

How to make money with an airship.

I did several advertising contracts with large corporate sponsors.

My first was with Seagrams, at the time one of the largest liquor companies in the world. They just bought Tuaca and Irish Mist brands and were looking to expand sales. We came up with a brilliant plan that would have local bars at ski resorts serving new specialty hot drinks with both liquors. We advertised Tuaca on one side of the blimp and Irish Mist on the other. I flew over many ski areas in Colorado right at the base of the mountain over the beginner slopes. I dropped fluorescent green coupons good for a **free** drink. We also had a local radio station announce when the blimp would be appearing. Seagrams was pleased since they got tremendous brand recognition, the bars were happy since it would bring people in for their first drink, then stay to buy more. The liquor distributors were happy since they had a new profitable product. I was happy since I made a small fortune flying a couple of hours a day, and skiing the rest of the day. There's an interesting story to the end of this but I'll save it for another time,

My second large contract was with GT bicycles, one of the first mountain bike manufacturers. Their biggest competitor was Trek bicycles, the literal 800 pound Gorilla with massive sales. They sponsored many outdoor mountain bike races in the western US during the summer with crowds of 50,000 in attendance. Their logo and advertising was plastered all over the stadium finish area. I came flying over the National Championships with the "GT Bicycles blimp" and caused total chaos and confusion - and "stole their thunder". There was nothing they could do about it. This is known as ambush marketing and was of course a huge success. GT got all kinds of free public relations coverage out of it. Trek was not pleased.

I have had many smaller advertisers approach me, but they didn't have enough money to make it worthwhile. I charged a fee of \$10,000 for 1.5 hours of flying one time over a large outdoor event like a car race, concert or fair. I also charged them \$5,000.00 for two advertising banners, and of course marked this up \$2500.00 for my trouble ordering them.

My fees of course were much less for a continuous set of appearances over time. The larger corporations understood how valuable repeat advertising is. The larger corporations also provided a customized motor home with graphics and a customized support trailer - which gave them additional exposure. This was part of the contract requirements so we could travel in comfort and not needing to worry about checking into hotels every night. I traveled with two crew guys, all that is necessary for operations. It can be done with one but two is much safer. Three is too many.

So that is how you can make money with a blimp! With the trend away from indoor gatherings and towards outdoor socially distanced events the future is writ large...

I am now in the process of retiring from a 37 year aviation career and spending more time skiing. :-)