

## **REPORT ON EAVE + FOR AVEK**

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I attended EAVE+ in April 2018. The course took place in a hotel on the outskirts of Luxembourg city. It was an intense week, with a full programme of workshops, talks and meetings. The format and outcomes were a little different than I expected, but useful and inspiring all the same.

On the first day we were introduced to the co-ordinators, who explained that the programme would adapt and be shaped by our needs over the week.

I had arrived with charts and SWOT analyses, ready to dissect the minutiae of my business, but immediately realised they would stay in my bag. Instead we were encouraged to take a step back and focus on the bigger picture. This week would be about building relationships and developing ourselves as leaders.

As we went around the circle, introducing ourselves, it soon became clear why. No company was alike. Each attendee had different funding systems, different economic conditions in their country, different working conventions to contend with. It would be impossible to find a business model that would work for everyone. What we did have in common was to do with people. We shared our current challenges – our partnerships with talent, efforts to build deeper connections with financiers, our management approach to crew and our own time.

Immediately afterward I found myself in a de facto counselling session, listening to the results of the Emotional Intelligence test I had completed a week earlier. No surprises, I knew most of the things it unearthed. Running your own business reveals your strengths and weaknesses pretty quickly! But what was useful was receiving a large package with strategies and tips to address my weaknesses and build on my strengths. The tests showed a strong social awareness (no great surprise for someone working in childrens' content). We drilled down into my insecurities and how they are what is holding me back. It got fairly personal!

Later in the week I had another one-on-one session with Linda Beath. She again reinforced the need to step back and concentrate on the development slate and talent partnerships. With those in place, the business would follow. She was very affirming and talked a little about the differences between female and male CEOs. How we as women tend to hold back to get everything perfect and right, but that my business plan was sound in as much as any could be in our industry and I should have the confidence to push forward in that knowledge.

There were general sessions with talks from Larry Bass and Michael Comyn about leadership, which reinforced the one-on-one sessions and some excellent

case studies from Marc Bordure of Agat Films et Cie, who literally opened all his company finances and development files to us. Marc's company is a collective of producers, again reinforcing the value of partnerships. We also completed a detailed roleplay assessing a business' viability and strategised a new business in teams.

A huge part of the schedule was dedicated to one-on-one meetings with each of the other course participants. I thought this might be somewhat irrelevant to me, because I am focussed on animated television series and the other producers are mostly producing arthouse features. However I found common ground with almost everybody. The calibre of the other attendees was really impressive. They had decades of experience of producing award-winning projects and could give great insight into the possibilities of working in their territories. Many business cards were shared and connections offered to others in their circles. Some producers regularly produce films for a family audience and others just shared common challenges around their company, financing or working with talent. There was a spirit of openness and honesty that was so valuable, and builds the kind of trust needed for co-productions. As a result there are already co-productions happening between participants and I can see many more will come. Each meeting offered something of interest and I learned just as much from my peers as those supposed to be guiding us.

So I didn't leave with a new business plan, but with a renewed passion for my work, bolstered confidence in my ability to succeed and a whole new set of contacts ready to help me do so. And surely then, the business plan will follow.