



Much may have been said recently about good corporate governance and corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Russia, but Russian corporate financial sponsorship remains low. Sharon Miller, Director of the Anglo-Russian charity AMUR, which works to conserve the magnificent Russian Amur tigers and leopards, explains how Western companies are leading the way.

While, a few years ago, it seemed that corporates and environmentalists would be forever locked in battle, both sides now realise it makes very good sense to work in tandem to find solutions for environmental problems. Even in Russia, a few companies support environmental projects, particularly the extractive industries. A new approach, 'Cause Related Marketing' (CRM), has recently started to develop, where a not-for-profit organisation and a for-profit company enter a partnership to promote a particular cause, for mutual benefit. This is not the classic one-off corporate donation, but a dynamic relationship where both parties gain

in the longer term. The charity gets financial support, enhanced credibility, better PR and even business advice, while the corporate partner can reap a number of rewards including improved profile, PR and visibility, better employee relations and motivation, better political relations, improved customer loyalty and in many cases, interestingly, increased sales.

The relationship between AMUR and its five sponsors demonstrates this new type of win:win relationship. For example, AMUR has gained financial support for field projects, it has been given a top-of-the-range customised Land Rover Defender for tiger tracking and receives regular advice from the

senior management in the sponsoring companies. Sponsors have benefited from good publicity, extended contact networks and excellent marketing via the AMUR-organised high-profile events in Moscow and London.

Russians lagging behind

An essential element is missing, however – Russian corporate financial sponsorship. AMUR, and thereby Russian big cat conservation, has received support in kind from several organisations including Moscow Narodny Bank, the Moscow Marriott Grand Hotel and the Russian Travel Centre, but a major Russian corporate

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donor remains elusive. It is still the international companies leading the way in CSR, with Russian ones only just catching on.

But why are Russian companies so slow in this area? The main reason seems to be lack of experience, and therefore understanding, of the

business benefits of a well organised corporate social sponsorship culture. The long term strategic arguments for aligning with good causes have not yet been worked through. In the modern world of information clutter and complex media relationships, CRM can be highly effective, but it



Snow tiger WCS Goodrich



Amur tigers Kristiansand Dyrepark



Amur leopard cub Feline Conservation Centre



A leopard killed for its skin Phoenix



Amur leopard Feline Conservation Centre



A tiger rescued from poachers is released from AMUR Land Rover Defender WCS Goodrich

is essential that enough resources, in terms of corporate strategic thinking and decision making, financial support and management structure, are put into the design and delivery of such programmes. At the moment, the absence of this well-structured approach seems to be the major stumbling block. Simply put, Russian companies just have not put enough thought into this rewarding area of the business matrix.

One of the reasons that Russian corporates have not signed up to this approach may be that the local market is not yet calling for it, Russian consumers are not yet as ethically conscious as their European and American counterparts and as a result corporates, and the businesses that serve them, are not being driven to CSR/CRM in the same way as their international colleagues. Globalisation is turning out to be a positive spur. The more that Russian companies move beyond their borders to list on foreign stock exchanges, the more the demands for good CSR are growing. In addition, there have

AMUR at a glance

- AMUR is an Anglo-Russian charity whose Patron is Sir Roderic Lyne, the British Ambassador.
- It was set up to raise awareness and financial support for the massive conservation effort required to save the Amur (Siberian) tiger and leopard from extinction.
- AMUR has five corporate sponsors – the Russian representations of BP, Castrol, KPMG and Land Rover and Harcourt Partners Ltd in Switzerland.
- There are only 35 Amur leopards and about 350 Amur tigers left in the wild today, living in the Russian Far East states of Primorski and Khabarovski Krai.
- The number of cooperating organisations include the Zoological Society of London, Moscow Zoo, the Wildlife Conservation Society of Bronx Zoo and Russian scientists.

been a few sound-bites from Russian politicians on this subject over the past few months, trying to promote an improved CSR culture.

At the moment, the direct result of these limited driving forces for CSR in Russian corporates, for any not-for-profit organisation trying to form partnerships, is that there is no formal structure in place to tap into. Often, they still seem to be at the whim of a particular charismatic company leader.

AMUR believes it has an excellent offering to take to Russian corporate sponsors, but until recently, that has literally fallen on deaf ears. With signs that Russian corporates are taking the whole CSR agenda more seriously, we hope to help them to blaze the trail, but for AMUR it requires a huge investment in time and effort to seek out and cultivate relationships and to explain the potential benefits to an audience that is not yet attuned to such principles.

Hopefully this will change soon; after all, it is a great form of investment!

www.amur.org.uk 