

# The Business of First-Class Partying

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## *Корпоратив: office party*

A while back, when Moscow was plunged into pre-holiday madness, some of my dog-walking companions appeared red-eyed and miserable for the morning run in the park. Their one-word explanation for their hangovers: Корпоратив! It wasn't hard to figure out that this word meant "office party," especially when the sufferers regaled us with stories of the spread (lavish), the booze (abundant) and their co-workers' behavior (deliciously scandalous). Almost made me want to join the corporate world again.

As far as I can tell, корпоратив (or корпоративчик) is a newish addition to the Russian language, a slangy version of корпоративная вечеринка (office/business party). Runet is filled with thousands of companies advertising their ability to organize the absolute best office parties, complete with ведущий (master of ceremonies) or тамада (toastmaster). True, they tend to overpromise. One company maintains that their office parties "повышают корпоративный дух, снимают стрессы и напряжение, носят просветительскую функцию, при этом повышая интеллектуальный уровень сотрудников" (raise

company morale, relieve stress and tension, and are enlightening, while at the same time raising the intellectual level of the staff). Right. That certainly describes the office parties I've attended.

In some contexts, the adjective корпоративный (corporate) from the noun корпорация (corporation) can simply mean "relating to the business." For example, you may read about корпоративная социальная ответственность (corporate social responsibility) or корпоративный имидж (corporate identity). But, like English, in Russian корпоративный can refer to any group connected by professional or other ties, not just a commercial enterprise. For example: В России действовали правила, которые оберегали корпоративные интересы судебного сообщества и делали судей практически недоступными для ответственности перед гражданами. (In Russia there were rules that protected the corporate interests of the judicial community and virtually stripped judges of their responsibility before citizens.) Of course, Russia being Russia, sometimes it's hard to distinguish "commercial" from "group" interests: Депутаты принимают законы, которые отвечают их корпоративным интересам. (Parliamentarians pass laws that serve their corporate interests.)

Another commercial entity, фирма (firm, company), has an adjectival form — фирменный — with a range of meanings. Sometimes it's straightforward: фирменный can mean "having to do with the company," as in фирменный бланк (letterhead), фирменный знак (trademark), or that Moscow PR obsession — фирменный стиль (corporate identity, branding). Sometimes English demands a bit of specification: Мы раздали нашим таксистам специальные фирменные кепки. (We gave our taxi drivers special caps with the company logo on them.) But beware of false firm friends: фирменный магазин — a store that only sells one company's products — is not a company store. That's a shop for employees inside a factory or business.

Фирменный can also mean "what the manufacturer is famous for." So фирменное блюдо is a restaurant's specialty of the house. Somewhat confusingly, in a private home, фирменное блюдо is not a store-bought, brand-name treat, but the hostess' homemade specialty. This can also be called "trademark."

Then, companies being companies, the notion of "trademark" can morph into the notion of "the best." Фирменный поезд is a premium-class train — a very good venue for your next корпоративчик.

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