SHARED VISION: NATWEST PARTNER WITH EVERYWOMAN TO ENGAGE WITH EMPLOYEES, INCREASE FEMALE CUSTOMERS AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE ECONOMY
Since the start of the Women in Business Programme, we have seen a huge uplift in lending to female business customers, as well as a significant increase in female customers — which is all fantastic.

Julie Baker
Head of Enterprise (Business Banking), NatWest

BACKGROUND

NatWest and everywoman have been partners since 2003 — a positive, long-standing relationship that has grown and evolved to meet the bank’s strategic objectives in difficult economic times, as well as their important organisational goals for employee engagement and development.

From the beginning, NatWest understood everywoman’s concerns that the UK’s brightest female entrepreneurs and business leaders were not being properly recognised. By sponsoring the everywoman Awards, NatWest helped showcase the success of women in business, raise their profile in the media and create positive role models.

As a result, NatWest also became the first bank to recognise women in business as an important emerging market — something that proved pivotal in the wake of the global financial crisis of 2008, when banks around the world were faced with the challenges of improving financial performance and restoring public trust.

“51% of the UK population is female but when we looked at the amount of women in business, it was down in the low 20s,” said NatWest’s Head of Enterprise (Business Banking), Julie Baker. “As a bank, we wanted to do something that would help attract more women into business, as well as giving them more reasons to choose to bank with us.”

However, NatWest also recognised that to do so, they had to help their own employees better understand the different motivations, challenges and barriers facing female business owners and entrepreneurs.

The result was everywoman’s innovative Women in Business Accreditation Programme for NatWest’s business development specialists. And because the bank also wanted to advance women at all levels in their own organisation, we rolled out the everywomanNetwork for all employees in the group.

“everywoman are our longest-standing partner after the Prince’s Trust,” added Julie, “but after sponsoring the awards, we realised there were many other areas where we could work with everywoman — not only to support women but also to give the bank a market-leading USP as the bank of choice for women.”
Bank has been the title partner of the NatWest everywoman Awards since 2003 — showcasing more than 200 of Britain’s top female entrepreneurs.

more than 550 Women in Business advisers have completed the Accreditation Programme — helps specialists recognise different motivations, challenges and barriers for female business owners and entrepreneurs.

‘Huge uplift’ in lending to NatWest’s female business customers and significant increase in Women in Business customers.

everywoman developed Women in Business Accreditation Programme for NatWest’s business development specialists — programme accredited by Chartered Banker Institute.

everywomanNetwork rolled out for all employees in 2014 — 3,000 female and male employees regularly access content.

Bank’s leadership profile more closely aligned to customer base.
Our partnership with NatWest has three integral components. It started in 2003, when NatWest first sponsored the everywoman Awards — a significant move that helped align the bank’s brand with a growing inclusivity agenda.

The NatWest everywoman Accreditation Programme was launched in 2013 to help position NatWest as ‘the bank of choice for women’. This was followed in 2014 by membership of the everywomanNetwork.

Today, the whole programme is playing an important role in building trust and advocacy in NatWest’s wide community, as well as bringing in more business.

“It is a relationship that’s stronger than the sum of its parts,” said everywoman’s co-founder, Karen Gill. “Not only is it helping us showcase some of the great female role models in business today, it’s improving skills and understanding within NatWest’s employees and, in turn, developing the growth potential of their female customers.

“It’s been a 15-year journey that continues to grow and evolve.”

The Women in Business Accreditation Programme was designed by everywoman and signed off by the Chartered Banker Institute — making it a recognised and trusted part of the bank’s CPD programme for Women in Business specialists. It helps these specialists provide tailored mentoring and support for existing and potential customers that recognises the different motivations, challenges and barriers for female business owners and entrepreneurs. Through learning sessions, networking and events, it equips NatWest employees with the skills and insight to deliver great customer service for women in business.

However, while NatWest targeted female entrepreneurs, women were under-represented in senior positions within the bank itself. What was required was a long-term, sustainable model that would ensure that the proportion of talented women rising to the top in business was mirrored within NatWest.

While achieving gender balance is simply the right thing to do, there were also important strategic reasons for NatWest. Women are typically more risk-averse (which in the wake of the financial crisis is no bad thing) but it also makes sound business sense that the products and services for women in business are being shaped and developed by women in the bank.

The solution came from NatWest’s membership of the everywomanNetwork — a digital learning and development platform that provides access to senior role models and personal development opportunities through live and interactive webinars, videos, workbooks and thought-leadership content. Through the everywomanNetwork, female employees gain the knowledge, confidence and inspiration to develop their careers within NatWest and pursue leadership positions that afford greater strategic input and more influence over product development.

everywoman is delivering a range of complementary programmes and events to help high street bank NatWest attract more women into business — and advance women at all levels within their own organisation.
The NatWest everywoman Awards celebrated their 15th anniversary in 2017, and continue to celebrate the success of Britain’s top female entrepreneurs (with more than 200 stories showcased so far). Meanwhile, since its launch, more than 550 Women in Business advisers have progressed through the NatWest everywoman Accreditation Programme. And today, more than 3,000 female and male employees regularly access resources on the everywomanNetwork digital platform.

The impact of the Accreditation Programme on the female business community has been particularly significant. As well as face-to-face meetings with existing and potential business customers, accredited advisers hosted a series of local seminars and networking events that were attended by more than 20,000 people in 2016 alone.

“Our goal is to be the go-to bank for women setting up or scaling a business,” said Yvonne Greeves, Head of Women in Business for RBS and NatWest, “so the Accreditation Programme has been really fantastic. I was one of the first people to go through it, and it opened a whole new world for me in terms of understanding the challenges and barriers facing women in business today.”

Yvonne and her 400-strong team are great examples of how the partnership between everywoman and NatWest is supporting the development of talent across the bank and, specifically, increasing the representation of women at senior levels. Membership of the everywomanNetwork plays an increasingly pivotal role, with engagement rising sharply.

As a strategic business partner, everywoman is making a significant impact. “It has been said that if women were to start businesses at the same rate as men, there would be 150,000 more start-ups in the UK every year,” added NatWest’s Julie Baker. “So we like to think that our partnership with everywoman is not just helping the bank but also the UK economy.”

“Since the start of the Accreditation Programme, we have seen a huge uplift in lending to female business customers, as well as a significant increase in Women in Business customers — which is all fantastic.”

However, for many banks today (and for NatWest in particular) success is not being measured just by pounds and pence, but also by their contribution to society. “NatWest is a values-driven brand, with a clear vision to be more worthy, more inclusive and to offer more to its communities,” said Kate Farrow, Head of Partnerships at everywoman. “Helping it have a leadership profile that closely matches its customer base is an important part of that process, and something everywoman is delighted to play a role in.”