

Female Empowerment Program (FEMP)

In December 2021, the Diversity Circle of the PMI Germany Chapter e.V. created a first draft of our “Female Empowerment Program” (FEMP) being built on two pillars:

- 1) Participants should be distributed over small groups to promote their mutual collaboration and support.
- 2) Workshops should be offered and organized for all groups to discuss relevant topics for all participants.

The FEMP objectives had been defined in advance:

- encouragement of women in project management,
- increase of their professional network, and
- knowledge and experience exchange.



Source: Unsplash

The members of the Diversity Circle were totally convinced that **experienced female project leaders**, who usually attended our events, would actively collaborate in such a “Mentor Program for Women”. However, our plan was to strengthen their self-confidence through their experience as mentors in our program in order to make them aware of their abilities to be a mentor even for men. Due to the high expected benefit for **less experienced female project leaders**, their participation in our program turned out to be very attractive.

So, we had the structure, the objectives, and the target group. FEMP could be kicked off. In March 2022, we fired the starting signal with 18 participants as an online event. Currently, in cooperation with PMI UK, the second edition is ongoing with 20 participants. During this journey, we have learnt a lot!

Our first finding was that to get the best from such an empowering program, none of our ideas were as important as the participants’ well-being. Independently of our good intentions to define the concept, if there was anything that was not suitable for the whole group, it had to be adjusted immediately. For example, the idea of a hierarchical structure on the roles “mentor” and “mentee” was discarded at once. Even female project managers with more than 10 years of experience were not 100% sure of taking the mentor role. Here, it should be mentioned that there is a male connotation of the term: Mentor was Odysseus’ friend. When Odysseus left for the Trojan War, he placed Mentor in charge of his son, Telemachus, and of his palace (“Odyssey” of Homer). Thus, we decided to call the participants assigned to the same group “partners”.

After our FEMP Kickoff, we encouraged the participants to take part in the **Speed Dating**. In this event, each woman had the opportunity to shortly present herself and to share her expectation of the program and what she could offer and contribute. Afterwards, all participants provided their individual list of preferences via a personal message

to the moderator who could then form the groups based on that information. Interestingly, we realized that a fair solution was to assign at least three members to each group. This “magical number” allowed the partners to challenge and support themselves and to network with each other without any hierarchy. From this point, the groups were self-organized for exchanging knowledge and experience. Another positive side effect of having groups of three was the fact that a planned meeting could take place even if one of the partners could not join at the last minute.

In parallel, we organized different workshops for all groups, so that all FEMP participants could meet regularly. The topics were chosen directly by the participants to cover their interests. We had workshops about various topics, for example: “Imposter Syndrome”, “Conflict Management”, “LinkedIn as a Career Path”, “Challenges for Women in PM”, “Leveraging Collaborative Strengths”, etc. In the currently running FEMP edition, we also introduced so-called “Interactive Sessions”. Those sessions are aimed at the members of the same group preparing a topic together and presenting it to the rest of the audience.



Source: Pixabay

Diversity – , i.e., different locations, nationalities, professional experiences, work positions, professional and cultural background, has enriched the small groups as much as the discussions in the big audience, and finally, the Female Empowerment Program itself.

At this stage, it needs to be mentioned that from the beginning of FEMP there is an agreement for keeping confidentiality, respect, and integrity, which must be confirmed and signed by all parties. FEMP continues and keeps evolving. The partners’ satisfaction during the program is fundamental to guarantee the program’s success. Feedback is always appreciated and considered for the further development of FEMP. Now, with our results, we can say that each FEMP edition has been carefully tailored to the participants’ situation. **We bring the structure and the high-level objective, and we rely on the participants contributing the content and the personal benefit.**

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