

# SECRETS OF MY SUCCESS



**Name:** Leila Thomas  
**Age:** 35  
**Occupation:** Founder and director of Urban Synergy

**L**eila launched Urban Synergy – A Mentor Resource Pool in 2007. Its aims are to get professionals from a variety of backgrounds to become volunteer mentors into the community in London. Mentors provide a range of services, including one-to-one mentoring and support, work experience and workshops, in an effort to equip young people with valuable life skills and experiences so that they can ultimately succeed.

**VISION:** I had been very unhappy about the number of youth killings and negative press regarding underachieving young people. This was my trigger to start the Urban Synergy project, and get professionals from a wide variety of backgrounds (medical, legal, sport, technical, media, entertainment, finance etc) to become volunteer mentors into the community, London-wide. I coupled up with another project

manager to create a steering group of professionals who had the same vision and passion. Together we developed a programme to train over 50 professionals to plant a positive seed of hope, ambition and achievement in young people. I believe so much that it's not only the parents who have the responsibility of raising a child, but it's the village also. I myself had guidance and people motivating and encouraging me outside of my family to get to where I am today and appreciate it. Hopefully, I can do the same for another young person.

**CHALLENGES:** Funding has been difficult, but fortunately, there are a number of high-profile people and companies that support us in kind. If people want to support us, they can do so in a number of ways, including providing us with their skills, providing a young person with

an opportunity or donating money. We haven't had any issues finding mentors, because word has really spread about what Urban Synergy is doing. People have felt so burdened about the lack of role models, resources and hope for young people that they want to train as mentors. We constantly get enquiries.

## **MOST ENJOYABLE:**

I get a great deal of satisfaction from helping people, and I believe that only together can we make a difference and overcome the issues we're facing in our community. I feel strongly about engaging young people at a grass-roots level in order to understand their challenges and to give them the tools to succeed. In turn, I hope to build the self-respect of the young people we mentor – and maybe some of these young people will in turn become role models for future mentees.

## **5 TIPS FOR SUCCESS**

- 1 CONSIDER FINDING YOURSELF A MENTOR.** Everyone can benefit from having one.
- 2 INTEGRITY, COMMITMENT AND PERSEVERANCE**
- 3 ENTHUSIASM AND PASSION**
- 4 CONFIDENCE AND A DEGREE OF EXPERTISE**
- 5 YOU ALSO HAVE TO FIND YOUR BALANCE.** Value and spend time with your loved ones!

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