

## Hometown News Online!

Words of  
Wisdom...



"All who have accomplished great things have had a great idea, have fixed their gaze on a goal that was high, one which sometimes seemed impossible."

**Orison Swett  
Marden**

### Quick Links

[Sylvia's books](#)

[Sylvia's Children](#)

Where In The World Is  
Sylvia?



October 28 ... Jewish  
Business Network Breakfast  
speaker, Manalapan



October 14, 2015

**This is a really long article BUT it is a great idea. Please read it ... definitely a great way to end a conference ...**

### **Shark Tank 'Living Session' Teaches Sponsorship Survival**

By Marylon Barkan, Marketing and Communications  
Coordinator for Main Street Alabama | From Main  
Street Story of the Week | September 25, 2015 |

Communities thrive in the 'Shark Tank'

Ending a two-day conference with an inspirational session is often times challenging. The audience has been saturated with ideas and concepts and is already thinking in terms of developing implementation strategies on the way home. Enter the aLABama Downtown Laboratory, a two-day event where participants work in sessions to study, analyze, and question experts on one area of the Main Street Four Point Approach®. To avoid information overload and fatigue, a groundbreaking experiment was developed to close this year's lab, a living session. With a three-fold mission to keep the audience connected, benefit Designated Communities, and engage the organization's supporters, the 'Shark Tank' style sponsorship panel proved to be an energetic and dynamic living session.

November 1-December 15 ...  
Sylvia's Children exhibit at  
Monmouth University with  
reception November 5 @ 6  
pm

November 3-5 ... Oklahoma  
Main Street, Sponsorship

November 12 ... Sponsorship  
sales training at Zeo Brothers  
in Pennsylvania

2016

March 17-29 ... Medical Trip  
to Uganda

April 23-24 ... Waretown  
Wine Festival

June 10-11 ... Jersey Shore  
Wine Festival

September 10 ... Brewfest



To assure the audience, panel and communities had the same baseline information before the 'Shark Tank' style living session, Sylvia Allen presented "What Sponsors Want" to the entire group, giving an overview of preparing for a successful sponsorship request. Allen then moderated as-one by one-Athens, Birmingham, Florence, Monroeville and Opelika entered to pitch their event to our 'Sharks': Alabama Tourism Department, Electric Cities of Alabama, FlipFlopFoto, Grayton Beer, Print Promotions Group, National Main Street Center, Regions Financial and Zeekee Interactive.

The dialogue between the directors and the panel was both informative and entertaining as the sponsorship 'Shark Tank' style living session was a tech-free zone, that is, one without computer-generated presentations. This meant that the Main Street programs had to be not only well versed with background information but agile enough to field industry specific questions from the varied panel. At the close of each pitch, Allen offered comments to both the communities and the audience. Her advice reinforced the previous presentation and clearly demonstrated several of the session points: having a single, concise information sheet; preparing a strong closing statement and speaking from the heart. The reasoning became evident as the requests played out in front of the audience.

Thousands of dollars in cash and in-kind sponsorships were at stake as Athens Grease Fest, Birmingham Restaurant Week, Florence Bacon Crawl, Monroeville's Chef's Dinner and Opelika's On the Track vied for the interest of the panel. Prizes included Alabama's Tourism Department promotional package, \$3000 from Electric Cities of

Alabama, multiple product donations from Grayton Beer, FlipFlopFoto's community or event photography package, two scholarships to this year's conference from the National Main Street Center, multiple in-kind print packages from Print Promotions Group, \$1000 cash from Regions Financial, and an Event Splash Page from Zeekee Interactive.

Communities walked into the 'tank' prepared with presentations, including everything from relevant statistics and handouts regarding sponsorship benefits to budgets, posters, collateral materials and a bacon tasting. Directors then responded to very specific questions on topics such as social media hits, hotel room night numbers and sponsor participation from the panel. On two separate occasions, awards were given on the spot, while others waited to hear from all five participants. (See the winners below.)

Results of this living session experiment included producing an invigorating close to presenting primary resource level information to LAB attendees and generating sponsorships for community projects. But, because the goals of the project were much larger than simply putting sponsors and communities together, the experiment yielded results for everyone involved.

Ultimately, the living session demonstrated the path to a successful sponsorship request and showed how to avoid pitfalls along the way. While being informative to the audience, engaging to sponsors and beneficial to our communities, the 'Shark Tank' concept also provided the unique opportunity to observe dialogue between parties and better prepare the audience for their own dialogues with sponsors.

Connecting communities to companies to

which they don't typically have access was a huge bonus to the process. In addition, Main Street Alabama supporters and conference sponsors were eager to serve on the panel and work directly with our local programs, as they are seen as the true innovators for downtown redevelopment in the state. Next year, we look forward to further developing the living session concept for the LAB, which will focus on Design and Innovation. The panel will consist of interested architects, engineers, planners, signage companies and others to support furthering design concepts in Alabama's Designated Communities.

When planning the next conference, training, or director meeting, consider a living session to facilitate professional development, program supporter exposure, community impact and excitement. The living session idea is versatile enough to be applicable in all areas of the Four Point Approach: Organization, Economic Vitality, Design and Promotion.

Living Session Reviews:

- "Loved the 'Shark Tank' and the chance to raise funds for projects. It was engaging for everyone. I enjoyed watching other group's ideas and how the judges reacted to them. Very, very interesting and informative." aLABama Downtown Laboratory survey response
- "The Sponsorship Shark Tank was BRILLIANT!" Sylvia Allen, Allen Consulting
- "The 'Shark Tank' is just one example of the creative ideas and thinking outside the box by Main Street Alabama that has changed not only the perception but the reality of many downtown areas in our state. And I, for one, cannot wait to see what other

ideas they might have up their sleeves!"

Jonathan Hand, Executive Director,  
Electric Cities of Alabama

- "It was a great experience to go through-terrifying but great. I think it was probably good to get out of my comfort zone of everyday tasks to prepare for the challenge. I'm ready for next year!" Pam Powers-Smith, Executive Director, Opelika Main Street
- "Kudos to Main Street Alabama for giving local programs an opportunity to pitch an event to a panel of potential sponsors from across the state. I don't know if I would have connected with them otherwise." Trisha Black, Executive Director, Spirit of Athens

Marylon Barkan is Marketing and Communications Coordinator for Main Street Alabama where she focuses on the Promotion Point of the Four Point Approach®. Marylon has been with Main Street Alabama since the program relaunched two and a half years ago. She previously served as Program Coordinator for Main Street Mobile and as a private consultant for developers interested in promoting local business clusters.

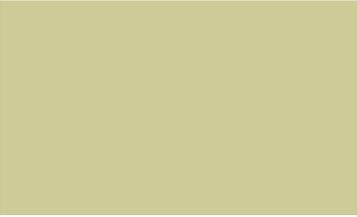
**Starting to book 2016 speaking and training ... want to know and understand sponsorship? Give me a call 732 946 2711 or e-mail me [sylvia@allenconsulting.com](mailto:sylvia@allenconsulting.com).**

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Have you bought a copy of my sponsorship book yet and/or DVD? If not, click on the left ... Sylvia's books ... and order. I guarantee if you follow the rules you will increase your sponsorship sales by a minimum of 10% or your money back.

Want a preview? [Click here!](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyR6vOJzxm7UmuelOKN9bNQ>



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