

Achieving Sustainability through Challenge of a Sponsor Company

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■ Overview

In this interview series, professionals who are involved mainly in the promotion of sustainability in Olympics/Paralympics are featured. This time we deliver our interview to Ms. Katherine Symonds-Moore, who was in Coca-Cola at the time of London2012 and Mr. Simon Lewis, who supported the challenge from WWF.

■ Toward Realization of Sustainable Olympics – Collaboration between LOCOG and Coca-Cola

Motohashi: Today I would like to hear from you two who were involved from different standpoints each other in the development of corporate sustainability strategy at the London Olympics and Paralympics..

Moore: I currently work for a sustainability consulting firm called Sancroft, but was working for Coca-Cola at the time of the games. Sancroft has a 15-year business relationship with Coca-Cola, so you can say I am still related to Coca-Cola.

Lewis: I was involved in sustainability-related projects of the London 2012 on behalf of WWF. Katherine was my main contact at Coca-Cola.

Motohashi: What roles did you play in the development of sustainability strategy?

Moore: As Head of Sustainable Games, I managed Coca-Cola's sustainability programme for three and half years from May, 2009. My role was to work with the management team

to implement sustainability goals agreed within the company for relevant departments. In particular, I worked closely with our on-site operations team to ensure, for example, refrigerators at the venues were free of hydrofluorocarbons and transportation vehicles were all run on biofuel. Although my team consisted of only three members of staff and was on a relatively small budget, we were able to get all of the 40 members of the operation team and 500 of the event staff to learn and practice the basics of sustainability.

Motohashi: What was Coca-Cola's involvement in that realm?

Moore: LOCOG's aim was to "adopt the most extensive sustainability policy in the history of the Olympics." Apart from this, working under our own goal to "continue being a sustainable company," Coca-Cola already had an established strategy called "Live Positively", and was the only corporate sponsor who already had a specialised team dedicated to sustainability strategies. As a continuous sponsor of the Olympics and Paralympics since the 1920's, Coca-Cola has accumulated a great deal of knowledge, and understood how the Olympics and Paralympics work. With the common aim of sustainability, Coca-Cola formed a powerful partnership with LOCOG, and provided them with support for the event as a whole, in addition to supporting the sustainability aspect.

Lewis: There were two underlying factors behind their successful relationship: the first is that Coca-Cola had already established a position as "the most sustainable Olympics sponsor" by the time of the London 2012. They had gained support from the Olympic Committees of the 2006, 2008, and 2010 Summer and Winter Games, and put more emphasis on sustainability in not only their operational but also marketing activities. The second is that London committed to the idea of "making the 2012 Games the most sustainable ones" since the time of the host city bid. I believe that the marriage between LOCOG's positive attitude toward their commitment to sustainability and existing strategies of Coca-Cola led to good results.

Moore: Coca-Cola was not one of the six companies authorised as Sustainability Partners by LOCOG. It was because there was no need for Coca-Cola to pay an additional sponsorship fee to become a Sustainability Partner since they had already been recognised as a company with sustainability principles. It is a bit ironic, but I was proud, because Coca-Cola was considered a more legitimate sustainable company than the official Sustainability Partners.

Lewis: It was a great idea on LOCOG's part to introduce this sustainability partnership

program. It well illustrated their stance, both nationally and internationally, of encouraging private companies to be involved in actions to ensure sustainability. While LOCOG gained extra sponsorship revenue and the Partner companies were also happy as their corporate image had been enhanced.

■ Emphasizing Sustainable Food and Drink in Addition to Promoting Recycling

Motohashi: Could you tell us about “Food Vision”, which was developed as part of the sustainability project?

Moore: Food Vision was an effort to maximise sustainability in food provision. It took them about a year to prepare because they had to start from scratch and write a draft. They set “benchmark standards” and “aspirational standards” for the food industry, and encouraged them to achieve the aspirational standards. After months of meetings with LOCOG officials to discuss these standards, we came up with detailed criteria for individual items; for example, what specific types of egg and fish to use, not to use plastic wrap or aluminium foil to cover food, and so forth. These detailed criteria were not forced by LOCOG’s decision but determined by consensus of those involved. It had often been said that British catering businesses, especially restaurants, neglected sustainability and had a long way to go, but the Games boosted their awareness at once. The level of awareness of the need for sustainability strategy varied significantly among nations, but the London Games raised the level to be required. Once the level gets raised, you cannot lower it because the world is watching. Sancroft has already initiated conversations with Coca-Cola in Rio de Janeiro, and been urging them to take advantage of lessons learned in London 2012.

Motohashi: What are some of the programs originally developed by Coca-Cola?

Moore: One that is well known is the local recycling programme. LOCOG had an aim of “zero waste to landfill.” Since Coca-Cola was to deliver a huge amount of plastic bottles to the venues, they built a plastic bottle recycling plant beforehand in Lincolnshire in northern England. Prior to this, they used to ship out 2/3 of used bottles to Asia and Europe for recycling. By building the recycling plant, they became able to process the majority of the bottles in the UK. As a result, recycled bottles from the Games were put back on shelves in six weeks. In addition, they worked with local residents to redesign trash cans. They improved labels and added the Coca-Cola message, “please sort waste and dispose of it in the appropriate bin.”
From the health point of view, they also aimed 3/4 of their beverages consumed at

the venues to be water or sugar-free soft drinks, which also served as a great opportunity to promote sales of Innocent products, a British smoothie brand that Coca-Cola had acquired. This was, of course, done without compromising the choice of Coke products for consumers, and it was ensured that a wide range of beverages from Coke Zero and Classic Coke to sport drinks was available for visitors at the venues.

Furthermore, they used every chance they got to raise awareness of sustainability: For example, at their hospitality events, where corporate executives were invited, they offset the carbon emissions from air travel, provided gift packs in hotel rooms with a “please recycle” message, and showed a 5-minute video about the importance of sustainability during transportation to a stadium. Everyone was interested and the video led people to talk about sustainability.

■ More Proactive Dissemination of Information – Changing People’s Attitudes towards Sustainability

Motohashi: What legacies do you think were left behind through these efforts?

Moore: I think it’s the fact that people’s attitudes towards and confidence in recycling changed. Many British people seemed to have mistrusted the recycling system, thinking that “it is just a name, and recyclables are just getting dumped at a landfill.” Now they know that used plastic bottles really do get recycled at Coca-Cola’s new facility to produce new bottles and they return to the shelf within six weeks.

Lewis: A legacy is hard to quantify. In my opinion, the biggest is the fact that the London 2012 was the first example where regional stakeholders, local communities, NGOs, international sponsors, and the organising committee all participated not to argue against, but to cooperate on sustainability issues. This is an intangible but important point. WWF worked closely with Coca-Cola, for example. I was part of their sustainability advisory panel, reviewing all of Coke’s sustainability plans and making suggestions for improvements. It was also the first Games for IOC to realise that “sustainability is an advantage rather than a risk management concept for the Olympics.” I also believe that many corporate sponsors realised in London 2012 for the first time that “they want to be actively involved in effort to promote sustainability to be considered as a sustainable business.” There will be lots of differences between the Games in London and Rio, but I am sure that London’s legacy will be followed in Rio in terms of sustainability. IOC has already launched Agenda 2020 for sustainability¹. London’s legacy will surely be reflected in their discussions as well.

Moore: You can also consider this as a legacy: I am using LOCOG's Food Vision as the basis for a campaign for Bristol 2015². It is not a sporting event, but is a sustainability campaign launched in response to the naming of the city as European Green Capital³ for 2015. LOCOG's Food Vision can play a leading role in the promotion of sustainability in the UK, given that the standard is well prepared, and its online availability makes it possible to apply it to other events.

Motohashi: Looking back on the London 2012, is there anything you wish you had done differently in terms of sustainability?

Moore: Honestly, it is hard to say because I look back proudly. East London, the main site of the Olympics, used to be a gloomy, derelict place. But now, it is a comfortable, up-and-coming area that everyone wants to live in. It is a wonderful thing that the whole country came together putting all our energies into rejuvenating this area through this massive event called the Olympic Games.

Lewis: From my point of view, I wish we had been able to send out more sustainability messages to the stadium crowd and worldwide TV audience during the Games. A lot of sustainability efforts were made behind the scene, but the crowd simply went home after the game without realising these efforts unless they made an effort to find them out.

Moore: That is true. I agree that we should have taken the opportunity, especially at the Opening Ceremony, and sent out more clear, powerful sustainability messages. So, I do hope that Tokyo 2020 will have an unprecedented opening ceremony that brings the entire nation together and make its people determined to "make something special related to sustainability happen."

Interview date: 25/Sep/2014

Katherine Symonds-Moore

Since graduating in 2000, Katherine has made a career in helping major multinationals improve their sustainability performance. Katherine led Coca-Cola's efforts to deliver its sponsorship of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games sustainably. This three-year project involved: devising a carbon footprint reduction and compensation strategy; using the power of the Coca-Cola brand to inspire behaviour change on recycling; and working with charity partner, StreetGames, to get more young people active. Previous to working with The Coca-Cola Company, Katherine helped to develop and deliver Tesco PLC's Community Plan, before becoming Tesco's Climate Change Manager. In this role, she contributed to reducing annual UK carrier bag use by 3 billion, putting carbon labels on products and launching a low-carbon blueprint for all new Tesco stores. She is now an independent sustainability consultant specialising in environmental, ethical and community issues.



Simon Lewis

In January 2014, Simon set up Team Planet – a specialist consultancy providing sustainability advice to sport. Team Planet is for organisations across the business of sport that are getting to grips with sustainability requirements, as well as those in the sector looking to gain benefits by doing sustainability well. Before Team Planet, Simon spent 12 years at WWF, the global conservation organisation. Latterly he led WWF network engagements with sport, establishing partnerships and initiatives to address sport's impact on the planet and to develop sustainable legacy projects through sport. From 2004 to 2012 WWF's development of the 'One Planet 2012' programme with LOCOG and the London 2012 Olympic Games was a key focus. Simon's previous employment includes the Natural History Museum in London and the education charity Learning through Landscapes. His sporting highlight was watching the Jamaican 1-2-3 in the 200m in the Olympic Stadium at the London Olympic Games. His sporting low point was sinking in a rowing eight in the River Thames in winter.



¹ <http://www.olympic.org/news/olympic-agenda-2020-strategic-roadmap-for-the-future-of-the-olympic-movement-unveiled/241063>

² Bristol 2015: <http://www.bristol2015.co.uk/about/>

³ European Green Capital: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/winning-cities/requirements-benefits/index.html>