



Steering  
the Course   
Women's Sailing  
Festival

# The Magenta Project Mentoring Program

Case Study #2

sport / nature / technology



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# Introduction

Now in its third year, the Magenta Project's Mentoring Program provides opportunities for aspiring female sailors to excel and reach their potential in the sport.

The annual program selects talented female sailors from across the globe and pairs them with a mentor. The mentors come from all corners of the sailing world and are hugely accomplished and experienced sailors, able to offer guidance and inspiration.

Last year, 42 mentees were successfully accepted on to the nine-month program which kicked off in the autumn. The mentees come from 14 different countries and half of them are under the age of 25.

The Program was established in 2018 by Vicky Ellis, a Magenta Project Director and former Clipper Round The World Yacht Race skipper and RYA instructor. She saw the need to bring mentoring into the sport to achieve greater diversity at the top.

Some mentees are transitioning from successful dinghy or Olympic classes into keelboats or larger yacht racing. Many aspire to the big offshore races, both fully crewed and short-handed. Others seek the thrills of the multihull and foiling classes that pave the way to the America's Cup. What they all share is a passion for the sport and the aspiration to positively impact its landscape in the future.

# The Magenta Project

# Aims of the project

The aim of the Mentoring Program is to link up aspiring female sailors with mentors, who can help plan their sporting development pathway and inspire them to succeed at the highest level possible, whilst addressing any issues which may prevent them progressing or reaching their potential, or even lead to them exiting early from the sport. It is predominantly an 'off -the-water'-based mentoring program, focusing on their wider development in sailing, not necessarily hands-on skills development. Mentors are a hugely inspiring and important part of women's development; similar mentoring schemes are found across other business and industry sectors. Within the sport of sailing there was no such scheme.

*"Mentoring is the opportunity to connect with a future version of yourself, who can help you navigate that transition into a new role or new industry or your next opportunity."*

**Lucy Lloyd**, CEO Mentorloop.

Our aim is to make mentoring opportunities more visible and accessible to those aspiring to greater things in the sailing world, by empowering and encouraging personal development, identifying any skill and knowledge gaps and having access to a senior role model.

# How and why the project was started

For a long while the business world has embraced mentoring programs to develop female talent, whether that be for top leadership roles or in industries where diversity is lacking. As Forbes reported, "research has proven that in male-dominated professions, where women often face greater challenges building networks and embracing feminine leadership strength, mentoring has proven even more paramount."

Having been exposed to mentoring in her professional engineering career, Vicky went on to see the benefits of mentoring other up-and-coming female sailors in the world of sail training and racing. Realising the benefits and need for mentoring to be scaled across the sport, The Project launched the pilot program in 2018 to gauge interest and see if it would produce positive results. It had a huge response and has been growing ever since.

Bringing mentoring into sailing at the top level will help sow the seeds of change. A culturally more supportive environment with clearer pathways and guidance along the way are key to helping retain and advance diverse talent in the sport.



# Key successes

Mentoring in sailing has opened up so many opportunities. One of the surprising successes has been the community that the mentees have created; linking over 100 talented women across the globe and with similar aspirations has been hugely beneficial. This pool of talent is now targeted for opportunities and has momentum to create their own where they don't exist. From foiling and short-handed clinics, mentees have gone on to collaborate on campaigns and source other racing opportunities.

*"I had no idea that all these girls with similar goals to me were out there and it's hugely inspiring & motivating to have access to these people all in the one place."*  
**Clíodhna Connolly, 2020 Mentee**

The program has also provided international networking for the mentors too, sparking ideas for campaigns and other ways to support women in the sport at that level.

Sometimes mentoring pairs will get afloat together if geography allows. Several mentees have been given opportunities to sail with their high-profile mentors on high performance boats. Some have been able to work shadow them onshore. A success highlight came when a mentor and mentee were competing against each other in a race to the Azores. The mentee won!

Each year we have had more and more applications from talented and ambitious sailors. Connecting mentors and mentees successfully is the measure of any program. Through our understanding of the matching process, we have a high pair success rate, comparable with the top corporate programs.

*"The Magenta Project's Mentoring Program was instrumental in my development as a sailor, leader, and athlete. My mentor, Katie Pettibone, provided me with very insightful advice and helped reaffirm my passion for the sport of sailing. It was refreshing to connect with someone who shares the same interests and has been down a path similar to mine."* **Frances Schulte, 2019 Mentee**

To see how the program impacts the sailors, we follow mentees' goals as they evolve. Being able to support mentees, especially through the pandemic, by keeping them engaged in the sport has been a key success this year.

# Changes or developments throughout the project

In October 2019, just after the launch of the second edition of the program, the World Sailing Trust released the results of its Women In Sailing: Strategic Review study. One of the proposed initiatives for progress and positive change was mentoring.

The Magenta Projects program has continued to lead the way for mentoring in the sport, encouraging and supporting other projects and championing the inclusion of mentoring in the sailing culture.

The impact of the pandemic acted to accelerate an extended online programme of inspirational, developmental and technical webinars that can now be accessed by the mentees. From CV writing, weather routing and 'how to get your foot in the door,' many top names in sailing have presented and offered their inspirational advice and tips. This is a truly incredible resource for our mentees and has kept their ambitions afloat through the lockdowns.



# How others can get involved

The program is going from strength to strength. Every year we seek new mentees, mentors and crucially funding support.

If you are a talented female sailor with big ambitions or are responsible for talent development and have high potential sailors who have reached a transition point, then please look out for applications opening for the fourth program in the late summer.

If you are an experienced and accomplished sailor, or a sailor with professional coaching and mentoring skills, who would relish the opportunity to be a mentor to the next wave of top talent, then:

Please register your interest or email for more info ([click](#) to register).

Finally, if you or your organisation is interested in partnership or sponsorship opportunities, the biggest sailing program for aspiring female sailors is seeking partners and sponsors.

Please email us at:  
[mentoring@themagentaproject.org](mailto:mentoring@themagentaproject.org)





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