

ERASMUS+ Programme 2015 – KA2 Adult Education Project n°: 2015-1-ES01-KA204-015937
Document name: Interviewing entrepreneurial women
Partner: Università Popolare di Firenze, UPF, ITALY
Author: Cristina Demartis

**Employment and Women on the 21st century in Europe:
From Household economy to SME economy (Small and Medium enterprises)
MUPYME Project**

INTERVIEWING ENTREPRENEURIAL WOMEN

Tiziana Marchi –Firenze-Italy



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Identification

Tiziana Marchi, 58, is the director of Polimoda, where she has been working for 20 years.

Polimoda is an Institute of fashion, design, marketing and business, an international center of training with laboratories alternate to lessons and to stages in firms of the Tuscan region.

It's a model of school alternative to University, based on labs, and it is in touch with the main fashion firms of Italy. Polimoda has got 65 employees and more than 100 collaborators. The students are 1300, mainly women, and women are the maximum part of the staff.

Tiziana meet us in her office, to show us around her Institute, considered last year one of the 6 best Fashion Institutes in the world, in the distinguished building where it is placed. Then she shows us the rich library, digit, the labs and the cafeteria, where the interview continues.



She has started working soon, at the age of 15. Temporary jobs for 10 years, such as dressmaker's assistant, model, secretary and stand assistant in fairs; she was also storekeeper in a technical school for 8 months.

She is satisfied of every work experience and says she has learned something from every one, such as the expertise and the specific language of each profession.

Reviewed by: Cristina Demartis

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At the age of 21 she started to collaborate with the Women Center of Documentation in Bologna, Association Centro Orlando, starting almost by chance to be the digital documentarist of the library. It was her political involvement to allow her to learn that profession.

In the same years she was a student of Philosophy at Bologna University and was learning English in the evening at the public school of the Municipality.

Beginning

Apart from temporary jobs, Tiziana's first real employment as a manager in Polimoda had started almost by chance, when a friend told her that the Institute was looking for a documentarist for the Library going to start in Florence. Having been selected, she started her career in Polimoda digitizing catalogues and books of the Library, and after 10 years she was the deputy director.

It has not been simple to work on her image to be considered reliable and serious. Having succeeded in being known for her expertise and for wanting to work, she became responsible of the Library.

Tiziana has been able to seize the opportunity and was available to do her very best and to risk, she changed town, from Bologna to Firenze, and working site, a bit irrational maybe, but always with passion and alert to the opportunities she perceived.

Consolidation

In the meanwhile Polimoda was developing in number of students and of employees, so Tiziana started to study again, dealing with Human resources, personnel management and legal issues.

So she became operative director in a few years.

Thanks to her flexibility, curiosity and passion for working, she was involved again, in order to face new challenges for improving her position, also economic. At this stage-the deputy director says- she was in need of legal and economic training; so she began to study again and invented new strategies to improve her employment position.

Meanwhile she had two children and had separated from her husband and therefore she was very fond of investing in the work. As a result she devoted little time to her family, the other side of the entrepreneur woman who gives up part of her private life to concentrate on work.

In moments of doubt and uncertainty her friends helped her; at work she disputes always with collaborators to avoid errors. She has always got the practical sense and willingness to discuss,

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both helping her in private life as well as at work, in addition to giving her a capacity to resist and fight in difficult moments.

The future

Because of her story of woman and entrepreneur, who had to sacrifice affections because of work, she sees her future in a positive way, because she wants, from now on, to devote herself to the family, to her own life and to travel, more than to her career.

She wants to live together with her beloved ones, devoting them the time she didn't have before. The changes she designs are now more connected to her family than to her job: children growing up and becoming autonomous, relatives to look after, to move house and live in the country. She is aware of the need of weaving friendly relations, and, at work, to keep abreast of new ways of human resource management.

Enterprising women

To be a woman has allowed her to assess honestly what she could and what she couldn't do, to invest and to convert when the situations change.

To manage alone her family has given her a practical sense, organization, handling of time and of the family budget. This makes her say *“a house is a small firm, it needs planning and management of details. It's a continuous learning by doing, a training of pragmatism and problem-solving. We are multitasking. All listed features are entrepreneurial characteristics!”*

Women must be aware that many job opportunities exist. They must just seize the opportunities, develop passions and believe in their own ideas, risk, get involved, get out of habits, change the focus to change the view of things. They have to invest on their “soft skills”, on relations, organization, time planning.

In time of troubles, if they need help, they don't have to be ashamed to ask a doctor, a psychologist, a friend or a business consultant; problems must be faced immediately with courage. In the other side, it is necessary that also firms understand that women need a flexible timetable, part-time jobs, permissions for their children and the family members. Also for this reason that women have to sit at the controls and in administration tips.

Tiziana would continue to talk for hours about her work, history and life choices; at the end, she thanks for the interview: it allowed her to put together and reflect on an important part of her life.