REFORESTATION: A CORPORATE SUSTAINABLE COMMITMENT

How private companies are using the forest as a marketing tool

Companies today fulfill more than just an economic mission. At the heart of the societal challenge, they are aware of the role of general interest they have to play for the benefit of their ecological, social and cultural environment. In a logic of collective intelligence, they integrate directly a CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) approach to their development and innovation strategies. Their activities are carried out from a citizen perspective and their values are regularly translated into actions that benefit to the common good.

1. The forest, as a communication and marketing tool

Among these actions, environmental philanthropy, and particularly the preservation of the forest, is more and more often used by large commercial or industrial actors.

The need to plant or replant trees is well established. The UN has made the preservation of the forest ecosystems one of its 17 "Sustainable Development Goals". These operations have a very good image among the general public and consumers. Many non-forest companies have understood this and have decided to become involved in the sector, by financing different afforestation or forest restoration projects, in order to reduce their carbon footprint, but mostly to improve their image among their consumers and partners.

2. How does it work?

These companies act as funders and finance projects in strategic regions, with a strong image (Africa, South America), or most simply close to their customers or production sites (Europe, United States). Projects of very different sizes may be considered, the key element to communicate being most often the number of trees planted. Generally, these companies, whose forestry knowledge is nonexistent, join forces with NGOs, International Organizations, local consultancies and experts to select the sites and organize the operations.
At **Sylva Nova**, we are used to carry out this kind of missions on behalf of funders.

Our work can be summarize in :

- Selecting and assessing the sites or forests in needs of additional budget to be sustainably replanted or restored, with a focus on the environmental added value of the project.

- Ensuring the administrative management of the project, obtaining the necessary authorizations and the collaboration of the local stakeholders.

- Ensuring the operational management of reforestation itself with the support of local partners and contractors.

- Communicating regular information (both editorial and visual) and project monitoring data’s to the funding company.

3. **The crucial role of communication**

By associating its name with an environmental commitment and by an appropriate communication, the funding company benefits of:

- a brand image whose visibility is reinforced with positive values in the eyes of its stakeholders

- an opportunity to develop the sense of belonging and motivation of its staff around a collective dynamic that makes sense and a personal involvement in an ethical project

- a better integration in the local environment, with public authorities and general civil society
An appropriate communication aims to tell and make visible the company’s societal commitment in a coherent and consistent way with its usual communication habits:

- Create a habit of communication with the actors of the forest industry (infomercials in specialized magazines, presentation of the project in conferences or events …)
- Press: press releases and conferences
- Events: awareness days, visits to a logging operation or replanting site...
- Internal support: intranet, internal journal, specific training ...
- Digital communication: news updated regularly on company’s website and social networks
- Annual report: part of non-financial information of the CSR type
- Related visuals making the project more real, concrete and tangible.

4. A win-win strategy

Far from green washing, pragmatic and field effective, these collaborations constitute a chance for the implementation of many projects in lack of funds, or in need of additional budget, and that without use of public money.

At the other hand, funders know that this kind of soft and meaningful marketing is highly appreciated by the general public.

A win-win strategy.