

Trestle Group Foundation coaching program:
**EMPOWERING WOMEN
ENTREPRENEURS IN EMERGING
ECONOMIES 2016**



Company: Ennbow
Coachee: Katarzyna Piasecki
Warsaw, Poland

TRESTLE GROUP
f o u n d a t i o n

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ENNBOW

Realizing the Potential of Talented Women

An outstanding group of female managers at Credit Suisse took on the challenge of coaching Katarzyna Piasecki, a Polish entrepreneur in the fashion industry. During the process, Piasecki received advice and tools which she is using to transform her company into a growing and profitable business.

After 5 years working in the financial sector in Germany, Katarzyna Piasecki decided to return to Warsaw. With a degree in Economics from the University of Bonn and solid experience in the area of Merger and Acquisitions, Piasecki had the skills and talent to find a promising position in a company in her home country. However, while preparing to approach the job market, she decided to change her initial plan and take another route: the entrepreneurship road.

It wasn't an easy decision, but it was part of a long process that started many years before. "When I was a kid I had a very vivid imagination, and many ideas about how to make money", she explains. Over the years and into adulthood, her interest in "what makes companies tick" had continued to grow. Therefore studying Economics made sense to her, even though Medicine could have been a smoother choice, since her parents are doctors. Also, fashion had been a hobby and a passion for a long period of time.

So, while evaluating working opportunities in Poland, she realized it was the right time to build her own business. In 2013, she founded ENNBOW, a fashion label that designs and produces clothes for working women using high-tech fabrics.

Piasecki applied her own experience of working in the finance industry to product development and design. "I faced many challenges when buying work clothes. Some were too boring. Others were too expensive. It is still a male-dominated environment", she says. ENNBOW's target group comprises busy professional women who play multiple roles in life. "They sit for long hours, travel a lot. They have family to take care



of. They need to follow a professional dress code, appear elegant, stay fresh and feel empowered.”

Aware of the risks involved in the operation, the economist decided to start small, using the extra space available in her flat to set up her office and showroom. She gradually built the first connections with suppliers and partners. She visited fashion fairs abroad, connected with fabric suppliers in France and with manufactures in Poland. Initially she counted on the support of a friend, also a fashion designer, to develop the first collections. More recently, Piasecki took on this role; she is now responsible for the design process.

The economist also used her own network to reach the first potential clients. Coming from the business world, she already had interesting connections and knew the challenges her friends and office colleagues faced when searching for appropriate clothing. Moreover, she started to spread the word about her products and ideas, taking part in business conferences and organizing meetings at ENNBOW’s showroom.

Now, ENNBOW clothes are available through its website, multi-brand retail shops in Poland, and, for specific periods of time, at pop-up shops at the headquarters of large companies in Poland, Germany, Switzerland and the UK.

In addition to the clothes, the company offers customized, interactive trainings and workshops (for groups and individuals) on dress codes, personal branding and image



Among our clients there are employees of top strategy consulting companies, international law firms, media corporations and NGOs.

Katarzyna Piasecki

strategy. “Among our clients there are employees of top strategy consulting companies, international law firms, media corporations and NGOs. By connecting women from diverse fields we help them enhance their network,” explains Piasecki.

In order to manage all activities, the Polish economist has relied on the work of four freelancers: two of them work full-time and two part-time. “Unfortunately, I had limited financial resources to start the business, so I could not hire as much staff as I would have liked,” she explains.

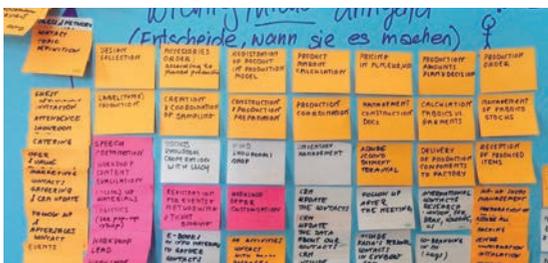
In this first phase, Piasecki accomplished several goals. For the medium term, the entrepreneur had a clear target: she wanted to make her company grow. And for that she needed help in some key areas.



The Coaching

One of the main goals of Empowering Women Entrepreneurs in the Emerging Markets Program is to help female entrepreneurs overcome business challenges and aid them in growing their companies. The Program provides skills-based coaching on a voluntary basis from one or more executives with expertise in different fields. In this case, Piasecki, founder of ENNBOW, was guided and mentored by a group of executives at Credit Suisse: Maike Klement, Team Lead IT Recruiting in Switzerland, Julia Sonderegger, Team Head Recruiting International Wealth Management and Daniela M. Vetro, Sector Head Claims Production within Tax Operations in the division of Swiss Universal Bank Operations.

The coaching sessions started in May 2016 and continued over a period of three months. Conference calls, face-to-face meetings, email exchanges and individual calls were part of the program. “Piasecki is a very motivated and confident entrepreneur. Since the beginning, we realized that she was ready to make things happen”, said Jeannette Weidmann, managing director of Trestle Group Foundation.



The Entrepreneur

Katarzyna Piasecki

Founder and CEO

35 years old

5 years experience working in the finance sector (M&As)

Married

Company

Ennbow is a style company that creates and produces clothing for working women using high-tech fabrics. The company was founded in 2013 in Warsaw, Poland. www.ennbow.com

Education

Katarzyna Piasecki holds a degree in Economics from the University of Bonn, Germany

Free time

Playing Tennis and Travelling



Facing the Challenges

Organization and Delegation

The first step was identifying the source of Piasecki's challenges. After initial discussions, the team of advisers hit on one key problem. The entrepreneur was suffering from a typical problem facing small business owners: she was concentrating too much of the work in her own hands, and it was overwhelming her.

"Piasecki is a very energetic and smart professional, but she was taking too much on herself", explains Maike Klement. It was clear to the coaching team that organization and delegation were two essential aspects that had to be tackled immediately. Piasecki needed tools and techniques to improve the way she was prioritizing the innumerable tasks she had to deal with, as do most entrepreneurs who feel overwhelmed by the many responsibilities that fall on their shoulders. These solutions would help her to be more focused and manage her time and team more effectively.

What to do: Piasecki was introduced to the Eisenhower Matrix. When using this Model, tasks are evaluated and prioritized using the following criteria: important /unimportant and urgent /not urgent. They are then placed in the according quadrants of the Matrix. "The method is simple and very efficient. I could start applying it immediately", said the entrepreneur. "With this tool in hand, I could filter the tasks better and manage my schedule wisely."

Piasecki knew most of the steps that needed to be taken to run her business. She had several spread-sheets and a good sense of the processes, but most of the information and the files were not well structured or organized.

Daniela M. Vetro

Formal Structure and Business Plan

Another common challenge for budding entrepreneurs is having a well-laid out business plan and process. They may know how to run their business, but they need to have a plan that is clear and systematic if they want to attract investors and grow. “Piasecki knew most of the steps that needed to be taken to run her business. She had several spread-sheets and a good sense of the processes, but most of the information and the files were not structured or organized”, explains Daniela M. Vetro. It is well known that entrepreneurs have to be comfortable taking decisions with less than perfect information. However, a more structured process and a business plan are indispensable if the entrepreneur aims to expand the business or raise money from investors.

What to do: The coaches invited Piasecki to work on a business plan, building up a document with all her goals and the strategy to reach them. The business plan is a very detailed report; producing it demands a lot of time, energy, and the collection and organization of data and processes. It also involves questioning and evaluating information. Initially Piasecki didn’t have much time available to immerse herself in this process. She was very busy working on the urgent daily demands. A proposed solution was to split the document in several chapters, and let her advance gradually.

“By brainstorming and sitting down, trying to figure out what to put in this business plan, you go into a different way of thinking about your company”, explains Maïke Klement.

**DAMN
GOOD
ADVICE**
The greatest advice I
was ever given



When your business grows, you will have more people impacting it, more processes, more financial aspects to consider.

Maïke Klement



“When we encouraged Katarzyna to look at the business plan, she was forced to go into her own processes and review what she was doing. She had to go through it and reconsider what she should do and what others should do.”

Klement goes further: “When your business grows, you will have more people impacting it, more processes, more financial aspects to consider. And the longer you wait to bring all this together, the more difficult it will get.” The recommendation from Klement is valid for all entrepreneurs: “The moment you start to have your business, create a little document and work on every now and then. Sit down, review and update it. And while you do so, reconsider processes and decisions: am I doing things right? Am I on track? Do I need to adapt anything?”

The first results were soon visible to the entrepreneur. “It has become a good document, with clear and consistent information. I’m glad we have something like this”, says Piasecki. In the following months, after the official end of the Program, the entrepreneur could count on further support from an expert in business strategy from Credit Suisse, who reviewed her business plan again and gave her further advice.

Marketing

On one hand, Piasecki was focused and running her business: she had a vision, a mission, innovative products and services. On the other, she had several questions on how to refine the brand’s message, how to build a story that stood above the competitors, how to

communicate the quality and uniqueness of her products. Piasecki knew the power of an efficient and well-targeted marketing and communications plan, but she also knew she needed guidance and feedback in that area. ENNBOW had to become more visible, more recognizable and more admired in order to reach more customers.

What to do: “It happens with many entrepreneurs: they already have a trusted customer base, but struggle to move beyond that, and market their products more broadly, to a larger audience”, explains Dana Smith, coach and former Managing Director of Trestle Group Foundation. Beside specific feedback on presentations and marketing materials, Dana Smith invited ENNBOW’s coaching team to go through a messaging and branding exercise. Through the RIBS (Relevant, Inevitable, Believable, Simple) Test, the team discussed key aspects related to the business, the products and the market approach. The objective was to review ENNBOW’s attributes and differentiators and align them with the company’s positioning and messaging. “The RIBS and the other tools helped us a lot. They worked as a roadmap”, says Piasecki.

The entrepreneur soon applied the discussions and conclusions to great effect. She found a new online marketing agency and together the team was able to re-launch ENNBOW’s website in 3 weeks. “Now our website is much more focused on presenting and selling our products,” she said.

Pop-up Shop

In addition to the intensive learning and the productive exchange with the coaches, Piasecki had the chance to open a pop-up shop in Zurich and therewith launch her brand in Switzerland. The temporary retail event took place on the 30th and 31st of August in one of Credit Suisse’s buildings in Zurich, a perfect location to reach bankers and business women. The pop-up shop was a success. “We know that one of the challenges of selling clothes online is that the clients can’t touch it or try it in advance. So the pop-up shop was a singular opportunity for clients to check the design, feel the fabrics and attest how comfortable the clothing pieces are”, explained Piasecki.

With the pop-up shop, Piasecki got very close to her target group in Switzerland, learned about its demands and preferences and got very helpful feedback on the brand and shopping experience. “Our collections really met the Swiss taste. The clients appreciated the comfort and functionality of our clothes.” Piasecki plans now to increase the regular mobile showrooms in different corporations and women’s events.

Building the Team

Piasecki, as many entrepreneurs, didn’t have the budget to hire full-time employees. So she decided to work with part-time collaborators and contractors. However, this can be a challenge, in particular when people don’t feel committed to the job. So she ended up doing – or redoing – a lot of work by herself.



The Pop-up Shop was a singular opportunity for clients to check the design, feel the fabrics and attest how comfortable the clothing pieces are.

Katarzyna Piasecki

What to do: “Our recommendation was to review the skills and experiences that were essential to the company. And then, with a more specific profile in mind, go to the market and search for the talents,” explained Julia Sonderegger. The results could be seen in a couple of days: “I’m already much more confident on what kind of people I need and, therefore, can make better choices,” said the entrepreneur. “And this saves me a lot of time and energy.”

Mentoring

Through the Program, Piasecki also had access to a mentor, Mirna Zereckli, Vice President and Head of Group Talent, at Danfoss, who helped her on personal issues. “It was an amazing opportunity to review my motivational factors, my decision taking process and how I manage my daily work load. It helped me to be more resilient”, said the entrepreneur.

Conclusion

In 2013, Piasecki decided to leave a more structured and secured life as a bank employee to run her own business. The driver of her decision was the dream to develop and produce comfortable, high-tech business attire for busy women professionals. Her idea was to blend technologically advanced fabrics, used in sports clothing, with classic design to create a modern and comfortable business wardrobe.

Since then, the entrepreneur worked hard to launch new collections, find partners, manage costs and build a trusted customer base. But after this initial phase, she had to overcome a bigger challenge: make her business grow. “Piasecki is very much like every entrepreneur with whom we have worked at Trestle Group Foundation. She was doing everything at once, juggling all the different demands, 24 hours a day”, says Dana Smith. “One of the biggest advantages of the Program was that it brought her some structure.”

Through the Empowering Women Entrepreneurs in Emerging Markets Program she had access to a variety of fundamental skills and experiences offered by accomplished executives. It was a unique experience for the executives as well; several of them related having learned a lot from the process. “I could see what it really means to be an entrepreneur. It was an amazing journey, with difficult and awesome moments,” said Daniela M. Vetro. “One of the lessons I learned is: make sure that the scope of a project is clearly defined right from the start.”

Managing certain aspects of the communication and different expectations were sometimes a challenge to the group, but also a lesson learned. “What we did was great, even though there were moments where cultural differences and communicating in a foreign language were very challenging, as it happens in many multicultural teams. These lessons can be applied every single day in our work”, explained Maïke Klement.

Finding the right balance throughout the process made a difference too. “I have learned that sometimes we can be a bit more relaxed during the process. If things don’t go as fast as we hoped, it is fine too”, explains Maïke Klement. “Piasecki was extremely happy with the tools and inputs we brought. It was an overachievement for her. And this is what counts in the end.”

In fact, the Program had a real impact on Piasecki’s performance. “Piasecki has gained a lot from the partnership with Credit Suisse and Trestle Group Foundation. Today she has additional leadership skills and a solid business plan to make her business grow”, said Weidmann. “She is very confident going forward and has already expanded her team during the project.”

Piasecki is indeed experiencing the first positive effects of the coaching program. “I’m so thankful to have this chance to exchange with experienced people. Most of the time, I was leading my business alone. With the Program, I could get another perspective, new inputs, ideas and tools”, said the entrepreneur. “I’m feeling much more empowered.”

The partnership between Trestle Group Foundation and Credit Suisse was built on a solid and fruitful cooperation. The commitment of CS and its leadership – providing resources and talents – created a real and relevant impact on Piasecki's business. Coaches worked on a volunteer basis for the Program while keeping up with their daily jobs.

The Benefits of the Program

8 Reasons to join the Program

Empowering Women Entrepreneurs in Emerging Marketing Program creates an impact in your team, business and community.

Improve Business Objectives:

- Amplify talent development and attract through skills-base volunteering
- Accelerate growth strategies and emerging market success
- Stimulate strategic mindset with exchange on innovation, entrepreneurial thinking, growth and operational excellence
- Collaborate across functions with a live business case with measurable outcomes
- Strengthen capabilities and relationships through partnerships

Reinforce Business Values:

- Emphasize corporate culture and responsibility
- Strengthen diversity of thinking and working
- Create meaningful stories and relationships, engaging with employees, suppliers, customers as individuals

The Trestle Group Foundation Program offers an opportunity to demonstrate the commitment of the company and of its employees to the society. It is also a real chance to help female entrepreneurs to build their long-term ability to run their business more more effectively. In addition, it works as a development platform for our female talents.

Laura Hemrika,
Head of Impact and Microfinance Capacity Building Initiative at Credit Suisse

Corporate partner team members and advisors

Beatrice Fischer

Head Communication & Marketing Swiss Universal Bank, Credit Suisse

Valerie Philips

COO for CRO Change (Risk division), CS

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Daniela M. Vetro (AVP)

Head Claims Production, SHTP3, EWE PMO & Business Structure, CS

Echo Lu

Steering Committee Member, Trestle Group Foundation

Funding Partner

Templeton Charity Foundation Switzerland

About Trestle Group Foundation

Organization

Trestle Group Foundation is an innovative nonprofit organization dedicated to creating and expanding sustainable economic opportunities in developing and emerging economies by supporting high potential women-led businesses.

Build on a new model of nonprofit support, and guided by the belief that entrepreneurship fuels the engine that drives economic opportunity, growth and social progress, Trestle Group Foundation works to empower women entrepreneurs in emerging economies.

The 20:20 Vision

With a goal to support 20'000 women entrepreneurs by 2020, Trestle Group Foundation is linking human capital, networks and resources to build sustainable pipelines and communities of women entrepreneurs.

The 20:20 Initiative is a combination of the Foundations' flagship Empowering Women Entrepreneurs Partnership Program for high potential women entrepreneurs and Connect & Accelerate, a training program focused on early-stage women led-businesses.

Sponsors & Partnerships

Trestle Group Foundation has been fortunate to earn the support of leading organizations including: COFRA Foundation, Cognizant Technology Solutions, Credit Suisse, Gübelin, HCL Technologies, HP, IBM, Microsoft, Odgers Berndtson, Pepsico, Symphasis, Triumph International, UBS and UN Women.

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