

Prokhorov Taps GQ Boss Ahead of Elections

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January 09, 2012

The  **Moscow Times**

With less than two months to go before the presidential election, contender Mikhail Prokhorov has strengthened his campaign team by tapping editor-in-chief of the Russian GQ for his own media empire.

Nikolai Uskov, a darling of the hipster crowd, will start as the head of the ZhV! media group on Feb. 1, Snob.ru social networking and news web site [reported](#) Sunday.

Uskov, 41, will also be editing Snob, one of ZhV!'s most well-known projects, which, however, has failed to turn any profit since its inception in 2008.

ZhV! — a convoluted bilingual play on the Russian verb meaning “to live” — is owned by Prokhorov's Onexim Group, which also owns RBC media holding.

ZhV! also includes Russian Pioneer magazine, edited by Andrei Kolesnikov, a prominent

Kommersant reporter, F5.ru web site and ZhV! television channel.

Appointing Uskov is Prokhorov's attempt to "show intellectual youth ... that he is one of them," Yelena Zelinskaya vice president of MediaUnion, a nongovernmental organization, told The Moscow Times on Monday.

Uskov's nomination also signals that Prokhorov's campaign may "bear an unexpected character" and "bring surprises," Zelinskaya said.

The 46-year-old Prokhorov, whose fortune was listed by Forbes at \$18 billion, turned to politics at the start of the election season last year.

But despite his outspoken rhetoric, he has largely failed to shake the suspicion of being a Kremlin protege who has joined the race to sweep the protest vote, which is made up of the same educated youth that Uskov's appointment is presumably targeting.

The suspicions were recently fueled by Prokhorov's growing ties to NTV, a television channel known for its pro-Kremlin stance.

Last month, he appeared on the show "NTVshniki," promoting his presidential bid. He later picked the show's host Anton Krasovsky to head his campaign staff.

Uskov has also often criticized the government on his blog, but did not completely escape censorship allegations at GQ.

In 2009, he refused to run a story in the magazine linking the Federal Security Service to the series of deadly blasts in Moscow and Buinaksk in the late 1990s, dismissing it as "nothing sensational," Kommersant [reported](#) at the time.

Uskov will replace Vladimir Yakovlev, 51, the founder of Kommersant, who quit as the head of ZhV! in [October](#) amid allegations about the media group's unsuccessful financial performance.

Uskov's old job, in turn, will go to Russian GQ columnist Mikhail Idov, who has also contributed to New York Magazine and The New Republic, socialite Ksenia Sobchak, also a GQ contributor, [reported](#) on her Twitter blog Saturday.

Uskov had been editor-in-chief of GQ since 2003. Before landing a job in media, he researched monastery life in Western Europe in the early Middle Ages at Moscow State University.

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