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Yegor Dobrogorsky, the Guru of Event Planning

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Dobrogorsky has succeeded in getting business from large multinationals.

Yegor Dobrogorsky's event agency Communicator seems unbelievably successful, with budgets of millions of rubles for events from clients like Raiffeisen Bank, Beeline, Siemens and Sberbank. But a close look at the story shows that this success did not happen overnight, but rather stems from a decade of hard work and making connections.

Normally, all the event and concert entrepreneurs in Russia come from one of the various schools for creative people. For example, Max Timoshin of tMotion production company, who is now one of the most promising and aggressive concert organizers, graduated from Gnesin Music Academy as a saxophone player, and Maria Semushkina, the organizer of the Russia's largest open-air festival — Usadba.Jazz — is a former newspaper and radio journalist with a journalistic degree from Lomonosov Moscow State University.

Yegor Dobrogorsky was classical musician in the past, and even played at a professional level.

However, realizing the financial difficulties of life as a young musician, he thought of his future even as a student at The Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory, finishing with two diplomas in art management and music.

Now 35, he recollects his career path with pleasure and pride. Between 2002 and 2003, he negotiated with the Shell Corporation about sponsoring the Bolshoi Theater. A deal was struck, and Shell has been a permanent sponsor of the Bolshoi since 2004. Together with Maria Semushkina, who found money for Russian cinema projects in the early 2000s, he is one of the pioneers of the Russian corporate sponsorship programs.

Yegor adheres to some simple rules in everyday business. When talking to business people, never forget to count like a mathematician, and when talking to creative people, never criticize them openly, or deal with their managers instead of dealing with them directly. Being a guru of the event business is not the same as being a producer. Event managers do not find stars, but rather buy those who have proved themselves to be stars for large amounts of money.

Balancing the ambitions of music stars and the logic of businessmen is not the only tricky point in his business. Financial issues are foremost. "Just think of it, the international corporations and investment banks pay at the last minute, sometimes one day prior to the event in late December. But I have to pay from 50 to 100 percent deposits to the top-ranked artists in October or early November, otherwise they will not schedule my requests," Yegor said.

This is very understandable, from the point of view of the directors of music bands and famous artists. They receive hundreds of calls with promises to employ them to perform at "korporativy," or New Year's celebration parties, but most of those calls never result in real invitations. So, band managers and famous artists never book a date in the diary until they get payment in full or in installments.

"I had a client, whose name I would prefer to withhold, who promised to pay 13 million rubles ($397,150) for a one-day event, but paid only 11 million on the eve of the event. Two million rubles had just disappeared somewhere, while I had obligations to vendors and suppliers," explains Yegor. Not being a public company as of yet, Yegor Dobrogorsky's Communicator pays the artists up front with their own resources. Right now, he has no plans to start a joint loan program with the banks.

The Moscow Times could not help asking Yegor about his favorite artists to work with. "I always look forward to working with Dmitry Hvorostovsky, he is my No. 1. He is the most hard-working and reliable male artist I have ever seen in my life — a real Siberian and Russian man," Yegor said. Alexei Chumakov and Sergei Lazarev are great performers. Always well-organized and disciplined, they respect people in the hall, and never stop flirting and teasing the public until they get everyone interested in the action on-stage.

Among the television hosts, Yegor Dobrogorsky marks Pavel Volya as one of the most intellectual, quite the opposite of his image on Comedy Club. Pavel is a well-educated person with a sarcastic sense of humor, and he is very flexible and able to adapt his humor to various audiences.

Competition in the event market is harsh, though perhaps more civilized than in the ballet world. While acid is not thrown into the eyes of the rivals, competitors never stop looking for ways to bring down their opponents. There are many low- and mid-level event agencies, who attract small companies and individuals, and constantly seek to move up the ladder. Among top-level event agencies like of his own, Yegor mentions Sergei Knyazev and Department, We Can Group and Eventum Premo.

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