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Our mentors and mentees share why they find mentoring so valuable

MENTOR Anne Skipper AM

Anne Skipper AM has more than 20 years experience as a board director and chair. Some of her current directorships include Chair of Silver Chain RDNS Group, Director of the Qantas Foundation, Director of Plan International and Chair of Plan International Australia. Anne is also the Managing Director of corporate governance and strategic planning consultancy, Anne Skipper & Associates.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT BEING A MENTOR?

It was a privilege to mentor someone as enthusiastic and motivated as Katharina - she was eager to learn, take on new ideas and be challenged. Watching someone grow both as a leader in their field and as a young person in the community is an extremely fulfilling role.

WHAT'S THE HARDEST PART ABOUT BEING A GOOD MENTOR?

I don't view mentoring as hard however I am cognisant when mentoring, that my role is to "guide and suggest versus telling".

HAS IT BEEN A GOOD MATCH?

I believe mentoring is all about "a good relationship" and with Katharina that was exactly what it was. We both looked forward to meeting with each other, had fun and in many ways I learned a lot about the challenges young women still face in business today.

DO YOU THINK YOU'VE MADE A DIFFERENCE?

Over the year I believe I challenged Katharina's thinking and mindset to "step out of her comfort zone" and take on some things she wouldn't have normally done. In some part I think that resulted in her having more confidence to accept the promotion with the Property Council in Melbourne.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE SUCCESS IN MENTORING?

A successful mentoring relationship for me is defined by; setting clear expectations of each other, setting some targets or goals to aspire to and enjoying and respecting what each other bring to the relationship.

HAVE YOU HAD MENTORS IN YOUR LIFE AND HOW HAVE THEY SUPPORTED YOU?

I have had numerous mentors throughout my life and career - some formal and others informal. They have all been pivotal at certain stages in my career and have challenged and supported me on my journey and most of all they have remained friends whom I still admire and respect.

MENTEE Katharina Surikow

Katharina Surikow participated in the Emerging Leader Mentoring program as a Senior Policy Advisor at the Property Council of Australia. Having received First Class Honours and the Chancellors Letter of Commendation for her academic performance at the University of SA, Katharina worked at the Department of Trade and Economic Development before joining the Property Council. Here she worked in Policy and Business Environment unit and in the Office of the Economic Development Board. Katrina has since progressed her career and is now the Head of External Relations at Global Infrastructure Hub.

WHAT IS THE BEST PART OF YOUR JOB?

It is constantly changing and I am continually being confronted by new challenges and opportunities. I'm always learning - it never gets boring. I genuinely enjoy my work, and I'm surrounded by some great people.

WHAT DO YOU DO FOR FUN?

Having recently moved to Melbourne, 'fun' is exploring my new home and of course meeting new people. I love going out to the great restaurants and bars, the markets and galleries and of course the shopping! I love yoga and swimming, and am about to get back into rowing and try snowboarding for the first time. Spending time with family and friends is also very important to me.

IN YOUR CURRENT ROLE WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST CHALLENGE?

My greatest challenge is also the best part of my job - that there's always something different going on. There are also a lot of issues that I deal with that are very technical and complex, but I'm lucky enough to have easy access to the industry experts who can help.

WHAT WERE THE KEY OUTCOMES OF MENTORING FOR YOU AND THE PROPERTY COUNCIL?

I wouldn't be here in Melbourne, in this role, if it hadn't been for the mentoring. It helped clarify what I wanted to do with my career, and changed my thinking. In particular my own abilities and what was important to me. In some respects it pushed me out of my comfort zone, which has definitely been a benefit. It also strengthened my skills in critical thinking, negotiation and networking, and gave me a lot more confidence in myself.

HAS THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP MET YOUR EXPECTATIONS?

It exceeded them. At first I think I was looking for guidance and someone to bounce career ideas off. But it really developed into something much broader than that - the 'work' I did with my mentor changed my attitude on a number of levels, and gave me support that I didn't even know I needed until it was there.

WHAT ASPECTS HAVE BEEN MOST VALUABLE?

Having someone who was independent, and didn't know me at all, but who at the same time had my best interests at heart and was purely interested in helping me however she could. I found that I could speak about anything, and that it was a great way to test my ideas by talking through them with someone who had such a different perspective. I've learnt so much from my mentor and I'll always be grateful for the time and effort she invested in me and this process.

