

Maite Usón

(MBA 85)

“You have to think about your own professional life”



Maite Usón bids farewell as a contributor to Esade Alumni Careers and brings to a close a successful career as a consultant, mediator and trainer. Here she talks to Iñaki Ocaña (Lic&MBA 06), Esade Alumni Global Relations & Careers Director, about her time at Esade.

You've been working with Esade for 35 years and with Esade Alumni for 20 years. Can you tell us about how you started out in the Alumni Association? My most active involvement in the Association began in the 1990s. Andersen Consulting and the Association together with Esade decided to undertake a study on "The Manager of the Future". I was responsible for overseeing the project on behalf of Andersen and worked with the alumni who were the driving force behind it and lecturers at the School.

What changes have you seen in the Association since you took over running it until today? The Association has strongly supported Esade over the course of its journey. It

has brought in major changes in all areas for action and most of all it has expanded abroad.

Looking at the Career Services, where did the idea for the Senior Programme come from and how has it evolved to turn into the Career Boost Programme? Right from the start, the Association's guiding principle has been to support its members in their professional careers. The initiatives started up over 20 years ago and were highly innovative for the time; they included arranging meetings between potential entrepreneurs (alumni) and SMEs looking to divest or sell their businesses. We also began to liaise with recruitment organisations and consultants to help alumni find

new positions. Then in 2005, the Association began delivering specific support to the group of senior staff in their professional transition. A work team was set up with alumni of which I was a member along with Marion Suffert, an Esade contributor and professional outplacement consultant, and we devised a seminar inspired by this new methodology addressed to senior professionals. The first was held in April 2006. Since then, the content has been tailored to this group and more than 100 events have been held with me as the facilitator.

As a specialist in career consultancy, what kind of people and situations have you come across in the course of running this programme over the years

(examples of profiles, significant cases, etc.)?

Basically, there are two kinds of participants: professionals who have quit their companies, usually after more than 10 or 15 years of service and with little experience in looking for other opportunities; and people who need a career change, mainly away from their current company. They are usually highly qualified professionals and used to managing complexity, but when confronted with a potential career change they become extremely emotional. As a result, they get a mental block which doesn't help them to approach the situation in the way they are used to dealing with their work. This programme's main input has been to provide them with a tried and tested approach which enables them to work through their initial confusion and take action more calmly. In these change scenarios, people often opt to stay in the same job, although others also seize the opportunity to make a change that will bring them greater professional growth. There is something else which is pretty common, and that is thinking that change can only happen away from the company where you are working. It's entirely understandable for people to look for new experiences after several years in an organisation. Yet the company itself can sometimes provide changes which are hard to come by in the jobs market.

What do you take away from your time as the programme's facilitator?

Without a doubt, the human experience and the bonds that were forged. In many cases they are still there today. The number of participants in each edition of the programme had to be small, around 10, and the atmosphere we created was very special with a lot of camaraderie. I learned a lot from the participants. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who took part for their willingness to share their experiences.

How do you think the jobs market has changed over the last 20 years?

The jobs market is very broad. Perhaps the most important thing for senior profiles in business has been the ability to keep up with the changes brought about by globalisation and digitalisation. Equally,

the market has learned to appreciate senior experience. Meanwhile, in the programme we have tried to get across to candidates that they had to be seen as professionals who could adjust to the new circumstances. The most important thing is having learned to convey how experience can be transferred to new situations.

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What career advice would you give to the new generations of alumni? You have to think about your own professional life in order to recognise your skills and the experience you have gained. You also need to know how to express what you have to offer as a professional and be able to put it across effectively. This is the cornerstone of professional development. In my experience, I can say that you always achieve what you firmly believe you can achieve. In short: we're going back to the classic inscription on the frontispiece of the temple of Delphi: know thyself, and be confident in your potential.

Career Boost Programme

This programme is intended for executives who need an action plan for the next stages in their career. If you have ever thought about designing a marketing plan to improve your job-hunting prospects, you are looking for a method for pinpointing strategies to achieve your goals or you need guidance in order to focus your search, then this is the programme for you.

<https://www.esadealumni.net/es/desarrollate/programa-lidera-tu-carrera>

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Now you're embarking on a new stage in your life; what would you like your relationship with Esade Alumni to be like? I'm happy to have accomplished the missions I was given and to have done so responsibly, diligently and honestly. From now on I'd like to be just another member and take part in all the activities where I can chip in with my experience such as mentoring and coaching. I don't have enough time to do everything I'd like to do. But I would like to take this chance to thank all the participants in the Transition/Boost programme, the Alumni professionals and in particular the ones at Careers, and the lecturers and staff at Esade who have supported me over the years.

