

In conversation with Brad Orgill, Chairman and CEO UBS Australia.

Brad Orgill is Chairman and CEO of UBS Investment Bank, Australia & New Zealand and Country Head for all UBS activities in Australia. Globally, he is also a Member of the UBS Group Managing Board. Brad has been with UBS and its predecessor companies for 21 years of which half have been spent in Australia and half (1994-2005) in Asia. He has a Bachelor of Economics and M.A. in Asian Studies.

Sophie McCarthy spoke to Brad Orgill about the mentoring program at UBS, how it is helping his staff to take more risks in their careers and who he would chose today if he could have any mentor across the globe.

Brad, the UBS mentoring program with McCarthy Mentoring has been operating for almost a decade, what was the initial motivation for establishing this external mentoring program?

The original motivation was to give support to the development of women in our business. We felt that we didn't have enough women in the senior ranks and that by having external mentoring we could assist that process. Subsequent to my arriving we decided to add more people and to open it also to men.

I think that as well as the general development of senior executives it does plug them into people outside our industry and outside the firm which is tremendously beneficial for an understanding of broader business. It can become very insular working for an investment bank or a law firm if you just mix principally with people from the bank or the law firm.

Have the aims of the program changed in this time?

No I think the genesis has remained at the core.

How do you select people for that program?

Those who are performing well, those who are seen as potential leaders of the firm and there is still a bias towards women in that we still feel we don't have enough senior women in our ranks. When I say bias, it's a priority to use this program to try and rectify this position.

How many senior women do you have or what percentage?

Not enough. The percentage is too low. It's not just us, it's the industry. There are various issues that we can undertake to try and correct this but it's a long, slow process.

When I say issues, things like childcare which we introduced in the last couple of years, subsidised childcare just across the road. That made a difference at the margin. Making sure that we had a message out on campus that some of the perceptions of working in an investment bank perhaps were off the mark and there are lots of different options.

We now look across all of our particular functions and roles and decide which ones can be done more flexibly and which ones can not. I think Alison Johnson has done some excellent work in sitting down with each manager and saying, 'Is being a research analyst/IT operations manager/ investment banker/ equity salesman – can you actually do that four days per week? Can you do it from home?' And really trying to push that boundary.

The first reaction of managers, particularly male managers in the past has often been to say 'No we can't do it'. She's come up with a good heat map that shows which roles within each function should be able to handle flexibility. That's been useful. There are a whole host of things. I actually don't think we'll get there unless we use quotas though.

So would you get 50/50 at a graduate level?

No, we'd like to but we tend not to. The percentage at graduate level is not so much the problem though - it's losing them in that mid-tier space. We've hired some very good women from law firms. We actually address the issue in the short term by attracting people with 3-4 yrs experience in a law

firm, to come in at the mid-tier rather than waiting for them to go through the whole 10 yrs to MD status.

So do women still leave when they have kids?

Yes, it's an issue, it's still an issue, although we do have a lot of successes in them coming back as well. Kiera Grant for example from within equity sales, is just about to undertake her third maternity leave with the firm. Karen Phin is another example. Others have told me that our childcare provision has made a positive difference.

What do you see as the benefits for the mentee and the organisation from the mentoring program?

I think the benefit for the mentee is that they have someone they can talk to on a confidential basis who's not a UBS person, who is external to the day-to-day issues but has a broad understanding of business and can give them advice or perspective. And it's probably less advice than sharing experiences.

How does the organisation measure the benefits/success of the program?

I think it's hard to quantify, it's a bit like advertising, you're not sure what aspects actually make a difference but I do get direct feedback from the mentees as to whether they're enjoying it or not and finding it beneficial and that feedback is consistently very good.

I also think that the people who are on the program do tend to display more willingness to move out of their functional business areas. It's a confidence, it's a broader perspective, it's saying 'Okay what do I really want to achieve in life?' Just having a slightly broader vision and a greater preparedness to take risks and do other things. Amie, for example, moving into the Alternative Capital group, out of her comfort zone. Nick Carrigan moving out of Trading into Institutional Funds management, there's a strong correlation of people moving to do different things who have been on the program. So it's very encouraging.

You've worked in Hong Kong, China, Singapore and returned, in 2005, to this role as CEO. What's been the key to your success?

To be in a leadership role, particularly across our various businesses; I think it is necessary to gain skills and experience working in a different geographic region or a different functional area. So I think the decision in my early 30s to go offshore was a good one. The experiences were very beneficial. And I encourage others to take similar risk either via going overseas, to Asia, or if they're staying in Australia to at least move outside the primary function area into another.

And what type of things do you learn from that experience?

For me, going to Asia, I learnt about the Asian economies and how Australia plugs into it. You can see macro trends between Aust and Asia - for example it seems pretty compelling to me that the flow of M&A activity from China will increase (especially in the global race for energy / resources) and at the same time Australia's superannuation funds going externally into Asia. There is a natural symbiotic relationship between Asia and Australia. I think you see that more clearly when you've worked and lived outside the country.

I think going through experiences, like the Asian financial crisis, was beneficial to anticipating part of what we're seeing now in the US and in Australia. For example: Asset values, including houses, collapsed in Asia (the house I was living in – renting – went down in value by 70%). This is a different reality than one is used to in Australia.

The third area is cultural sensitivity. I think working across Asia, being aware of the investment in education in some of those countries, being aware of the cultural differences and similarities has been very useful to me. And I think it also touches on the issue of gender. For example, we faced an issue in Japan of how to get more Japanese nationals into the senior ranks. The issue in Asia was less gender and more about local versus expat. It was only by saying we're going to enforce more investment in the development of Japanese nationals and impose a quasi quota approach to promotions that we actually got change. And stripping away the benefits that expats got so they were

completely on the same terms as locals. But I remember for years I'd get foreign managers saying there's a critical lack of investment bank talent in Japan with the only answer being to bring in foreigners. I was bemused by this when there's 95 million people – very smart, active, hard working – in Japan. It's just a question of how much we invest and how much we train them. So I'm proud that the Head of Equities in Japan, for example, which was one of the businesses I was historically responsible for, is now headed by a Japanese person.

Have you ever had a mentor, formally or informally?

I've had various formal and informal mentors. I've found them useful. I haven't had an external mentor in the way that this program works. Those that I've had have been from UBS or other companies I've been in. I've also found being part of an organisation called YPO and their concept called Forum, is incredibly powerful. I was in the HK and Singapore Chapters and now am in the Sydney Chapter.

Were there ever particular issues that you had or problems that you sought counsel in a mentor in your career to date?

When I was on the decision point, do I go to Asia or not, I certainly took the advice of senior figures. I remember my conversations with Laurie Cox, for example, who was running the firm then, and I always found that advice very good.

But if I look back I think I could have done much better at connecting with people and seeking advice and I think if there had been a program like this for me I would have benefited significantly. I think some of the regrets or lost opportunities were because I didn't actually take enough advice.

Perhaps it's a confidence thing, when you're young you don't seek advice or too much confidence perhaps?

I think it's a lack of confidence and I think coming through a government high school, not having a natural network, then moving cities. I grew up in Melbourne, moved to Sydney, tended not to really build networks and then (later in your career) perhaps it's harder to reach out. So I think if we as a firm, to come back to this program, can help employees with Wendy driving it, it's fantastic.

As you know with this program we interview the mentee and then we identify a mentor for them and we don't tell either party until they are matched together. But if you could choose a mentor from anywhere in the world, who would you choose today and why?

I think I would choose Arundhati Roy, author of *The God of Small Things*.

Why?

I think her perspective on life, post colonialism and her appreciation of things that I'm interested in but don't have as good a perspective on as she does. I think it would be really interesting. When I see the mentors that Wendy brings out, with people experienced in media and all sorts of different industries, I think it's fascinating for our people to have that perspective. It would be someone like her.

People I admire like Richard Flanagan, I think he is fantastic. Have you read his book, *The Unknown Terrorist*? He also wrote the article in a magazine that got Geoffrey Cousins concerned about the Tasmanian pulp mill. His book is just fantastic, it's about this woman from the western suburbs of Sydney who really has a pretty tough life. It's a novel that preceded but paralleled (anticipated really) the Haneef case. People like that I like to read.

But in terms of a business mentor, I should give you an answer on that – Steve Jobs from Apple.

Are you a mentor to your staff?

Yes.

Is that a formal program?

Yes, the meetings are unstructured but we meet once a quarter.

How do you handle work/life balance? Do you have lots of interests outside your work?

I think work is not just about the hours it's about the efficiency so I tend to focus more on the efficiency. But in our industry you tend to be on call so I have quite a lot of late night phone calls and in the past a lot of long haul international travel. I've made sure that I maintain flexibility wherever possible around my schedule, recognising that you're always on call.

One of the best decisions I made was not to miss the kids' school productions or sports days and to make sure that when my daughter had a school production at 10 o'clock on a Friday morning, I'd leave at quarter to and go and see it and come back at 11.30. And I think those were the best decisions I ever made because it means I haven't missed out on key events in my children's lives.

I was also pretty religious that between Monday and Friday I might be away most evenings or travelling but on the weekend I was there at home. So not missing my children's development, being there on the weekends and not missing birthdays (I've missed just one out of 31). I have two children, they are 17 and 14.

I've only cancelled my holidays once when we had a particular crisis in HK. I take a long holiday in January and we go skiing. I went back to university a few years ago and that was one of the best decisions I made. I did a Master of Arts in Asian studies when I was in Singapore. Just to go one night a week to a completely different group of people and be sitting around with people who had grown up in a village in Burma or China. I'm just about to start another program in environmental science and law but it's not so much doing the degree as just doing something at a very slow pace one night a week - I think it keeps you broader in perspective than might otherwise be the case.

Are you a good role model for your staff?

I hope so.

How would you describe the culture here at UBS?

I think it is meritocratic. I think it is inclusive. I think people of all backgrounds, various cultures, ethnicity, gender, are equally comfortable. We aspire to this.

Is there any way in which you'd like to change that in your current role?

I think we could move people around more. I think we still operate too much within the three businesses and I think we still need to move people across our different businesses.

In these times of financial difficulty, falling markets etc, is this a time when a mentor could be especially valuable to remind people or help them understand, give them perspective that actually things will get better?

Yes incredibly.

How else do you do that, as a CEO?

I think in this period of time it's incredibly important that the leadership group and me in particular are out talking to people - so we arranged in the last year and are repeating in the next month a whole series of breakfasts or lunches with people from different businesses just to talk about how we're seeing things in the industry.

You've got to be out more than normal communicating. I think that's absolutely critical and I think that it is a stressful period for everyone in the industry. We've a lot of people in the industry in Australia and in UBS who have not seen these conditions before and it's important that they gain a broader perspective than just the day to day headline scenarios. That can become a bit suffocating. Leadership in periods of crisis is critical. I think during these periods external mentors can assist greatly in keeping the mentee's view of the world in perspective.