



Our MBA Family

www.uemba.ue.poznan.pl

On earth four, in the heart forever five (...)

„There are people we may not see for years, or talk to for a long time, or be hundreds of miles away from, and yet – we will always be connected to them. It's as if at some point we exchanged pieces of our hearts (...)"

~Aleksandra Steć, The touch of your words

Magda: Man is a „social being“. This is not a slogan but a fact. The need for social contact and joining groups is a natural human need. But a good relationship and a cohesive group is not yet a family. Why do we call ourselves a Family? Because we are more than just a sum of individuals with useful competences.

Kasia: It's true, I strongly believe that friends are the family we choose for ourselves.

Magda: I think the uniqueness of our relationship is that it's not based on what we have or where we're going but on who we are to each other.

Kasia: Do you remember how it all started? Your first impression after meeting at an Orientation Session with Professor Deborah Buttler?

Magda: Of course, (...) beautiful surroundings, new people, the excitement that accompanies one when starting a journey into the unknown.

Kasia: The first „hello“. Just an ordinary one, not announcing anything. We were divided into groups and the people in the teams were chosen in such a way as to make them complementary to each other. Lawyers, humanists, marketing specialists, financiers (...) the power of arranging relationships so as to exclude rivalry in favor of teamwork. This is a very inspiring and developing model used in the methodology of these studies.

Magda: I agree. The first two days of classes were conducted in a way that allowed us not only to get to know each other but also opened us up to create a unique group whose relationship based on honesty and support continues to this day.

Kasia: People quickly understood that it is not worth putting on masks for 2 years and pretending to be someone you are not. A waste of time, money and no progress.

Ania: I remember the first day of my MBA exams when I saw Kasia. Elegant, short, perfectly styled, platinum hair, high heels – such a typical business woman. Although I don't belong to shy people, yet Kasia evoked a slight distance. Agnieszka is extremely professional, always prepared and keeping the level. Madzia (Magda) is a nice person, an oasis of peace, at the beginning a little in the shadow, but with time for me Madzia became an amazing inspiration of consistency in private and professional life. Adzik (Agnieszka Dzikowska) open to the world, hailed by us as the Dalai Lama, a little bit crazy with a storm of curls, which defined her.

Kasia: You brought back memories. Platinum short hair (...) today I have dark long hair (laughs), I guess that's another indication of the fact that a lot has changed. Ania, I remember you were working at Allegro at the time, still in IT. At that time, it was an area which was not often chosen by women. It impressed me how well you were finding your way in it and gaining new skills.

Ania: Thanks, Kasia. It's true that the IT world for women can be very demanding. But it was my internal change that became the biggest challenge. At the time I was overly goal-oriented and now I think I often looked at situations from too narrow perspective. Another thing is that my hair is also completely different – then it was short blonde and now it's long platinum (laughs). What else do you remember from your first MBA days?

Magda: The only thing I remember about the exams is that Kasia and I couldn't find a parking spot, we got the wrong building and were almost late for the exam!

Ania: Do you remember that one of the first questions you were asked at the MBA session was why you'd started studying?

Agnieszka: Yes, I remember I was prepared to give some kind of inspiring answer to that question... :-). Those were the days when I was very perfectionist in everything, I set my mind to (...). It's a good thing that with the experience I gained, I unlearned that and am not afraid to show weakness. You and our MBA played an important role in this process of professional and life maturation.

Magda: Unlike Aga who was „always prepared” at the time, I didn't have an inspiring answer to this question – I probably said something about gaining knowledge and personal growth. The prospect of „opening up” in front of almost thirty strangers had a striking effect on me at the time.

Kasia: I will never forget how Michal, declared in the questionnaire that he came to college „for fun” (laughs). He captivated me with his sincerity. To this day I have „Michal MBA, Mr. Fun” on my phone, after all we were in the „Five Blondes Except One” group together and sat in the first pew.

Ania: Each of our 5 made some kind of first impression and the amazing thing is that over several years this impression evolved a lot and as it turned out later our real inside was often different than

the first mask on the outside.

Magda: It's true, Anne. We've all changed a lot. I remember Agnieszka – an elegant perfectionist. She wowed me with her professionalism, polite but distanced. She had the „right“ answer prepared for every question (...) even those from the category „what was the most embarrassing situation in your life?“. She didn't leave anything to chance. When we started to know each other, Aga turned out to be my soul mate. Adzik from the beginning charmed me with her feisty, wonderful warm smile, storm of curls and sincerity. She always said what she thought. I appreciated it very much and I miss her very much (...) Do you think it was „friendship at first sight“?

Kasia: No, for me it was more like a road. A way during which people met accidentally become one of the best people in our little world and a casual „hello“ opens oceans of possibilities.

Ania: I can't say when exactly our friendship started because it was also a process. First shy conversations in the hallways, exchanging words, going out for coffee together. But there was one moment, I call it an evening of confidences, when we each shared something deeply hidden and important. I think this built an incredible strength and foundation for a deep friendship.

Magda: I agree. This friendship has been a process. I can't pinpoint the moment when the five of us became so connected. I have connected with each of you in a different way. Each of you is important to me for a different reason and each completes some part of my life map.

Agnieszka: I didn't expect to find friends at this university – 4 amazing women – each of them different, strong in a specific area, interesting and unique. Often, when we were sitting together, I felt that we complement each other, each brings a different perspective, a piece of herself – like a puzzle that fits together perfectly. Every time we get together, I feel like this (...). Only one puzzle is missing for some time – Adzik – her place will always wait for her and she will always stay in our hearts. Now when we see each other we tell ourselves what Adzik would say to us. Then I feel that she is not gone.

Kasia: I have the thought that if it hadn't been for my studies, I wouldn't have known that you existed. What a loss and what a poor life I would have had (...)

Ania: These memories were really a lot – from fashion inspirations, support in difficult life situations – changing jobs, breakups, illnesses but also wonderful births (...) through crazy meetings, to which we traveled from different parts of the world – even a few thousand kilometers. Each time the world was open to us and whenever we wanted it was possible. We supported each other in the good, but also bad moments.

Magda: We just really wanted to.

Ania: My friendship with Adzik (Agnieszka Dzikowska) travelled around the world: Tuscany, Corfu, Dubai, Miami, New York and Mexico. Each of these trips is a separate story and adventure. Although Adzik left for the USA after her MBA studies and we were separated by thousands of kilometers and many hours of time difference, we managed to keep in touch and continue our trips together.

Kasia: There are five of us in the picture. Happy after receiving our MBA diplomas, full of ideas for

the future and proud of having completed two years of studies. Adzik passed away unexpectedly, she didn't have time to warn us (...)

Ania: I like to think that this soul connection between us is a bit beyond space-time and beyond the temporal world and eternal life. This conversation is also a little tribute to Adzik, to let her know that we remember and that even though there are four of us on earth, there are always five in our hearts.

Kasia: What would you write from the perspective of the female graduates?

Ania: The MBA helped us grow in business, but most of all we became more mature and confident women. I was promoted and changed companies to a global/ international corporation with an incredibly high company culture. It also allowed me to take a big step towards maturity. I opened myself up to a broader perspective, looking through other people's eyes, taking more distance to myself, letting go. Difficult life situations in the past few years have allowed me to focus on priorities and get my personal life in order. I have the impression that in these few years, you could fit experiences for at least 10-20 years.

Kasia: It is no coincidence that studies unanimously show that relationships are the greatest added value of these studies. Let me add that well-organized MBA studies. Ours was a model in this respect (...)

Ania: It is worth adding that we were the only class on the MBA that defended on time 100% of the time! This shows how connected we are and how strong these relationships are :-)) We still stick together, update on Facebook and support each other in various situations. I actually said in the first session that my MBA goal is relationships. It's hard to say whether I was aware of the strength of these relationships at the time.

Magda: My time at University has changed me a lot. New knowledge and skills have strengthened me professionally. But of course, it was the people I met that became the greatest value. I remembered how much I enjoy establishing relationships, sharing knowledge and exchanging experiences. To inspire and be inspired. To walk boldly through life and not to put anything off „for later“. This is what Adzik taught me, who was able to enjoy every moment and take full advantage of life.

Ania: Oh yes... Adzik's brother said at the funeral that „Aga didn't live long, but she knew how to enjoy life“. That is absolutely true. She didn't leave anything for later and that is incredible wisdom and inspiration for us.

Kasia: In our first class we described what we wanted to change after graduation. We hid the list in an envelope to open it in 2 years. I opened the envelope after receiving my diploma and it turned out that almost nothing had changed, at least none of the things listed there, nothing visible to the eyes. It was just that my goals were different. The path I had planned to follow was located on a completely different „map“. The one I ended up on wasn't even in the realm of my dreams. Here, where I have arrived, I am fulfilled and happy...

Agnieszka: My MBA and getting to know you gave me a positive kick in the life – I became braver in going outside my comfort zone and searching for happiness. I got promoted, changed companies

twice. I left marketing to go into strategic business management. I took all these steps having you as my advisors – either positively motivating me or telling me frankly that something doesn't make sense and it's better to let go. The MBA Poznań-Atlanta was an incredible adventure which shaped me and which I still draw on. I wish everyone such an adventure in their lives (...)



Photo from left: Anna Kujawa (Ania), Agnieszka Dzikowska (Adzik), Katarzyna Czachowska (Kasia), Agnieszka Kozłowska, Magdalena Stelmach (Magda) (EMBA Poznań-Atlanta Graduates, Class 2015-2017)

Anna Kujawa

Commercial Excellence Joint Venture
Director
GlaxoSmithKline

Agnieszka Dzikowska

Senior EU & USA Product Manager
Mowi, Miami, US

Katarzyna Czachowska

President & CEO Office Coordinator
TZMO

Agnieszka Kozłowska

Head of Non-Fuel Retail in Central and
Eastern Europe
Shell

Magdalena Stelmach

Credit & Collections Manager
TZMO