

Inside the Network

p a r t o f a s e r i e s

Profession Profile

Name: Selma Prodanovic

Profession: constant progress ?

I do not like defining myself through a single profession as I enjoy the diversity. In my company Brainswork – ideas in progress I am a personal branding and soft skills trainer, business mentor and networker. At the Tourismus Schule Wassermannngasse 21 I teach marketing and communication and I am also coach and member of the gender mainstreaming steering committee. Just recently I was named Programme Selector for the No Limit Advertising Festival 2005. I write articles for marketing magazines and lecture at various events.

What is your background?

I was born in Sarajevo, went to school there, but also to a French Lycee in Tunisia and later in Madrid, where I then started my international marketing studies at an American University, and graduated back in Sarajevo. To round it up I am writing my dissertation at the WU in Vienna, on Knowledge Transfer in Informal Networks (including women networks). Through the years I also attended more than 80 different lectures, workshops and seminars on various topics (more to come).

I look back at 14 years of experience in marketing, advertising (Young & Rubicam, Ogilvy & Mather), financial consulting, TVC and film production (Neue Sentimental Film), teaching and training.

How did you choose your profession?

I had no choice. After my second child it seemed my career was coming to an end. Film production was not my “dream job” anymore, my CV was not straight enough for marketing and it showed no clear “profession” - in other words the total “who am I” depression. After a while, I realized that exactly

this variety of experiences; the languages I speak (English, German, French, Spanish, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian and some Italian) and my capability to transfer knowledge from one area to another were my strengths. I started developing several business concepts (some with the help of various WCN members like Caroline and Sybille) and was soon confronted with the fact that I needed either money or time to turn them into business. I opted for time and took the teaching job in Fall 2002, started my doctorate studies in spring 2003, printed the Brainswork – ideas in progress business cards end of 2003 and by now I am my best reference. Some of my concepts are “in progress”, and there are still many things I want to do but as I believe that we set our own limits it is all just a matter of time...

Describe a typical day at work

In short: creatively efficient. My job is to combine usual with unusual solutions/strategies customized to my clients needs.

Simplified, my work consists of developing concepts and delivering soft skills trainings (like presentation skills, networking, motivation, entrepreneurial skills and so on) as well as developing marketing, branding and communication strategies with my clients through more sophisticated “brainsworking” sessions. Most communication is per e-mail, which makes life much easier, but meeting clients face to face is extremely important. Also, networking is a regular part of my work (at least one lunch and one evening a week).

My clients are quite diverse, from educational institutions like BFI, through Greenpeace, an art shop or science magazine to advertising agencies and advertising festivals like the

No Limit Advertising Festival where I was member of the jury and speaker. I will do it again in March 2005 but in addition I am responsible for the festival programme. This means I have to develop a concept for the programme, which besides the competitive segment has a very strong educational part; decisions are to be made not only on content but also the format (lectures, workshops, panels, exhibitions...). The most important part is selecting the speakers and negotiating with them.

I am a speaker at various events like other advertising festivals (Idea Festival in Novi Sad and FESTO in Opatija) or women networks (Alpha Giovane).

Quite often I mentor projects like for example “Ask Sarajevo” a project developed by a team of Danish Kaospilots in Sarajevo.

And of course when teaching, I prepare for the courses, lecture, attend conferences, prepare tests and so on; also attending further trainings like coaching or making interviews on gender mainstreaming is an important part of the job.

Do you travel?

Yes, I travel for trainings or lectures mainly to Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia where I speak the local languages.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I made my job myself based on my strengths and my interests – sharing knowledge and communicating with people. Also, I can afford to choose what I want to do and with whom. If I like, and only if I do like the project and the people involved I care and with it deliver premium results. A large network gives me this freedom of choice.

Profile continued on page 7