Be afraid and do it! Who can understand it better than moms?

An exclusive interview with founders of the foundation Mamo Pracuj: Joanna Godfryd and Agnieszka Czmyr-Kaczanowska on the occasion of the International Women's Day.

From the left: Joanna Godfryd and Agnieszka Czmyr-Kaczanowska, photo: MamoPracuj.pl

Special material on the occasion

of the International Women's Day

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Eklektika - Experts in Language Education for Business

Before you read:

- *What do you think Mamo Pracuj does? Have you heard of it before?*
- *Are you a member of any professional organizations or communities? If so, which ones?*
- *What challenges are facing mothers who want to go back to work?*

Read our exclusive interview with founders of the foundation Mamo Pracuj: Joanna Godfryd and Agnieszka Czmyr-Kaczanowska on the occasion of the International Women's Day.

Eklektika: What does Mamo Pracuj do? How did it all start?

JG - it's a long story and a long friendship. We got to know each other (me and Agnieszka) when we were students, at the Cracow University of Economics. What brought us together was travelling, parties and common friends. After the University we worked in completely different jobs. Agnieszka was in the NGO sector and I worked for private companies. We both set up families and gave birth to our older daughters. In 2010 we both had new babies and it is the time when the Mamo Pracuj story started. Agnieszka had a supportive employer who gave her opportunity to work from home, to work part-time. When I wanted to come back to my work I could only work from the office, one hour away from my home, and forget any flexibility. So I decided to look for another job, a more mother-friendly one. We faced completely different attitudes of our employers. In the same time our friends also had babies and also wanted to work, but not necessarily 11 hours a day, she wanted flexibility. We noticed that part time work, work from home is very popular in other countries, and mums are considered to be a valuable employee, not "a problem". We decided to do something that will help other mums to balance work and family life. We wanted to give inspiration, educate, show possibilities. And we decided to start a portal which can reach mums from all of Poland. From the very beginning we wanted to act on-line. And it was the beginning of Mamo Pracuj.
Our aim was also to make Mamo Pracuj our workplace, flexible and friendly for our families. Now we have ca 100K users and do great things every day!

EKL: What are your goals for 2018?

ACK: work, work a more work! But, to be more precise, we have a few directions that we would like to follow:
1. Having even more interesting texts published on our portal www.mamopracuj.pl.

2. Starting an online course with the working title "How to find a dream job for a mother in the 21st century" - it will be an additional chance for us to share our knowledge and experience. Very soon we start with beta tests of that course, so please keep your fingers crossed.
3. Expand our Database of Mom-Friendly Employers - were we gather information about those employers who care about mothers and fathers at work eg. offer flexible working hours, home office, extra days-off for family matters.
4. Develop the project #MamoPracujwIT that encourages women to enter IT companies and change their career path.
5. Cooperate with new employers that are ready to look for great employees among mothers.
6. Social actions that help moms: creating a great CV, starting one's own businesses, providing opportunities to discuss career paths with professionals etc.

Our foundation is also open for new ideas, including unexpected ones ;-) And every year we do more than we have planned (laughing)

EKL: How has the perception of working mothers changed in recent years in Poland?

ACK: Despite all changes on the labour market eg. the low unemployment rate and workforce shortages, there is a quite big group of women who are currently not economically active. They are stay-at-home mums or they take care of elderly people. In addition, the stereotype that the most important role of a woman is to take care of the family while the men should earn money, is still present. The key point is that mothers need to be supported while entering the labour market and combining different roles. That is why we aim to increase the awareness of flexible job opportunities among mothers as well as employers and to increase the rate of employment among mothers. We also promote work-life-balance or the more trendy work-life-integration and economic independence. We build a positive

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image of mothers as reliable and experienced employees, educate employers about practices of supporting moms at work, show how diversity in teams can be fruitful for the whole company, facilitate networking among mums and employers motivate and encourage mums to undertake action and change their professional lives; build an online community of mums.

EKL: What are some obstacles - if any - that women face when trying to enter the IT industry?

JG: Women say: I am too old (I am 29, am I too old to change my career?) I have a background in the humanities, etc. First we should stop thinking like this. People with background in the humanities are also needed in the IT sector. People who are 30+ or 40+ can change their career! They may be too old to start a ballet career, not an IT one.

A few weeks ago I had a conversation with Anna, who wanted to become a software tester and she went to labour office to ask for funding for a course. And what is it that she heard from the clerks? IT? Oh it is for men. Don't you want to go for a cosmetic course? And this conversation took place in 2017! Not in 1997! That's very sad.

EKL: How can women with children join the IT revolution?

JG: The IT sector in Poland needs ca 50K people immediately (according to widely known surveys). Women are 50% of the workforce/population, so they should be considered as potential employees immediately, without a doubt.
Luckily (let's leave behind the labour office case), companies noticed that they need women in their teams (it simply is profitable for companies), and encourage women to join them. We cooperate with several employers who organize meetings for women interested in joining them (Nationale-Nederlanden, GSK IT, Intel Technology, Nokia Wrocław), offer trainings for women or want to educate women (a series of workshops and a webinar with Fujitsu, Accenture).

EKL: Can you prepare for a career in IT on your own, studying from home?

JG - Sure that you can - if you are highly motivated and can keep your motivation at a high level. Studying on your own can be more difficult because you need to motivate yourself and solve the problems by yourself. All the knowledge is on the Internet, but the question is if you have the time and patience to search for it? Sometimes it is better to work with someone, to take a course and to take advantage of someone's knowledge and advice. And to save time. Being a mum I would choose someone who would help me to save my time (laugh).

It is also good to go on various meet-ups, events and workshops. There are plenty of such events in big cities. You get to know people who are similar to you, are interested in the same subject, or want to learn the same things. Going to meetings is a great start for everyone who wants to start an IT career.

EKL: Working from home - is that a good idea?

JG - It is a great idea, but it is not easy. We sometimes meet women who think that working from home means typing on a computer with a one hand and cuddling a baby with the other. And it looks good only on stock photos (laugh) Not in reality. You can work with your child at home only occasionally, when your child is sick, or the babysitter has a fever. Otherwise you need a babysitter/someone who can offer the child 100% attention, who takes care of your child when you work in another room. Or you can work from home when the child is in kindergarten.

Working from home is great since you do not have to commute to work and waste time to stay in a traffic jam. It often gives great flexibility (when you are a freelancer). But also requires strong personality - you must be focused on your goals and forget about distractions which may (or rather will) occur - an unexpected visit of a neighbour, laundry to do, cleaning the house "in the meantime" etc.

I love working from home and I really appreciate this, but from time to time it is good to see your coworkers, or when you a freelancer - to see other adults. That's why we (Mamo Pracuj team) work 4 days a week from home, and once a week we meet in a coworking office in the centre of Krakow.

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EKL: Do you have any special words of wisdom for women who would like to join the workforce or make a significant change in their career?

ACK: People say: do what you love! But this is only half true. Sometimes it is more complicated, and mothers understand it very well that there are situations when you have to decide what is more relevant, more appropriate for you, for your family, in your particular situation and at this particular time. We like to say (even in our team): "Be afraid, and do it!" The first step is the most difficult… Who can understand it better than moms?

Thank you! Interviewers: Iwona Braun-Nowak & Joswrany McEwan | Eklektika Language Means Business

TASK1 : Comprehension and discussion.

- What is the objective of Mamo Pracuj?
- How – according to the interview - has the perception of working mothers changed in recent years in Poland?
- Do you agree with the views shared in this interview? Why/Why not?
- In your opinion, is working from home a good idea?

TASK 2: Watch the video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqrfPCGo2aQ **and answer the following questions:**

▶ she++ The Documentary - Good Girl Gone Geek

1. **What deters women from being interested in Computer Science?**

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2. What made the creator of She++ change her career paths?

3. Why is it important to encourage women to take up Computer Science?

4. What is the most important thing in Computer Science?

5. What career paths are available for a Computer Science graduate?

6. How did the interviewed women feel when they took their introduction to Computer Science class in university? Why?

7. What advice is given to people who want to try something new such as Computer Science?

8. Why study Computer Science?

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