

After You Sign: Five Moves to Make Before the Green Flag

The contract is the starting line. What you do between now and the first race decides whether 2027 pays you back.

Welcome back to The Activation Gap. **Last issue** covered five checks to run before you renew. This one is for the sponsors who have signed, or are about to, and want next season to look different from this one.

Here's what I see most often. A company signs in Q4, the team sends over a deck of deliverables, and everyone relaxes until the season opener. Then the first race arrives, the car looks great, and nobody has decided what the program is supposed to produce. By the time that gets sorted out, half the season is gone.

The quiet months before the green flag are the most valuable time in a sponsorship. Here are five moves to make with them.

1. Turn the contract into three business objectives

A contract lists what you bought. It doesn't say what you want back. Before anything else, write down no more than three objectives, each tied to something the business already tracks: new accounts opened, dealer or distributor engagement, retention of key customers, recruiting, or a product claim you need buyers to believe.

Keep them short enough to fit on one slide. If an objective can't be explained to your CFO in a sentence, it won't survive next year's budget review.

2. Take inventory of what you actually bought

Most sponsorship packages include assets that go unused every year: hospitality passes, show car days, driver appearances, content rights, data the team collects. Go line by line and mark each asset with one of three tags: will use, could use with a plan, or won't use.

The "won't use" list is worth a conversation with the team. Many teams would rather swap an asset you'll ignore for one you'll activate, because an active sponsor is a sponsor who renews. Ask early, while there's still room on their calendar.

3. Build the race calendar around your sales calendar

Not every race weekend matters equally to your business. Put the series schedule next to your own: trade shows, product launches, quarter-end pushes, key customer regions. Look for the weekends where they line up.

Those are your priority events. Concentrate hospitality, content and sales follow-up there instead of spreading the effort evenly across the season. Three weekends done well will usually outperform twelve done halfway.

4. Decide what you'll measure before race one

Measurement decided after the season ends tends to become a hunt for good-looking numbers. Decide now what you'll count, who will count it, and where it will live. For most B2B sponsors that means meetings booked from hospitality, opportunities influenced, sales and dealer use of the content, and the 30, 60 and 90-day follow-up with every guest.

Set a simple baseline today, even if it's rough. A year from now you'll want to show change, and you can't show change without a starting point.

5. Brief the people who sell before the season starts

Your sales team and dealers should hear about the program from you before they see it on TV. Give them a short briefing: why the company sponsors, what's planned this season, which events they can bring customers to, and how to ask for a seat.

Then give them a reason to come back. A short note after each priority race with one story they can use on a customer call keeps the program in front of the people who turn attention into revenue.

What this looks like in practice

None of these moves require a bigger budget. They take a few working sessions, one owner on your side, and an honest conversation with the team. The sponsors who do this work before the season tend to walk into their next renewal with answers instead of hopes.

If the season opener were next week, which of these five would you be scrambling on? That's usually the place to start.

A simple place to start

My **Activation Scorecard** works for this moment too. It's a quick form. You fill it out, and I send back a plain-English read on where your 2027 program is set up well and where it's likely to leave value on the table. No cost, no pitch deck.

Take the Activation Scorecard

If you'd rather talk it through, I also do a 15-minute Health Check call. Email me at steve@p1advantage.com. If you know someone who just signed a racing deal, pass this along.

Steve Mears
Owner, P1 Advantage
steve@p1advantage.com · p1advantage.com

Know someone who'd benefit? Forward this to a sponsor or rights holder wrestling with activation. New readers can get The Activation Gap by email: **activationgap.beehiiv.com/subscribe**

© 2026 P1 Advantage LLC · The Activation Gap · p1advantage.com/activationgap