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Employment: Merging Business With Art in Student Competitions for Future Leaders

By Elena Naumenko

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Elena Naumenko
HR Director, Recruitment & Global Mobility
KPMG in Russia and the CIS

Many companies today join forces with other companies for marketing purposes and implement various cross-promotional initiatives. For example, when you purchase the goods of one brand, you may often receive the goods of another brand as a gift.

Sponsorship is another popular form of cooperation. Nowadays, business is supporting art more and more : financial, telecommunications, production and many other companies are becoming the sponsors of theaters and museums, exhibitions and musical festivals. Such cooperation makes it possible to resolve not only marketing objectives, but also HR objectives. Let me cite the following example. A company becomes the sponsor of one of the country's major theaters. In addition to initiatives by the marketing department, the recruitment department also comes up with another idea: to leverage this opportunity to promote the HR brand of the company, and also to look for young talent capable of proposing original solutions. Which format would be most suitable? It goes without saying that business case competitions are the most popular format for young people. An event that brings together art and business — such an opportunity has still not been offered to students. After all, we know that the sophisticated Y generation constantly needs to be surprised by something new and unusual. It is doubly attractive, given that the case that we propose resolving is a challenge that has actually been set by senior management of the theater, and not an example that has been invented for the sake of the competition. The Y generation likes to influence developments in a company, the world, the country, it likes to feel that it is making a contribution, to see a demonstrable result and perceive the difference it has actually made. Cases on the activities of cultural institutions differ materially from classical cases on different companies that the participants in business case competitions are used to resolving. Consequently, thanks to your competition the students will be able to enjoy a new experience and receive training on how to resolve completely different types

of objectives. They will also highly appreciate the fact that the senior jury panel of such a competition will include not only the representatives of your company (the higher the grade, the greater the impact that this will have on the participants), but also the senior management of the theater. It would be good if the event (or one stage of the event — for example, the final) were to be held within the walls of the actual theater — this is something that the participants in the competition would remember for a long time to come.

It goes without saying that such cooperation should be mutually advantageous and beneficial to both sides. The holding of the competition will have a positive impact on the HR brand, while management of the theater will receive solutions that they can actually use when working on an existing challenge. In addition, the company will end up with a pool of talented candidates, who may be included in the recruitment process. During the competition, members of the jury — company employees — will have an opportunity to see the kids "in action" and assess the quality of the solutions that they propose and the compliance of the solutions with the requirements of the theater. It provides an opportunity to observe how roles are allocated in a team, how the participants analyze information and generate ideas, how they draft and present them, how they answer the questions and react to the feedback of members of the jury. In this way it would be possible to assess the numerous competencies of the students as potential candidates. If the event is a success and strikes a chord with the audience, and both the company and the theater are satisfied with its results, it would in this case make sense to hold the project in the following year as well, and possibly make it a regular event, and accordingly an event that is recognizable and anticipated by the audience.

Unlike classical product cross-promotional campaigns, when the goods clearly complement each other, the partnership of an audit and advisory firm with a theater may be not so clear to a mainstream audience. From a marketing perspective, everything is easy to explain and there is nothing surprising here. However, in the case of a student audience, it is highly likely that the element of surprise will have the desired effect. We are offering a "surprise" to the young people there, an event that differs fundamentally from everything on the market. It goes without saying that this will arouse their interest. As soon as you have made a decision on cooperation, it is important to discuss with the partner all the terms and conditions and understand each other's expectations, as well as who will benefit and how. At the same time, it is important to act in tandem. Neither partner should try to go it alone, according itself the primary role in the project. Absolute synergy is required — and then the maximum benefit is guaranteed.

Naturally, one should also mention the positive "side effect" of such cooperation. Immersed in theatrical subject matter, the students start to display more interest in art, study the repertoire of different theaters, become familiar with fine art, and invite friends to go together to a show, opera or ballet. This may be a small step, but it is nonetheless a step in increasing the interest of young people in the theater. It could be said that such projects also perform an educational function. Moreover, in order to reinforce the interest that the students have gained, it would be possible to reward the competition winners with tickets to one of the shows of the theater for which they have worked so hard to come up with a solution.

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