



A BLOOMING INSIGHTFUL AND INVALUABLE MENTORING PROGRAMME

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IN 2020 TWO JAA COLLEAGUES
EMBARKED ON THE BLOOM EXCHANGE
MENTORING PROGRAMME.

THE EXCHANGE IS A CROSS-
MENTORING PROGRAMME THAT
MATCHES INDUSTRY-LEADING MEN
WITH BLOOM MEMBERS TO BREAK
DOWN THE BARRIERS
CONTRIBUTING TO THE GENDER
DIVIDE IN THE INDUSTRY.

WE SAT DOWN WITH THEM TO FIND
OUT HOW THEY FOUND THE
PROGRAMME.

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fascinating to be
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Jonathan

1. WHY DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THE BLOOM EXCHANGE MENTORING PROGRAMME?



JN: I make no bones about it. I'm a middle aged white, sheltered, public school educated male travelling down a well-trodden agency path. I had never really faced adversity nor was particularly empathetic towards challenges other face. As I was approaching my 20th year in the industry a serious illness shook me out of my rut and it sounds trite. But for the first time I wanted to see if my experience in the industry could benefit others. Gina had sent information about Bloom to the senior team and I wanted to be a part of it.

GM: I'm a 30 year old female and have been in the industry for 8 years. I come from what may be called a disadvantaged background, brought up by a single parent in a council flat. Perhaps due to this, I have always been open about my thoughts on inclusion and equal opportunities and sometimes the lack of these in our industry. To explore gender dynamics in the workplace men need to be involved in the conversation too so I felt compelled to promote the Bloom Exchange programme in my workplace.



2. DID YOU HAVE ANY EXPECTATIONS ABOUT WHAT THE PROGRAMME WOULD BE LIKE? AND WHAT WAS IT ACTUALLY LIKE?

JN: My initial understanding of a mentoring programme was wildly wrong and outdated. I believed I would be imparting my years of knowledge and life experience and therefore help some younger, inexperienced person navigate their way through the industry. The programme was shared mentoring and rather than doing the lecturing I was matched with a mentor who was as experienced as I was.

"To explore gender dynamics in the workplace, men need to be involved in the conversation too." Gina

GM: I wasn't sure how cross mentoring would work and I think I was expecting to have some uncomfortable conversations around my awareness of people being 'the only one in room'. Be that the only senior woman or anyone who's from a different background compared to the majority in the workplace. However, we actually agreed on a lot of points and spoke more about what we felt needs to be done as an industry to make changes. Improving inclusivity needs be active, ensuring everyone feels comfortable and confident to contribute. When it comes to the recruitment process widening the talent pool is imperative.

3. WHAT WERE YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF THE PROGRAMME?

JN: The exchange opened up a refreshingly honest exchange with my fellow mentor. As well as exploring any causes of gender divide in our respective organisations it highlighted behaviour I had subconsciously perpetrated whilst never considering the implications of my actions. It was fascinating to be able to compare experiences and discuss in such a candid and open environment.



GM: It was great to have someone to talk to outside of my usual network but in a similar area of the industry. It also gave me a better understanding of the expectations on men in the industry too. We only managed to find time for a few sessions in the year but within those we covered subjects around gender dynamics but also supporting all parents at work (not just mums), social mobility and inclusion in many other ways.

4. WHAT DID YOU TAKE AWAY FROM THE PROGRAMME?

JN: The whole experience was invaluable. I learnt more about myself than I imparted. We talked openly and honestly about work, home and life. It offered me so much in how I work with colleagues on a day-to-day capacity and far more awareness as to how my actions affect others. It totally changed my perception and understanding of mentoring.

"Supporting each other can allow everyone to bring their whole selves to work." Gina

GM: I found the programme really insightful and got some great takeaways from the closing event too. A huge point that I got from it was that we need to create more safe spaces where people are able to discuss topics without the fear of judgment or 'getting it wrong'. The fear of saying the wrong thing leads to nothing being said at all which in turn means nothing changes. Supporting each other can allow everyone to bring their whole selves to work.

Gina Miller is an Account Director and Jonathan Newton is Chief Client Officer at John Ayling & Associates.

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