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The power of mentoring: A personal journey with Natalia Sawka

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In business, mentorship is more than just a nice-to-have—it's a crucial component of success. According to a report by mentorcliQ, 100% of the top 50 U.S. Fortune 500 companies have mentoring programs in place, and those with these programs were twice as profitable as companies without them.

But the true value of mentorship lies in its human impact. It's a source of personal development, confidence-building, and transformative change that affects not just your professional life, but your personal journey as well. Connecting with someone who shares positive experiences and helps you discover your own strengths can go a long way toward overcoming doubt, fear, and the uncertainty of stepping into the unknown.

Natalia Sawka, Process Manager of Plan to Manufacture at Infineum in Linden, NJ, has experienced all of these things. From emigrating to a new country as a young teen to later finding herself on an unexpected career path, Natalia had moments when she feared she wouldn't succeed. But with support from teachers, her family, and colleagues, she was able to push through—and today, she's not only succeeding as a senior leader in supply chain orchestration, but she also gives back the same positivity and encouragement to younger people in her life as a mentor herself.

“I think one of my primary roles is to be a mentor, whether it's at work, with my nieces and nephews, or even people I meet who ask for my advice because I was fortunate enough to have someone do that for me.”

NATALIA SAWKA, SAP S4 HANA Venture - Process Manager of Plan to Manufacture at Infineum at Infineum

From Ukraine to the United States

NATALIA'S STORY BEGINS IN UKRAINE, where she spent her childhood before moving to the United States at the age of 13. The transition was a pivotal moment, filled with both challenges and opportunities. Her first big goal was to learn



English, a task she approached with determination. “Coming here in ninth grade and wanting to enter university in the United States in four years was definitely a challenge,” she explains. As an immigrant, it was important to take her studies seriously in order to build a stable career one day. Her natural skills in science and math helped her achieve good grades throughout her teenage years.

Natalia is someone who thrives when she has concrete goals to work toward. So, she began wondering where her skills could be best applied in a career. At times, she felt uncertain and overwhelmed, but then, in 11th grade, her calculus teacher invited her to a panel organized by the Society of Women Engineers at Princeton University. Curious, Natalia attended with her mother—and the experience changed her life. “It was a panel of seven women, each from a different field of engineering,” she recalls.

The women shared personal stories about their experiences in what had historically been a male-dominated field. They spoke about how they discovered their potential through their work and how challenges helped them grow, empowering them to achieve their goals.

“I never realized that going into engineering could offer so many different options. Every story was inspiring to me as a 16-year-old girl

trying to figure out my future. And that event had such an impact on me moving forward.”

Moving from engineering to supply chain management

WITH A NEW SENSE OF DIRECTION, Natalia dove into her studies and pursued a career in engineering, drawn to its structured, systematic nature. She graduated with honors from Stevens University in Hoboken, NJ, and soon immersed herself in her career with focused dedication.

As a project engineer specializing in process control and programming, she found comfort in well-defined tasks and predictable outcomes. But her journey was far from linear. A career in supply chain management was not something Natalia had initially envisioned. As a project engineer with a strong foundation in process control and programming, she was intimidated by the chaotic world of supply chain. "I didn't think I would excel there, being such a structured engineer," she admits. Despite turning down the opportunity multiple times, a conversation with a colleague led her to reconsider. What if she did something completely outside her comfort zone? It turns out that going outside her comfort zone is something

Natalia does well. After all, she'd already managed the difficult transition of moving to a new country, learning a new language, and assimilating to a new culture. In the process, she discovered strength within herself and a drive to achieve her goals.

When her colleague and mentor saw something in her that he believed would make her a good fit for the complexities of supply chain management, she decided to give it a try. "He told me about the skills I would build and why he thought I was the right person for the job," she remembers.

Taking that leap, Natalia soon discovered a new passion for managing the complexities of supply chain logistics. Her engineering background gave her a unique perspective, allowing her to systematize supply chains and create efficient, collaborative networks. "I learned so much very quickly. It wasn't overwhelming anymore. It became a challenge of how I could do it better."

The two-way impact of mentorship

HAVING EXPERIENCED THE BENEFITS OF MENTORSHIP FIRSTHAND, Natalia now embraces her role as a mentor with enthusiasm. "Mentorship is an important part of working every day, and I see it as my inherent duty as a leader," she says.



Natalia's approach to mentoring goes beyond professional guidance; she aims to foster growth and confidence in others—and in herself. "I always look for opportunities to mentor. I'll never say no to anyone who asks me to be their mentor."

A few years ago, a colleague joined Infineum, and Natalia took her under her wing. When Natalia started a new project, she invited this colleague to join her team. Their relationship evolved from mentor-mentee to leader and direct report. Natalia reflects, "It's been great to be part of my colleague's growth, supporting her through less formal ways of mentoring, and now being able to offer concrete opportunities that will continue her growth as a team member."

Natalia cherishes the moments when she can support her colleagues' development, whether it's giving them the chance to present to senior leaders or encouraging them to take on "out of the comfort zone" assignments. She believes these experiences help build an exciting and dynamic team—one that can thrive when it comes time to deliver. "To me, those things don't just build a team—they build an exciting team. And when it comes to delivering, that's what really matters."

The two-way impact of mentorship



NATALIA'S COMMITMENT TO MENTORING extends beyond the workplace. Inspired by that early encounter with the Society of Women Engineers, she deeply values the lasting impact of positive role models. "It's so important to make time for younger people who are trying to find their way," she emphasizes. Whether mentoring her nieces and nephews or offering guidance to young professionals, Natalia is dedicated to giving back and fostering the next generation of leaders.

As she continues to guide others, Natalia's story is a testament to the transformative power of mentoring. Her journey shows that mentorship isn't just about professional growth—it's about inspiring confidence, fostering personal development, and empowering others to take bold leaps into the unknown.

"Always remember, without courage when leaping into something new, growth is not possible. It's absolutely worth it. Always listen to your inner voice and your mentors. They usually guide you pretty well, even through the scariest and most challenging times."

[Watch Natalia's full story here](#)

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