

Making waves and aiming high with a little help from her friends

Spanish wave energy specialist reveals how she has set up a consultancy firm with help from the Copenhagen Mentor Programme at Business House CPH

DAVE SMITH

CURRENTLY riding the crest of a wave in the area of ocean energy consultancy is Julia Chozas (juliafchozas.com), a Spanish specialist in the field who founded her own company in 2013: Julia F Chozas, Consulting Engineer (JFC-CE).

Chozas is one of many to benefit from the expert advice of Business House CPH (BHC) which through its Copenhagen Mentor Programme and other services has been assisting international entrepreneurs to go it alone in what can initially be an intimidating environment.

The Danish mentors provided by BHC are experienced and knowledgeable, carefully selected, voluntary and free of charge.

"The advantage for entrepreneurs is that mentors can advise them from a more practical point of view, and share their network and drive, in order to find hands-on solutions to the challenges they meet," explained Zikoh Kouassi-Zessia, a business consultant at BHC.

"We are currently looking for more mentors to support entrepreneurs aiming to establish sustainable companies in Copenhagen."

The Weekly Post caught up with Chozas to find out more about the challenges involved in launching her business in Denmark.

How did you get into contact with BHC?

A friend of mine put me in contact after he had a good experience with the team at BHC. I was astonished by the variety of services offered to entrepreneurs and new business startups on BHC's website. I signed up for an introduction course for entrepreneurs (called 'Start here') and since then I have used a variety of different services provided by BHC.

How has BHC helped you?

I have received a lot of help with business practicalities and taken a number of courses in subjects relating to business, administration, marketing, finance and book-keeping. Working with BHC also gave me the opportunity to meet other like-minded international entrepreneurs. We established a strong business network, which is extremely valuable in the startup process. In my opinion, one of the other top services BHC provides is the 'Start Here - Speed Advisory' service. This service allows you to attend a 20-minute Q&A session with experts in taxes, marketing and A-kasse, accountants and lawyers. It is a monthly event organised in central Copenhagen and is free of charge.

What were you lacking?

Having lived and worked in Denmark for over four years by the time I decided to start my own business, I already had a reasonable knowledge of Danish workplace culture. However, I was largely in the dark when it came to issues such as tax and legal duties, auditing obligations, marketing etc. BHC helped me with all of these.

How did you find your mentor?

I participated in the Copenhagen Mentor Programme organised by BHC in the spring of 2013 - a volunteer service between mentors and mentees. Through this program, BHC assigned me my mentor, Peter Munch-Madsen.

How has he helped you?

Peter has been a great help to me. He is extremely supportive and has helped me to analyse and overcome a lot of my business uncertainties. He has played a key role in maintaining my motivation, and has taught me to look at my business through the eyes of a businessman, rather than simply an engineer with an idea. I would very much like to acknowledge his continuous commitment as a mentor: his fruitful advice, his business guidance, and his openness in sharing his personal experiences and networks.



JOHAN KARANTSCHEF

Julia Chozas fully endorses the BHC's mentorship program

How is your company performing?

Overall, I am proud and happy with the results of 2014. Every day is a hands-on learning process and it's been an exciting and unpredictable journey. During this time, I've learned to juggle a lot of different aspects of the business. Business-wise, the company has expanded beyond the Danish market, and I am now looking into new opportunities in the Norwegian and German markets too.

I have also had the chance to share my enthusiasm for wave energy and new energy systems with a wide variety of students in the industry. I am always willing to contribute when it comes to educating a new generation of experts in ocean energies.

What are your future plans?

I am looking at 2015 with passion and enthusiasm. My intention is to maintain the partnerships that I have today and expand my business into new potential markets. My motto is "raising awareness of energy-related issues". I am truly concerned about our energy future and our current energy

challenges. I hope to contribute towards a positive change within energy planning, electricity markets and the integration of renewable energies into our energy systems. I still have many things to learn, but with the

help of partners, colleagues, clients and BHC, I feel I am on the right track to achieving my goals.

JFCCE

- JFCCE provides consultancy and training in the energy sector with a special focus on ocean energies and other renewables.

- JFCCE's main aim is to promote knowledge and a positive change in the energy sector through counselling services, education and interactive energy activities.

- JFCCE has already collaborated with Energinet.dk, the European Commission, Aalborg University and the IEA-OES (International Energy Agency).

- JFCCE is active in the Danish, French, Spanish, Swedish and Irish markets.

- Julia Chozas, who got her PhD at Aalborg University, was trained as a wave energy expert by the European Commission. Her background is in electrical engineering and power systems.

BUSINESS HOUSE CPH

- BHC provides business advisory services to entrepreneurs in order to establish more successful businesses in Copenhagen.

- The services are in English and Danish and available to Copenhagen Municipality residents.

- Its mission is - in co-operation with companies - to contribute to the strategies and specific initiatives to ensure growth and jobs in Copenhagen.

- It advises in relation to hiring and recruiting employees, and obtaining the necessary permits, application forms and funding from the municipality and other authorities.

- BHC (international.kk.dk) is based at Nyropsgade 1 in Vesterbro.