

2026 SPONSORSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARDS WINNERS ANNOUNCED

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SEATTLE, October 1, 2026 – The Sponsorship Marketing Association (SMA) is proud to announce the winners of the 5th annual Sponsorship Excellence Awards, celebrated at the Sponsorship Mastery Summit in Nashville, September 28-30.

The following awardees were recognized:

Myles Gallagher, CEO of The Superlative Group, received the Hall of Fame Award. As a 42-year veteran, Myles has built one of the world's most respected naming rights and sponsorship consultancies, negotiating more than \$4 billion on behalf of clients across professional sports, higher education, healthcare, and cultural institutions. A true pioneer, he expanded the industry's reach and raised the standards of sponsorship valuation and strategy for an entire generation of professionals.

Momentum received the Agency of the Year Award. As the world's leading global experience agency, Momentum delivered its biggest year yet in 2025, executing disruptive activations at the FIFA Club World Cup, Super Bowl, and F1 for brands including Coca-Cola, GEICO, Michelob ULTRA, Walmart, and William Grant & Sons.

CMA Fest received the Property of the Year Award. As the longest-running Country Music festival in the world, CMA Fest draws 100,000 daily fans to Nashville, generating 123 billion media impressions and \$86 million in direct visitor spending while giving \$2 million back to music education. With national ABC broadcast integration and custom activations, CMA Fest is one of the most powerful sponsorship platforms in live entertainment.

Athletic Brewing Company received the Sponsor of the Year Award. As the number one non-alcoholic beer brand in the United States, Athletic transformed non-alcoholic beer into one of the fastest-growing partnership categories, building integrated platforms with Live Nation, Ironman, Arsenal FC, NASCAR, and dozens of premier venues. By treating sponsorship as a fully integrated ecosystem, Athletic proves the best sponsors create new occasions and deliver measurable value.

Rosalie Kennedy accepted the award at the Summit.

DIGIDECK received the Innovation in Sponsorship Award. DIGIDECK transformed the sponsorship industry by turning the static pitch deck into an interactive, personalized, and measurable platform trusted by 600+ organizations, including every major league. In 2026, DIGIDECK launched DIGI, the first governed AI layer for sponsorship, allowing teams to personalize pitches at AI speed while staying on brand.

Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment and Mastercard received the Social Impact Award for the Indigenous Playmaker Marketplace presented by Mastercard, giving Indigenous-owned businesses access to Maple Leafs intellectual property, retail space, and a national fan base to turn cultural celebration into economic opportunity. The activation generated 35.8 million impressions, sold out 85% of inventory, and drove a 32% increase in Mastercard usage on launch night. Kirsten Maynard of Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment accepted the award.

The Rising Star Award was given to Ashley Dye, Sponsorship Sales Manager at Milwaukee World Festival, Inc., celebrating an emerging sponsorship professional already making waves. Ashley helped drive a record 82 sponsors at Summerfest 2025, landing national brands while developing community-driven programs. Her creative vision, rigorous KPI tracking, and natural leadership have made her one of the industry's most valuable rising voices. Ashley accepted the award at the Summit.

Canva received the Best in Show: Outstanding Activation in Arts & Entertainment Award for their Creative Cabana at Cannes Lions. Canva returned to Cannes Lions three times larger with the Creative Cabana, turning the world's most competitive marketing festival into a hands-on experience for over 10,000 visitors. The activation generated over \$1 million in sponsorship revenue, over 46 million organic social impressions, and a closing Pride Party drawing 1,200 guests.

Gideon Spitzer-Williams, Global Experiential Marketing Lead, B2B at Canva, accepted the award virtually.

Maple Leaf Foods and the Canadian Olympic Committee received the Best in Show: Outstanding Activation in Sports Award. In its Olympic debut as Official Protein Partner of Team Canada, Maple Leaf Foods brought "Victory. But First, Protein." to life across athlete storytelling. Maple Leaf athletes won 48% of all Canadian medals and \$10 million in incremental sales were tied to the program.

Harley-Davidson and Summerfest received the Best in Show: Outstanding Activation in Fairs & Festivals Award. Two iconic Milwaukee brands reunited on America's 250th birthday, combining a food drive collecting 10,000 pounds for the Hunger Task Force, a \$30,000 donation to veterans, and a July 4th fireworks show, generating 350 press stories valued at over \$20 million.

Michelob ULTRA and Park City received the Best in Show: Outstanding Activation in Events & Venues Award. Michelob ULTRA transformed Park City Mountain into the ultimate Team USA celebration during the 2026 Winter Olympics, combining Olympic artifact exhibits, elevated watch parties, and a Kygo summit concert. The activation drew 61,000 weekend attendees and 268 million media impressions.



Aimee Wenske, Senior Director of Strategic Partnerships at Vail Resorts, accepted the award at the Summit for the team.

Andrew Duffy, Chief of Corporate Partnerships at U.S. Army HQ IMCOM DFMWR, **received the SMA Member of the Year Award** for his extraordinary contributions to the SMA community. Andrew leads the Army's Commercial Sponsorship and Advertising Program, building strategic partnerships that enhance Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs for Soldiers and Families worldwide. He was joined by over 60 members of the U.S. Army FMWR to accept the award at the Summit.

About the Sponsorship Marketing Association:

SMA's mission is to strengthen, unify, and advocate for the continued growth of sponsorship marketing and raise the level of excellence across the industry. SMA provides resources, insights, and inspiration to help sponsorship marketers thrive. To learn more, visit www.sponsorshipassociation.com

About the Sponsorship Excellence Awards:

The Sponsorship Excellence Awards honor the visionaries, innovators, and trailblazers who are shaping the future of sponsorship marketing. Each year, the awards celebrate outstanding achievement across the industry—recognizing the brands, properties, agencies, and individuals whose talent, creativity, and impact are driving sponsorship forward. To learn more, visit <https://sponsorshipassociation.com/sponsorship-excellence-awards/>

About the Sponsorship Mastery Summit:

Created as a place for sponsorship marketers to find inspiration, discover new insights, and exchange ideas, the Summit is where innovative conversations happen, and meaningful connections are made. The 8th annual Sponsorship Mastery Summit was hosted September 28-30, 2026, at the Loews Nashville Hotel at Vanderbilt Plaza. To learn more, visit: <https://sponsorshipassociation.com/summit/>