

TITLE OF THE CASE STUDY: RELATIONSHIPS

Name of the organisation:

Foro de Empresarias y Profesionales de Córdoba (FEPC)

Country and sector of the organisation:

Spain. Multidisciplinary

Type of organisation:

- Business company
- Public organization
- Private organization
- NGO
- Other: Networking

Size of the organisation:

- small
- medium
- large

Brief description of the organisation:

The Forum of Businesswomen and Professionals of Córdoba (FEPC) was set up as an influential group organised to promote the full integration of professional women into Cordoba society and the business world, fostering a social and working environment of equal opportunities, thus contributing to the economic development of the city and province and the full integration of women into the business fabric.

Short description of the case study (500 characters)

The Forum was born in 2016 with the aim of bringing together women entrepreneurs and professionals from Cordoba so that through associationism and collaboration between them the work they carry out becomes more visible. Today it has more than 200 members from different economic areas among whom common activities and training are continually being promoted to increase awareness of women's entrepreneurship and to encourage associationism as a way of establishing networks.

Among its main achievements is to have become a centre of union and communication, promoting networking and supporting the training of women associates, being a meeting place for business women who share interests and concerns. In addition, the FEPC has become a means which, through the synergies between the associates and their network of contacts, helps to promote the businesses of its members. Thus, the Forum wants to be seen by its own participants and by the society of Cordoba as a platform that brings them closer and generates synergies benefiting their companies in a direct and transparent way.

Key words: Networking, women, visibility, equality, training

BEST PRACTICE PROFILE

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Women entrepreneurs have become clearly aware of the need to group together and associate in order to find better solutions and common strategies for their problems. This is something that is being developed throughout Spain, especially because of the need to make themselves visible as a social dynamising element, but also as a key element in the development of the different economic sectors.

This movement has had a special impact in Córdoba thanks to the birth of the Forum of Women Entrepreneurs and Professionals (FEPC), a networking experience that arose five years ago and which has become stronger over time, even more so during the months of the pandemic.

FEPC is not a vindication of the status of women in itself. It is a union between women, without forgetting the personal independence of each member of this association or forum, to fight for their common interests. To this end, they decided to set up a project that would have the following pillars and values:

EQUALITY: To be present in all the necessary forums to promote equal opportunities for women in Cordoba and the province, in the social, professional and business spheres and where all members have the same rights.

NETWORKING: To consolidate itself as a centre of union and communication, strengthening the networking network and supporting the training of the members. To be a meeting place for businesswomen who share interests and concerns.

SYNERGIES: To become a means that helps to promote the business of the members; that they see FEPC as a platform that brings them closer and generates synergies that benefit their companies in a direct and transparent way.

VISIBILITY: To be a showcase to visualise and communicate the practices and results of women in the business world. Being the nexus of talent, creating links between all our associates and society in general.

SOLIDARITY: To develop a spirit of solidarity among members, fostering an atmosphere of collaboration and creating an environment in which mutual help and synergies prevail over unfair competition and practices that violate professional ethics.

TRAINING: Support for the entrepreneurial initiative of any woman, providing her with all the possible tools within her reach and using the development of mentoring programmes for the integration of women into the business fabric.

President Inmaculada Pérez confirms that this movement "has given us visibility in Cordoba of the female business fabric of SMEs and micro-SMEs. Before, it seems that it was not seen with the same clarity as it is now, when we are seen as a large and active group. And we are also managing to make the companies of the members themselves grow because we have created a useful collaborative network, with which we push and support each other".

This movement of association of women entrepreneurs includes professionals from all sectors and of all ages. The youngest member is 21 and the oldest is over 60, there are single, married, with children, without children. Normally, as entry into the Business Forum does not require a specific type of activity or profile, there are many female university students, professionals, lawyers, property administrators, tax advisors, clinics, the trade sector, food producers, the advertising sector, etc. When a new member joins, the management studies what activity she has and how she can establish synergies with the rest of the members.

RATIONALE

The starting point was an analysis of the difficulties faced by women entrepreneurs in entering the business and professional world. This is compounded by the specific conditions of the province of Cordoba, among which we can find the following:

- Low presence of women entrepreneurs in the social and economic life of the city.
- Lack of visibility of women as the driving force behind the province's economic development.
- Scarce presence of women in positions of relevance or in managerial positions in companies.
- Minimal tradition of women's associations.
- Structural difficulties due to the high unemployment rate, since Cordoba is one of the provinces with the highest unemployment rate in Spain (23.7%, seventh in the ranking) and this figure affects women in particular (28% compared to 20% for men).

GOALS

The intentions of the FEPC were clear from the very first steps, as they mentioned the following decalogue of objectives in their founding declaration:

1. To promote cohesion between businesswomen and professional women, creating a space in which they can help each other and collaborate.
2. To obtain a greater and stronger presence that will have a positive impact on the exercise of our work functions.

3. To undertake and elaborate formulas for the promotion and defence of the human, social and professional values of women as entrepreneurs and professionals.
4. To develop training programmes, innovative actions, cultural programmes, mentoring programmes for entrepreneurship, information, studies, awareness-raising and dissemination. dissemination.
5. To strengthen solidarity among ourselves, support and pooling of resources.
6. To contribute to the dissemination of the role of women in Cordoba and its province through the media in order to position them in the business fabric of their community.
7. To disseminate the importance of the role of women, normalisation and family reconciliation.
8. To work for equal opportunities and for our voice and vote to be present wherever it is needed.
9. To collaborate with other associations in cultural, social and professional events.
10. Promote and encourage a programme of activities with the aim of revaluing and disseminating the role of businesswomen.

IMPACT

In its five years of existence, the FEPC has achieved its main objective: to make female entrepreneurship visible and to establish strong personal and business relationships among its members, fostering collaboration and associationism and banishing any hint of competition.

Among the activities that the FEPC regularly organises to generate relationships and synergies, impacting on society and its members, are:

- Business breakfasts. Held once a month, these meetings are a real driving force for economic development among the participants. Each breakfast has a new feature, whether it is a short presentation, a group dynamic or the presentation of the association's new products and events, as well as possible agreements. Members can bring other professionals or businesswomen interested in the Forum to these events, which usually attract more than 100 women.
- Plan #marcamujer. The Marca Mujer Plan is a programme in constant movement, with a clear objective of raising awareness and providing information, and the firm intention of facilitating and boosting the participation of women in the business sector in Cordoba. To this end, the FEPC works on the image of female entrepreneurship in the city as if it were a personal brand, thus promoting women's businesses with a commitment to value.
- Organisation of the trade fair Expo #Marcamujer, in which 80 companies are represented annually in days dedicated to networking, family, leisure and friends.
- Focus Group and Workshop. The PEPC regularly organises meetings to assess qualitatively, both the realities of female entrepreneurship and the reality of Cordoba in the different aspects that may affect their companies. Independently of the training workshops, the workshops are aimed at interact with other business groups of different types with the aim of joining forces and diversifying business.

- Training courses. Also on a regular basis, the Forum organises training courses based on the development of digital, business or personal skills. The speakers, as far as possible, are associates or women experts in their field.
- Regular presence in local and regional media, including a weekly section on the local TV channel PTV. They also promote internal and external communication with the publication of the magazine Expo#Marcamujer and their annual reports.
- Creation of the Andalusian Forum of Businesswomen and Professionals, which in 2021 reaches its fourth edition. This meeting encourages collaborative networks as an indispensable tool to mitigate the negative impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the economy. Its main objectives are:
 - To make visible the importance of the female business fabric in the development of the territory and the fields of investment.
 - To develop new networking strategies and foster a climate of collaborative trust.
 - To promote the business of the participating companies with an effective communication plan.
 - an effective communication plan.
- In 2020 it received the Meridiana Prize, awarded by the Andalusian Women's Institute to recognise the work carried out by individuals, groups or institutions in the defence of equal rights and opportunities for women and men.

LESSONS LEARNED

- The power of interpersonal relationships, synergies and benchmarking as a business tool.
- Cooperation between professionals from similar sectors, but also from different fields.
- The power of training as a unifying and transforming element.
- The possibility of becoming visible in a traditionally conservative society such as that of Cordoba through the organisation of activities and social and business dynamisation.
- The creative capacity of women and the possibilities of generating transforming actions, both for their personal and collective reality.
- The creation of a personal brand as well as a brand for women entrepreneurs in general. It is a commitment to personal development that values women in all areas, elaborated, transmitted and protected, with the aim of differentiating themselves and achieving greater success in social and professional relations.



Logo of the FEPC



Participants in one of the meetings of #Marcamujer



Meeting of the Andalusian Forum of Businesswomen and Professionals



Participants in one of the business breakfasts

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