In the General Management Program (GMP) at Harvard Business School, Paula Davila Martinez learned how leaders can make a greater difference to their teams and to their company—learning that has helped her hit the ground running in a challenging new role.

**Q** What direction did your career take after GMP?

When I completed GMP I had been working in the pharmaceutical industry for several years and in procurement for more than 10 years. Two years after finishing the program, I took on new responsibilities in a new industry and company, serving as chief procurement officer for Adidas at the company headquarters in Germany.

**Q** Which aspects of GMP did you find most helpful?

GMP was invaluable, as it prepared me to confront the new challenges that came with my new role and to embark on important transformations—both in the company’s procurement function and in myself. Disruption, largely driven by technology, is affecting every industry at an unprecedented rate. This requires new and different leadership capabilities, and GMP has set me on the path to becoming a truly transformational leader.

**Q** How did GMP change your approach to leadership?

The program expanded my perspective. I learned to look beyond the obvious and consider problems from all possible angles. I also gained greater appreciation for the power of diversity and the importance of integrating many different perspectives. This is helping me develop a winning, high-impact team.

More broadly, GMP has helped me define what kind of leader I want to be and how I want to make a difference through my work and my leadership. I now understand the importance of igniting the organization with a sense of purpose—even before thinking about strategy, culture, organizational structures, systems, and processes.
How did the program affect you personally?

GMP is much more than a senior leadership development program—it’s a personal development program as well. The program helped me reflect deeply on my values, what motivates me, and how I want to measure success in life. I was prompted to ask myself important questions. How do I want to be remembered, not only as a leader but also personally? How am I giving back, not only at work but also at home? My husband says that GMP has changed me as a person—and he’s right.

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How have you kept in touch with your GMP network?

My GMP group is very active and highly connected via social media. We always make an effort to meet up when we travel. One of the most valuable aspects of GMP—during and after the program—has been the close ties I developed with five other female participants, all highly successful leaders. We became close friends, and we continue to support and help each other. Whenever one of us is facing a challenge or has a big decision to make, we reach out to each other. The richness of perspectives we have gained as a group is priceless.

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