

STRONGER  
ROOTS

# The Stronger Roots Program

Case Study:  
KASPIAN

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# KASPIAN:

## Turning corporate donors into corporate partners and creating long-lasting and flexible co-operations together

Through rekindling previous corporate relations and turning businesses into close partners, it became clear for KASPIAN association that these partnerships, if handled well, can lead to a new level of flexibility and better activities for their target groups. They found ways that fit both their, and the corporations' needs, including both small, local businesses and large corporations.

*KASPIAN is a civic association based in Bratislava, Slovakia, focusing on activities and services for children and youth, as well as families and individuals from the local neighborhood. They help young people through methods of social work, leisure, participatory and preventive activities, as well as through education. They offer community, sport, and leisure activities and pass*

*on their experiences to parents and students, as well as education specialists.*

KASPIAN wanted to diversify their income - to obtain financial or non-financial resources that would be flexible, specifically for covering their current needs, without the administrative burden and the insecure future of grants and EU funds. In order to find this type of a partner, they knew they needed their new partners not simply to donate, but to understand their work and goals. They hoped to be on the "same page": to find someone to whom their requests would also be meaningful.

As they previously had good experiences, KASPIAN decided they wanted to increase their corporate partnerships. They had corporate partners more than 10 years ago, with

whom they established cooperation, mainly through the Pontis Foundation and other platforms, which, at that time, brought together socially responsible companies. These past partnerships were fond memories, but after the departure of the staff who dealt with this topic more than seven years ago, they only maintained these collaborations for a few more years and did not establish new ones. Based on this experience, they saw that in order for this area to develop, it was essential that one of the employees became intensively involved in contacting potential corporate partners and taking care of existing ones. Through staffing changes, it also became clear to them that instead of previous business experience, it was more important that this colleague understands and can align with their values and organizational culture.

### LIDL – A FRUITFUL COOPERATION WITH A LARGER PARTNER

Their original goal was to establish more cooperation with small local companies in Petržalka (residential borough of Bratislava) and later with larger partners. But due to COVID-19, the situation developed differently, as local businesses struggled with financial problems themselves. In this situation, KASPIAN thought it would be insensitive to address small businesses actively with a request for support or cooperation. So, they

turned to large food retail companies or telecommunication service providers, who they believed were less affected by the pandemic.

KASPIAN had a previous connection to LIDL, through corporate volunteering a few years ago. They decided to try to reanimate this old partnership: they directly contacted the person from the volunteer event, who then further recommended them to the CSR department. They addressed the department with a one-page presentation to see if they were interested in another, more stable support of KASPIAN's activities. The one-pager was very specific: it described their target group, and how the organization wants to respond to their current needs with the help of the company: by donating hygiene supplies, creative materials or board games. They listed in detail what kinds of materials, -how many, and for what exact activities- they would need. It also said they were looking for a long-term partner, but even one time support would be beneficial.

The answer came immediately and was positive, and LIDL even suggested several ways to support the organization. The most interesting offer for KASPIAN was the reoccurring donation of gift cards, with which they can flexibly finance not only refreshments or cooking with clients, but also buy a lot of smaller

products, for them to repair or replace anything that needs fixing. These donations help them to implement activities with new clients, for projects that were not previously expected or planned. As for LIDL, it's a comfortable and smooth way to help. After the positive response, KASPIAN are now not afraid to address the company with requests beyond the original framework of their partnership. This constant communication, which is casual and fast, strengthens and maintains this connection: LIDL values the partnership, and KASPIAN feels that, although some of their requests cannot be implemented, the company is looking for ways to meet these requests or offer alternative solutions. At warehouse cleanings, for example, Lidl now contacts KASPIAN to see if there are any items they can use for their activities.

- Having a personal connection from the past helped, but it was also Kaspian's to-the-point, transparent way of asking that made the next step possible. Being flexible in accepting the ways such a large company can help is also key to building a long-lasting partnership.

## TURNING AGAIN TO SMALLER, LOCAL BUSINESSES: FLEXIBILITY AND BECOMING PARTNERS

Later, in 2021, they managed to establish a fruitful cooperation with a small local company. As with LIDL,

they had cooperated with Korčule.com on a smaller scale before. The company sells and services scooters, skates and bikes, and had previously provided KASPIAN a service for freestyle scooters and offered them a scooter for their clients. It was a good fit with their activities, as KASPIAN organizes Scoot Jam, a scooter event in the local skatepark every year for the local youth. In 2020 they couldn't organize the event due to COVID-19, and also because they didn't apply for the grants they had previously needed to finance the event, as they weren't sure they could organize it the next year.

But in the spring of 2021, Korčule.com contacted them, stating that they had got over a more difficult period and are currently interested in renewing the cooperation. It was a lucky coincidence, as by then, it was clear that the COVID-19 situation was favorable for organizing the Scoot Jam again, so preparations quickly began. This was possible without grants from foundations or local governments, mainly thanks to the help from Korčule.com, who helped to secure excellent prizes and to transport tents, equipment and materials for KASPIAN. This kind of support proved valuable for the organization, as they do not own a car. The company helped not only financially, but also with the logistics and also gave KASPIAN new

inspiration and energy in planning future Scoot Jam events. And for the company, they were able to help with the resources they already own and didn't require extra investments from them. KASPIAN realized that thanks to the corporate partners, Scoot Jam has potential to develop in directions they had not dared to consider before. After evaluating the event, they decided that in the future they will not apply for a grant from foundations and local governments for these types of activities, but on the contrary, they will develop them in cooperation with corporate partners.

KASPIAN now believes it is good to clarify whether there are activities or events in an organization for which a corporate partner would be better than a different type of

donor (ministries, local governments, foundations). It is not just about getting rid of a lot of administrative burden and about increasing flexibility, but the fact that corporate partners, especially smaller ones, can bring ideas and energy that cannot be expected from other donors, with well communicated cooperation and shared interests, goals and motivation.

In fact, they are not talking about corporate donors or sponsors, but of partners. They found this involvement to be the key: instead of focusing on simply getting corporate funding, it is more beneficial to involve a business more and to share plans and be open to suggestions.

This case study was written as a part of the Stronger Roots Program.

The Stronger Roots Program aims to increase the resilience of civil society organizations and their networks, strengthen their social capital and embed them in the communities and societies in which they operate. It is implemented by Open Society Fund Prague, the NIOK Foundation, Open Society Foundation Bratislava and Glopolis.

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