

Profile

This is Ground Control...to Grenoble businesses

MICKEY Farrance, president of Working Women's Network of Grenoble (WWNG) used to communicate with astronauts - now she uses her skills in business.

Director of communications at the biotech company Genostar, she is a former member of the Mission Control team at the NASA Ames Research Center, where she liaised with Spacelab astronauts in the 1990s.

"I had originally gotten my degree in communications, but the 1969 moon landing made such a big impression on me when I was growing up, that I wanted to work for NASA," said Ms Farrance, who was born in the 1950s in mid-state New York.

She studied for an additional degree in aerospace engineering and went to work for NASA in the Silicon Valley region where other career projects included the Shuttle Program and the International Space Station.

When contractual mergers started to replace business as usual at NASA, Ms Farrance decided to leave aerospace. Sensing a golden opportunity in Silicon Valley with the emerging Dotcom scene, she started her own event management business. "As the Valley did better, so did I," she said.

The profits helped her to realize her next dream - that of moving abroad.

"When I was in high school, I went to Iran and lived with a family through an exchange program," she said, "It was the first time that I was exposed to the idea that not everyone wants to be us or not everyone is like us. Since then I have had a slightly larger world view."

She moved to Grenoble in 2000 when her husband took a position with Hewlett-Packard. "When I was unable to work in the first few years, I missed the professional contact. With so many international businesses in the area, I realized I wasn't alone.

"My previous experiences in networking organizations in the US had served

me well. I started WWNG to offer professional development programmes - enhancing the careers of our working members and keeping the non-working ones in the loop."

WWNG conducts their business in English, and has about 60 members from 12 countries.

Their French and foreign members experience the US business culture. "They see that it's OK to be brief, to the point, run things on time - even use a timer in a meeting," Ms Farrance said. WWGN holds monthly meetings, runs a Professional Enrichment Program, builds ties with other professional groups and holds annual seminars (see box right).

"Connecting with people and building a network is always important. Networking with a purpose works.

"It has gotten a tarnished image in the US now because people think that it's all about exchanging business cards; but, networking is not about quid pro quo. It means getting to know people: what they know and what they need. Then I ask myself what I have that can help them. We are talking about human resources."



IN THE LOOP: Some of WWNG's members and organizers (left to right) - Joelle Millery, Sara Freitas-Maltaverne, Mickey Farrance, Claire Cudrey and Kelly Rigotti

Networking is not about quid pro quo. It means getting to know people

Working Women's Network of Grenoble hosts workshops for English-speaking professionals

A DAY of talks and workshops for professionals - both men and woman - is being held by Working Woman's Network of Grenoble.

Topics at the event, on March 29 at the Grenoble Ecole de Management, will include: Dealing with Difficult People, Finding your Unique Leadership Style, Office Feng Shui, Work/Life Balance,

Manage your Message in a Second Language, Decoding French vs. Anglo-Saxon Management Styles, Networking Tools - "Face-to-Face" to "Facebook," and Intercultural Competency.

For more information about the event, which WWNG holds annually, or to register, contact: wngseminar08@gmail.com