

PAN Parks

Lessons Learned Series



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Combining Conservation With Business

December 2007



Dear Reader,

Over the past 20 years, more and more businesses have started to talk about sustainable development. Increasingly, governments everywhere are putting sustainability and conservation on their agendas, thus making both topics hot issues. Thanks to new laws, regulations, and public and internal pressures, many large companies are actively making green investments, establishing codes of corporate social responsibility, sponsoring NGO's and caring, to varying extents, about the impact their practices are having on future generations.

At PAN Parks we know just how important it is to establish win-win situations between conservation initiatives and business interests. We strongly believe that this trend presents a rather large opportunity for protected area managers and conservation focused organizations. We actively bring together our network of protected area managers with local and multinational businesses in order to prove that sustainable tourism presents a positive opportunity for protected area managers instead of posing a threat to them.

In the previous lessons in this series, my colleagues explained the importance of sustainable development. In this lesson I hope to show you the benefits we have received by combining conservation and business and help stimulate ideas for how you can do it too.

Sincerely,



*Gerben Weening,
Business Development Manager,
PAN Parks Foundation*

Opportunity Knocks

Increased corporate spending towards environmental protection

A noteworthy trend in the corporate world has been the significant shift made by many companies towards caring about the environmental impact that their business practices are having. Many businesses are establishing Corporate Social Responsibility departments. These departments are taking action by developing positive long-term goals and implementing practical action plans to achieve these goals. Many of these action plans involve investments in social and environmental projects, as well as communication plans aimed at getting all levels of their internal and external stakeholders on board with their plans.

Our experience has revealed to us that on an internal level, companies often develop incentives to get their managers and employees actively involved in integrating sustainable practices into their everyday activities. We have also seen that companies use internal incentive initiatives as tools to generate public awareness of their social responsibility by holding press events, issuing press releases and providing stories to consumer magazines. We have also seen many companies communicate their initiatives and successes to external stakeholders through Sustainable Development Reports and their Annual Reports.

Just how big is this trend in Europe?

Corporate Social Responsibility Europe (CSR Europe)

www.csreurope.org

Started in 1995, CSR Europe is an innovative initiative that has quickly become the leading European business network for corporate social responsibility with over 65 leading multinational corporations in its membership. It is an inspiring network of business people from all over Europe who are willing to exchange best practices and solutions in an innovative and enriching environment. The success of this business network is a testament to the increased importance that leading European corporations are placing on social responsibility and environmental protection.

I highly recommend that you visit CSR Europe's website to learn more about the businesses that are part of the network, their initiatives and how you can potentially benefit from this organization.

Toyota Motor Europe

www.toyota-europe.com

During my time at PAN Parks, I have worked hard to develop and strengthen our relationship with Toyota Motor Europe. Without a doubt, I can say that this corporation takes their social responsibility policy very seriously. Toyota follows the principle of Kaizen, which is aimed at continuously improving all areas of operations, and plays a large role in their CSR policy.

Thierry Dombrevail, the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Toyota Motor Europe, stated his belief that "a socially responsible corporation is one that takes voluntary initiatives to improve its social, economic and environmental performance. It must take all necessary steps to be more transparent and open to stakeholders." Our experience working with Toyota through our Wilderness Club has been invaluable. Toyota has proven to us that they are committed to establishing a win-win relationship that will evolve and improve with time.

What does this trend and opportunity mean for protected area managers?

- Increased number of companies looking to make monetary donations
- Potential to improve infrastructure of trails and visitor centres through in-kind donations of time and labour
- Potential for increased exposure through cross-communications projects with regional and multinational companies
- Joint nature protection initiatives
- Opportunity to exchange knowledge and gain expert insight into ways to improve management practices
- Local economy might be stimulated

What do protected area managers have to offer businesses?

- Beautiful location and excellent facilities for companies to send employees on incentive trips
- Visitor centres and/or conference facilities for corporate meetings such as presentations of Annual Reports
- Team building activities aimed at increasing leadership, team communication, and strengthening relationships in a challenging and beautiful setting



*Beautiful wilderness
Rila National Park, Bulgaria*



*Visitor centre
Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park,
Georgia*



*Canon team builds pathway
Fulufjället National Park, Sweden*

PAN Parks jumped at the opportunity

The PAN Parks Foundation was started in 1997 as a project aimed at improving the management of Europe's protected areas. Over the years principles and criteria were developed to do just that. It wasn't until a few years ago that our board of directors and management team recognized the importance of combining conservation with business in order to promote economic development, educate communities on the importance of their local protected areas, increase public awareness of wilderness protection, and generate funding for our future projects. Principles and criteria for sustainable tourism were then developed. I was hired on soon after to help with our new business development plans, and I have colleagues who work directly with our local business partners.

Two ways PAN Parks works with businesses?

1. Certify and Partner with Local and Regional Businesses (Topics covered in Lessons Learned 1 and 2)
 - To stimulate regional economic development
 - To improve the relationship between protected area managers and local communities
2. Partner with Large Multinational Companies and Facilitate Incentive Trips
 - To generate funding for future projects
 - To increase general public's awareness of the importance of protecting wilderness areas

PAN Parks Wilderness Club

In December 2006, we joined forces with Toyota Motor Europe to develop a new concept called the Wilderness Club. With an anticipated launch date of March 2008, our Wilderness Club is set to bring together at least four major multinational corporations who will all make annual financial contributions that will directly help PAN Parks achieve our vision. The money generated will be invested in our conservation projects, incentive plans, and initiatives to help build and strengthen the PAN Parks brand.

We have been very selective in the members we are allowing into our Wilderness Club as we want to ensure that like Toyota Motor Europe, that they:

- a) Have Corporate Social Responsibility high on their agendas,
- b) Recognize the importance of protecting Europe's nature,
- c) Want to build strong structural relationship with an NGO, and
- d) Want to express their commitment to the environment to all of their stakeholders.

We offer the members of our Wilderness Club the opportunity to:

1. Gain practical tools for communicating their ethical values to their customers, clients, partners and employees,
2. Help build a premium brand in Europe, and
3. Gain new networking and cross/joint marketing opportunities.



*A corporate employee witnessing first hand the importance of and need for conservation
Fulufjället National Park, Sweden*

PAN Parks Incentive Trips

For several years now we have worked closely with CANON Europe to arrange incentive trips for their employees. These trips give CANON an excellent opportunity to show their commitment to nature conservation through financial support and in-kind donations of their employees time and labour who help to improve park infrastructure. The trips are also used to award outstanding employees by allowing them to experience a certified PAN Park, meet colleagues from around Europe, and help them build their leadership, teamwork and problem solving skills. CANON has sent their employees to four of our certified parks, with the most recent trips being hosted by Rila National Park in Bulgaria and Majella National Park in Italy. The employees work alongside knowledgeable park staff to complete tasks such as repairing walkways and visitor centres, stripping down overgrown shrubbery, and building steps and fences.

CANON Europe conducts valuable research after each trip that they then share with us and park management. This helps us see where we were successful and indicates areas for improvement. The following are some of the results we received after CANON Europe sent 23 of their employees on an incentive trip to Majella National Park in Italy:

- ✓ 95% of guests felt that the tasks for completion helped develop their teamwork skills
- ✓ Everybody felt that the trip enabled them to network and learn more about their colleagues positions in other countries and departments
- ✓ Everybody felt that their experience gave them a positive perception of CANON and its commitment to environmental conservation and protection
- ✓ 82% of guests felt that the programme was an 'excellent' experience and they would love to do it all again!



*Incentive trip participants chatting during a well-deserved break
Fulufjället National Park, Sweden*



*Marking trails
Fulufjället National Park, Sweden*

How can you act on this opportunity?

Most large companies look for projects and programs with fit into their CSR policy and targets. At PAN Parks we act as an intermediary between the protected areas in our network and the companies we are aligned with. We find out what the needs of the protected area are and see how different companies can help. If you currently do not have an intermediary who can bring your area and a company together, the easiest first step would be to start doing research into organizations that can help you. I'd recommend looking at CSR Europe's website for contacts and information.

What we have learned is that the corporate world likes to act fast and see immediate results. Therefore if you contact a company directly, make sure you have done your research about the company and have a solid proposal ready to present to them. The company will likely want to know the details of the particular project you want them to get involved with, and how you will measure the results for them. Measuring the results is an important step for a company as they communicate this information to their various stakeholders.

Through our experience running incentive trips, here are a few key things you should keep in mind if you find a company that agrees to partner with you on a project that takes them to your area:

CAPACITY

- Park representatives must have a good command of the English language
- Make sure the protected area offers good quality accommodation in or near the area that can host roughly 20 people in a single location
- Quality catering of food and beverages that will keep participants energy levels up throughout the day's activities
- Make sure you select a good park contact available to discuss trip organization and developments with the company
- Ensure you have someone who will arrange to acquire and assemble the feedback provided by participants

ENVIRONMENT

- Surrounding participants with stunning natural beauty
- A chance for participants to learn about the environment and experience it through hikes and seeing beautiful vistas

LOCATION

- Accessible to transport such as airports
- Good internal transport, i.e. keep bus trips to a minimum as participants want to spend as much time as possible outdoors

ACTIVITIES

- Ensure the park staff who are leading the activities are well-trained in team building activities and conflict resolution
- Ensure that knowledgeable park staff are available to educate participants on the park, it's features, and the species that are found there
- Offer hands on projects that deliver visible results so participants can see the direct results of their efforts

Upcoming Lessons in the Series

- ✓ How to Perform a Cost Benefit Analysis.....January
- ✓ Building Awareness for Your Protected Area.....February
- ✓ How to Lobby Decision Makers.....March
- ✓ Conducting Independent Audits.....April
- ✓ The Value of a Research Network.....May

Contact Details

If you have further questions please feel free to contact us:

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To download past lessons in the series, go to www.panparks.org/projects/lessonslearnedseries.
To find out more about PAN Parks visit panparks.org.