

"This is one of our last experience written by a Mentee. The Mentoring program is like a chain: each Mentee can be a Mentor for next Mentee and this is the BPW power for our future and for our business development."

(Dr. Carla Laura Petruzzelli, Mentoring Taskforce Chair - BPW International)

The BPW Mentoring Programme - Viewpoint of a Mentee



Dear Ladies from BPW Europe

As a thirty-something woman, already well past my University days, but still without a good idea about what to do in my professional life, I had felt for a while that I needed to obtain a more strategic approach concerning my professional development. However, I was at a loss how to do that.

Through BPW Basel early in 2008, I heard of the BPW Mentoring Program. I had no idea about mentoring, but thought that this could be the starting point to get a more strategic view about my career. Marianne Plattner, Responsible for the BPW Mentoring Program in Europe, met me to explain how mentoring works. She had a major challenge for me right away! She told me that I needed a well-defined goal in order to participate in the BPW Mentoring Program! Fact was – I had no goal! I spent several evenings thinking about what I wanted in life until I came up with a specific professional goal which would be the core part of my mentoring program. This moment was my first one ever where I tried to look at the greater picture of where I wanted to head to in life by 2034, which will likely be the year of my retirement ... I was forced to focus! Focusing on the big picture of my life was the first great experience about mentoring!

Based on my specific goal and on specifications what my mentor should be, Marianne put me into touch with my Mentor, Jacqueline Erb. That was in late summer 2008. The match was perfect: We are both lawyers working in the energy sector, so exotic beings between engineers and computer specialists, never mind being women in a male-dominated work place. Certain subjects can be easily discussed that way. We meet once a month and discuss my progression towards my goal within the mentoring program which lasts one year. My defined goal is to find out whether I want to move into management in the long run. As I am certain that I want to move into management now, I am much more focused in my current job. I find that this already shows when I interact with my work colleagues and with my managers. So that is my second great experience about mentoring – you get more credible towards others!

As an example of being more credible: I had applied at my Company's Board for a course about management skills. My request got rejected by the Company Board, saying that the course was not relevant for my position as a legal counsel. I was disappointed. Had I not had the support of

Jacqueline, I would have let the matter go and forgotten about it. This time, however, she talked me through possibilities to get my course after all, she encouraged me not to let go of it. We discussed the reasons why the course could benefit my company. One day, arrived the occasion to tell the CEO himself why the course was necessary for me – and for the company. My speech was well-rehearsed, concise, to the point, with examples to illustrate my point ... the manager sat there after I held it and looked at me as if he saw me for the very first time. The feeling after that speech was priceless. It was my professional highlight for late 2008 ... and I am starting that management course this March!

Thank you, Marianne. Thank you, Jacqueline!

So, ladies, please take my humble opinion to heart: Forget the must-have handbag of the moment, or those cute shoes or where you want to go on your next vacation ... Get yourself a mentor instead and learn from her or him. Focus on what you want for yourself in the long run. Stand up for what you care for. Speak up. Those are the real must-haves for any woman who wants to further her career in an intelligent and long-term manner. Those must-haves, face it, ladies, have no season - as opposed to any handbag ...!

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