



Mariela Lorenc Pacek | Photos by Nicolas Goldberg

## Introducing Mariela and Eric

Mariela has worked in logistics in Argentina for nearly 20 years. However, as a woman in a male-dominated industry, she struggled to have her ideas heard and progress to a management role. Frustrated, she and two friends decided to launch their own company, Kalima Shipping and Logistics Solutions, which offers logistical support to freight and trucking companies, focusing, in particular, on women-run SMEs.

Mariela had been running her business for five years when she joined the programme in 2014. However, the recent import restrictions and devaluation of the Argentine peso made the business environment extremely challenging. She wanted a mentor to support her as she worked to keep her business afloat and secure new clients. Mariela was matched with Eric, a Senior Vice President at Bank of America in the United States, with expertise in marketing, sales and strategy.

### Relationship focus

Mariela and Eric reviewed Mariela's branding and devised strategies to market her business more effectively. They thought through ways to refine Mariela's business pitch, which she used to attract potential partners at the Women Vendors Exhibition and Forum in Brazil.

Despite facing a challenging economic climate, Mariela managed to retain 50% of her existing customers and broker a new partnership with a woman-led firm in Brazil, which gave her ten new clients in the winery, spare parts, oil and gas industries. She also hired a new employee. In addition to her mentoring relationship, Mariela also took advantage of the programme's online platform and library of resources. She watched the programme's webinars on branding and pricing and applied the knowledge she gained to her marketing plan and website.



### Mariela's reflections

Mariela feels she has become more confident in herself and her business as a result of her mentoring relationship. She has improved her English, her presentation skills and her ability to write professionally. Mariela dreams of becoming a leader in her industry and is setting up an NGO to support local artisans to export their goods to international markets. Now in their second year together, she said Eric's support has been invaluable and, *"when you get a mentor, then you want one for the rest of your life!"*

### Eric's reflections

Eric has also improved his communication skills and is committed to learning Spanish. His role at work involves entering new markets so he has found learning about a new market very useful. Eric has also gained a broader perspective after working with Mariela. He explained, *"I have an appreciation for how difficult it is for women entrepreneurs in countries which do not have the legal or social structures to support them."*