

## THE FTSE–BRITISH OLYMPIC ASSOCIATION (BOA) INITIATIVE – AN EXAMPLE OF SMART CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY?

Author:  
Stephen Morrow

email:  
s.h.morrow@stir.ac.uk

Co-authors:  
Robinson, Leigh, Professor

University:  
University of Stirling

Faculty:  
School of Sport

### Abstract

The FTSE-BOA Initiative is a partnership scheme initiated in 2007 between a number of FTSE 100 companies (the 100 largest companies listed on the London Stock Exchange by market value) such as Marks & Spencer and Skandia and select Olympic National Governing Bodies (NGB) in the UK such as The British Canoe Union and Pentathlon GB. The partnership seeks to improve the effectiveness of the Olympic NGBs delivery and subsequent performance, with the BOA acting as a linking pin organisation, helping the partners to develop shared goals and mutual understanding. The partnership provides 'support in kind' and involve no direct financial transfer. The aims of this paper are: to establish the effectiveness of this partnership as an example of smart corporate social responsibility (CSR); and to identify the perceived benefits arising from the partnership for Olympic NGBs. Of particular interest is the extent to which there has been knowledge transfer of sound business principles and practice from the for-profit sector to the not-for-profit sector, given the differences in objectives, ownership, decision-making structures and processes.

There is a growing body of literature on sport CSR, particularly on the motivations for engaging in CSR and on its outcomes, both consumer impacts and financial consequences (see, for example, Bradish and Cronin, 2009; Ratten and Babiak, 2010). Of particular relevance to this study is Seguin et al.'s (2010) paper on the use of CSR (or corporate support) rather than event sponsorship for a one-off major sporting event, the 2005 FINA World Aquatic Championships. Corporate support was distinguished from event sponsorship by emphasising that it is motivated by concerns related to civic engagement and social responsibility, rather than potential return on investment. Comparing their findings to Carroll's (1979) CSR aspects, they reported that these were most clearly associated with the economic aspect (securing corporate

funding for the event), but also found that leadership and political and networking skills were also important in acquiring corporate support, along with the positioning of the event / sport as a cause. Beyond sport, papers looking at the effectiveness of partnerships between businesses and Non Governmental Organisations in the context of CSR are also of great interest given the different competencies and strengths on each side of the collaborative venture (see, for example, Jamali and Keshishian, 2008).

In this study a qualitative approach was adopted which involved a series of semi-structured interviews with 12 of the FTSE-BOA partnerships. The interviews were taped and transcribed and analysed using content analysis in order to identify key themes. Case studies were prepared for each partnership and these were subject to cross case analysis to identify overarching themes regarding the FTSE-BOA initiative.

The research demonstrates that the initiative has been successful with all ONGBs identifying improvements in the way that they operate. Benefits include access to expertise and time, improving policies and procedures and easing access to other agencies. From the FTSE companies perspective a key benefit is that the focus on 'in-kind' assistance has allowed them to assist Olympic NGBs in ways which are focused on CSR; an important consideration in the straitened economic climate. Resource dependence has been identified as a significant factor in previous research into collaborative alliances and hence is used in this study to understand the implications of the initiative for both sides of the collaborative partnership.

References:

- Carroll, A.B. (1979). A three-dimensional conceptual model of corporate performance, *Academy of Management Review*, 4(4), 497-505.
- Bradish, and Cronin, J.J. (eds) (2009), Corporate social responsibility in sport, Special Issue, *Journal of Sport Management*, 23(6).
- Jamali, D. and Keshishian, T.(2008). Lessons Learned from Partnerships Between Businesses and NGOs in the context of CSR, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 84(2), 277–295.
- Ratten, V. and Babiak, K. (eds) (2010), Social Responsibility, Philanthropy and Entrepreneurship in the Sports Industry, Special Issue, *Journal of Management & Organization*, 16(4), 144 pp.
- Seguin, B., Parent, M. and O'Reilly, N. (2010). Corporate support: a corporate social responsibility alternative to traditional event sponsorship, *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing*, 7(3/4), 202-222.