

LE FIGARO

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Mentors help women succeed

The WBMI Association and blue-chip companies support women



Martine Liautaud, who chairs the Women Business Mentoring Initiative (WBMI) supported Martine de Richeville (on the right), founder of Svelt'coaching.

“I was lucky to meet Alain Papiasse, Deputy COO at BNP Paribas and Head of CIB, and to discover what we had in common! Thanks to my mentoring, I’ve got more confidence in myself, especially for introducing myself to top-level professionals”, confides Siobhan Roche who heads up an emerging markets sales team in New York within CIB’s Fixed Income Department (CIB, Corporate and Institutional Banking, is one of BNP Paribas’s two divisions).

“If the 2kids 1bag adventure worked, it was thanks the mentoring”, confirmed Karen Bras who directed the leasing company for childrens’ gear, 2kids 1bag, that she set up in 2012.

These two testimonials in *Mentoring Culture, Helping women to succeed* (Eyrolles) by Martine Liautaud, Chair of the Investment Bank Liautaud & Cie and founder of Women Business Mentoring Initiative (WBMI), an association that supports women entrepreneurs for one year for free. The book sets out how mentoring and sponsoring enables women to boost their performance and get promoted.

A springboard to success

The WBMI Association advised 30-odd CEOs from companies with revenues of €1m to €30m. “With my two mentors, I progressed from feeling guilty about failure to feeling excited about renewal. My dealers were my life blood”, confesses Sophie Bramly who leads the production company SoFemmes.

Several major companies have adopted the method to help their women managers get promoted. In 2010, GDF Suez launched “GDF Suez Mentoring”. Orange set up a programme in 2011 and enrolls 80 senior managers each year. The telecoms operator extended the programme to middle managers and supervisors. “The trials were extremely positive and we decided to broaden the scope”, said Stéphane Richard, Chairman of Orange. Oracle France, subsidiary of the American software giant, Publicis and BNP Paribas all run similar programs.

But the women that take advantage of the advice of their mentors aren’t the only beneficiaries.

“Mentoring is also a powerful tool for mentors; our senior executives can now better understand the ambitions of our high potentials”, observes Gerard Mestrallet, Chairman and CEO of GDF Suez.