



Report on the IMA Berlin year-end event , 8th December 2018

The event of IMA's Berlin regional chapter at the Novotel Berlin Tiergarten on December 8, 2018 was a special one in many ways. Not only was it the icing on the cake of the year 2018, but also the last event for **regional head Diana Brandl**. As of January 2019, **Charlotte Janning will take over** the group. At the same time it was the regional chapter's first-ever event in English. Accordingly, two each of the approximately 30 participants had made their way from Switzerland and the Netherlands and one each from the UK and France. The German regions Berlin, Cologne/Düsseldorf, Frankfurt and Stuttgart were represented as well.

Following a brief welcome by Diana Brandl, Sophia Ringel, Convention Sales Manager, presented the Novotel Berlin Tiergarten. Then IMA Germany national committee members Nicole Stigler und Franziska Deutsch greeted the participants and pointed out the national committee vacancies PRO and web coordinator.

To the sounds of the Silbermond song „Leichtes Gepäck“ (light baggage) **trainer and IMA-member Daniel Hermes** kicked off his presentation on the „mental backpack“. Just like one would carefully pack a backpack so it will not become too heavy along the way, in life one has to weigh carefully what to take along for the journey. During the course of his enthralling presentation he used examples to explain why he had packed which item.

Next **Claudia Mayer**, EA at Microsoft Germany, **Paula Harding**, EA at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, and **Daniela Leutwyler**, self-employed virtual assistant from Switzerland, talked about their careers and what is important to them when it comes to work. Particularly the topic „virtual assistance“ generated questions from the audience.

Nicole Stigler, Chairman of IMA Germany, started off her panel discussion with **Claudia Mayer**, **Paula Harding** and **Jannie Oosterhoff**, self-employed assistant and Chairman of IMA Netherlands, with an excerpt from a provocative Financial Times-article in which the author deems assistants as unnecessary since in the age of apps a manager is well able to schedule one's meetings and plan one's trips without an assistant. Whilst digitization certainly eliminates some tasks of assistants, the panelists feel that it enables assistants to focus more on strategic topics thus relieving the pressure on their managers.

Being present on social media is also important to small and medium-sized companies. This also applies to assistants, who should be active on social media not just within their profession, but also outside. Here one should not just „like“, but actively participate in discussions on professional networks such as LinkedIn or XING.

All three agreed that assistants have to develop proactively – if necessary at their own expense and during their free time. This means reading trade magazines and books,

attending professional events and watching webinars and TedTalks. It is important to take matters into one's own hands. Host Nicole Stigler wrapped up the discussion with a comment in response to the Financial Times-article she had quoted earlier. That comment indicated that the outlook for assistants is still good.

Following a delicious lunch and a lively exchange, IMA-member and coach **Yvonne Weller** started her presentation on „Strengthening your Resilience“ with a relaxation exercise. Many people learn to be resilient during their childhood and youth. This is done by accepting reality, positive emotions, optimism and courage, positive self-perception, control (of one's life), trust and social networks (offline). The presentation was interspersed with some exercises.

Helen Monument, former Chairman of the IMA Executive Committee, briefly touched on her own biography and explained that knowing oneself is the basis for one's development. Likewise, it is important to be and remain authentic, because this evokes trust in others. In an exercise the participants were asked to select their ten most important values from a list and then pare them down to five and subsequently three values. She stressed that it was important to know where one wants to go, to make connections, to say „Yes“, to believe in oneself, gain support and to network. Based on her own work for IMA, she described how volunteering can help with one's own professional and personal development.

Following brief presentations by IMA-business partners **Foxtrails**, **Comtravo**, **Helms Briscoe**, **Bullet Global** and **aveato**, **Tina Holmes**, Head of HR at DDB and former assistant at Sony, talked about how important her work as an assistant was to her subsequent career in HR and that the role as an assistant is a great spring board for leadership roles.

Sophie Descollaz-Dunkel, Managing Director of IMA Business Partner **PLU Top Assistant GmbH**, briefly introduced her company and explained that companies are struggling more and more to find good assistants. Nowadays, there are four generations of employees in the work place whose diverse needs must be taken into consideration. PLU certifies good employers and only refers assistants to these employers. Furthermore, an Excellence Circle will be established for assistants where they may develop further.

During her presentation, trainer **Ebony Fagbuyi** referred to her difficult childhood that was shaped by prejudice. Only after a conversation with her mother she realized that she and not other people determine her life. She encouraged the audience to chart and follow their own course and to see how they can apply the things they learn today to the future.

During the following raffle many prizes donated by the business partners were given away.

Charlotte Janning and Nicole Stigler thanked Diana Brandl with moving words for organizing the outstanding event and for her dedication to IMA as head of the Berlin regional chapter. Diana Brandl thanked the participants for coming and passed the baton as head of the regional chapter to Charlotte Janning – not without assuring her of her support.

The day ended with a mug of mulled wine on the roof terrace of the Novotel and a subsequent dinner.