

Testimonials

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Position: Senior Manager, Corporate Responsibility
Company: Vodafone
Programme: Mt Blanc, 2005

Why did you do your challenge?

I was looking for an adventurous challenge to make the most of my summer. I wanted to learn more about the technical aspects of climbing and was ever hopeful of getting fitter. I needed to make a change, a shift in the way I was going about getting fit. I never really admitted it at the time but I was also looking for a structure that would push me, I was interested to see how I would react at various levels when pushed and in a team.

What were your objectives?

I didn't really think too much about this at the outset, I wanted to climb Mt Blanc, I wanted to get to the top and I wanted to do it with some friends to share the experience, I thought it would be fun!

At a physical level, I wanted to get fit. Having the mountain as a challenge was a focus to get me on a programme that would help me to think more consciously about how I manage my energy – I wanted a reason to exercise and push myself.

Technically, I wanted to climb more and I wanted to learn how to do so safely so I could go out into the mountains confidently on my own – so I wanted to feel more confident in myself and my abilities to deal with challenging situations.

What did you achieve through the process?

We got to the top of Mt Blanc and we got back down again too – and in much better shape than I expected - I had a shared experience with a group of friends that will be with me for a long time, if not for ever.

I really learned the benefit of two things, pacing (managing and conserving my energy) and that to get mighty things done I have to do them bit by bit.

There were times on the mountain, both on Snowdon and in the Alps, when I allowed myself to get lost in the sheer size of the environment and the task. With a bit of encouragement, I was able to find enjoyment in the effort rather than getting dragged down by thinking "it's too much and I can't go on".

Did your programme have a positive impact on your work?

It did. Having Mt Blanc in my calendar and the prospect of a week in the Alps was a really positive beacon at the beginning of spring running in parallel with all the challenges at work that were continually filling my head and my Blackberry.

As we moved closer to the climb and I got fitter, I found I had a more even level of energy throughout my working days, in fact I had more energy generally and with more optimism, oddly I felt I had more time because I was prioritising time for me, rather than just to get work done.

Having the challenge in my scope was a real joy and when I told others at work, I noticed a really positive interest from them – that carried me along through many tough days. We got given detailed feedback after the Wales weekend and there were some quite tough observations given to me which I was uncomfortable with at the time.



How has your programme had a lasting impact?

At one level it opened up the mountain world in a whole new way, it broadened my horizons as to what is possible and more what I'm capable of once I put my mind to it. I never had any doubt that I would make it or that I was capable, it's just expanded my confidence in taking things on.

Work life became increasingly demanding towards the beginning of this year. My company wanted me to take on a bigger, more challenging role, and move to their HQ which was outside of London. I remember being quite rattled by the proposition at the beginning. But the change has been really positive and once I decided to take on the role I've been really enjoying it. I've even branched my work into a new area and am overseeing the video productions in Africa that highlight the CSR side of what we are doing.

So yes, I've chosen to take on new challenges and see the positive side and opportunity in change.



Caroline (right in red) with Vodafone colleague Sinead Bailey on the summit of Mt Blanc