, among others, will develop activation programs for the NCAA's corporate partners and champions incorporating merchandise.

Founded in 1984, BDA has a history of using merchandise — think swag like branded seat cushions, apparel, lanyards, can koozies and more — to help companies activate a sponsorship with fans, their own employees or business-to-business partners.

"The true benefit is that they're willing to work with the NCAA and our corporate partners to develop ideas and promotional concepts, without a guaranteed return," said Peter Davis, the NCAA's director of corporate alliances. "Like any creative agency would, BDA will go to our partners with a good promotional concept and try to engage consumers or staffers with premium items."

The NCAA has a licensing agent in IMG's Collegiate Licensing Co., and a lineup of licensees that execute all kinds of NCAA-branded items. BDA, however, will be responsible for the ideas and the activation platforms, then take them to NCAA official partners.

Coca-Cola, AT&T and Capital One are NCAA corporate champions, the highest level of sponsorship, while Enterprise, The Hartford, Hershey's, LG, Lowe's, Kraft, State Farm and UPS are corporate partners.

Those partners are not obligated to work with BDA or to adopt any proposed activation programs, but BDA is betting on its track record that it will find ways to do business with NCAA sponsors.



**BDA will develop ideas for NCAA sponsors like AT&T.**

"Leagues want their sponsors to activate. That's an extremely important piece of the relationship," said Jay Deutsch, BDA's CEO and co-founder. "It can't always be about media. You don't want it to be all media. In the past, leagues have been happy to let the sponsors do what they want to do, but they're understanding now more than ever about activating and leveraging the entire platform."

Davis, a former Bank of America executive and an eight-year veteran with the NCAA, first learned of BDA during his time at the bank, which had worked with the agency on other projects. He described the NCAA's new relationship with BDA as a value-added component for the official partners.

"When you go back several years, the NCAA has been really good at putting on three basketball games in a weekend" at the Final Four, Davis said. "But we've been working more and more to complete the weekend with fantastic fan-centric events for those with or without tickets, and a central theme to all of that is building greater value and activation opportunities for our partners."