

YOUR INSTITUTE

Our mentoring relationships



Kirsten Tisdale



Danielle Drozd



Mentoring schemes offer protégés the opportunity to grow in confidence

Kirsten Tisdale (KT), principal of logistics consulting company **Arcia Limited**, and Danielle Drozd (DD), Innovation Manager, **Kuehne & Nagel**, speak to *Focus* about the Women in Logistics mentoring scheme, now incorporated into the CILT mentoring scheme.

Why did you join the mentoring programme?

KT: I've worked in logistics for my whole career and realised too late that it would have probably been a good idea to have a mentor myself. I had already informally mentored a couple of people in logistics roles, which had fizzled out as the people concerned needed less input. So when someone sent round a reminder about the Women in Logistics mentoring scheme I signed up as a potential mentor.

DD: I was about six years into my supply chain logistics career and felt that I had no direction. I had such energy and really wanted to push myself, as I knew that ultimately my lack of confidence was holding me back. The environment that I'd worked in for the past six years was male dominated and at times I felt inadequate and inexperienced. I saw the Women in Logistics mentoring scheme advertised and felt that this could really help me on my new journey.

Why did you choose each other as a mentor/protégé?

KT: We didn't and our paths hadn't crossed before the Women in Logistics mentoring scheme matched us. That was

back in early 2011, so it's proved to be a good match. What surprises many people is that we didn't actually meet for well over a year. Our early mentoring relationship was carried out entirely through scheduled phone calls, about once a fortnight.

DD: The scheme put us together as a match. After speaking with Kirsten for the first time and setting the scene as to why we wanted to enter into such a relationship, I quickly felt that Kirsten would really help me along my journey.

What did you hope to get out of the scheme and are your expectations being met?

KT: I've tended to leave it to Danielle to lead, both in terms of frequency of contact and what she wanted to discuss. As a mentor, some of what you have to offer has to do with having experienced certain situations before, but much comes from a fresh pair of eyes and the ability that gives to see alternative approaches. Our relationship has morphed over time, so that now we're in contact less regularly, but do meet in person, generally over a coffee.

DD: Advice and direction more than anything. At that time my manager was based in Belgium and so we didn't often get time to talk about development. I'd set myself the objective of networking more to grow in confidence and Kirsten guided me into that with really valuable advice on events to attend and setting an intention for each, so that time isn't wasted. She also worked through specific role-related

challenges I was having around team management, conflict and presentations to key stakeholders.

Would you recommend the scheme?

KT: I'm hardly likely to say no, after being involved for seven years, but some advice that I give to others is that, certainly for the first few years, we were very organised and committed. We always put the next date in the diary. If it became obvious one of us couldn't make it, we'd rearrange, rather than leave it hanging. I think that's one of the things that made our particular relationship work well.

DD: Yes, absolutely. My time with Kirsten has been invaluable. Her experience, advice and direction really helped me to build confidence and ultimately achieve success in my own career. It was also great her being female, because she was part of the world of supply chain and logistics and she'd experienced having similar thoughts and feelings to me. She was and continues to be a successful and experienced woman in the logistics profession and it's been an absolute honour to have had her as my mentor. Over the years, I've also had male mentors and they bring a different perspective, especially around communicating more directly with male stakeholders. I would recommend a mix, someone within your organisation who understands the culture and politics, but also someone external who can bring a different perspective.

What is the key lesson you can take from your relationship?

KT: I've been bowled over at times by Danielle's approach to life and work – a combination of optimism and grit – and so she has also influenced me. I'm not someone that has any trouble applying myself to a task, but I've come off calls with Danielle and returned to whatever I was doing with fresh energy.

DD: Whilst it's a powerful development tool for a mentee, I think there are lessons and opportunities for both parties. My key takeaway from the experience is that talking is powerful, not only for you to understand your direction clearly, but also to get another perspective that might ultimately be a career game-changer. ☺