

## THE OTHER TALENTS OF THE ULMA GROUP

Employees and partners of the Group make their professional career compatible with very demanding hobbies in which they demonstrate that all obstacles can be overcome with talent and hard work.

# A life in sport and in the mountains

Maite Zabaleta, ULMA Handling Systems

**Maite Zabaleta, an administrative officer at ULMA Handling, combines her professional duties with trail running. For Maite, daily training is a way to switch off.**

All her life, Maite Zabaleta has been connected with mountains: her family, her work and her passion, trail running, a demanding sport involving running along mountain trails.

Maite was born in Oñati 35 years ago. She now lives in Aretxabaleta and works as an administrative officer at ULMA Handling Systems, also in Oñati. She is so dedicated to trail running that she uses her lunch hour to run 10 kilometres in the area around the cooperative. She does this every day, except for "active rest" day. "I'm using to going out, training, eating and then going back to work". Why? "For me it's more of a rest than an obligation. I switch off so I'm able to get rid of everything in my head", she explains.

Her passion for this sport started relatively late - she was already aged over 20 when she started. Maite recalls that as a child and a teenager she did athletics and played basketball. But these activities meant that she couldn't spend as much time doing what she really liked - walking in the hills with her father. "If I had a match on Sunday morning, I would go walking in the afternoon. That's what it was like - I always had to combine them. But one day I said to myself - no, I prefer to be out on my own in the fresh air." So she started hill-running.

She started training alone, doing it her own way with no instruction other

than her own common sense. However, a couple of years ago she'd had enough of running alone and joined the Vitoria-Gasteiz team, Zortzietakoak, and decided to use a personal trainer. "We often think that we will improve by running, running and running, but just doing that is no good: we have to take breaks, cycle, sprint", she explains after recognizing that since she joined the team trail running has stopped being just a hobby. "If you do something, you're supposed to do it well aren't you?" she says. Now she goes racing with her team mates and meets different people and everything is more enjoyable.



*For me it's more relaxation than obligation. I switch off so I'm able to get rid of everything in my head*

Even the competition. Maite participates in about 10 races a year, all of less than 30 kilometres. And she has winner's medals, although she doesn't even mention it. It's hard to believe, but she finds it difficult to remember how many top three finishes she has achieved in her life. She could only remember two: one in Vitoria, 25 kilometres and another in Villanúa, in the Huescan Pyrenees, "the vertical double".

That name suggests that it's not an easy race to forget. While the "vertical" involves 1,000 metres' climbing in less than 5 kilometres, the Villanúa double vertical means climbing 2,000 metres altitude in 7.5 kilometres, to the summit, Collarada. No big deal. Her summary of the race reveals how down to earth she is: "I suffered, I enjoyed it, I ran a good time and finished second".

She went to that race with her husband, her trail running companion with whom she enjoys a friendly rivalry ("he always beats me; I don't know how he does it, but I train more and I still can't beat him", she says with a laugh). Unlike him, Maite was only competing for the climb. She did it for the first time, with no expectations and only with the desire to participate. But she finished second in a very demanding race and, above all, she enjoyed it.

This Oñati athlete is not motivated by competition. It's the sport, the outdoor



activity and the mountains, especially the mountains. Maite says that she goes swimming on her rest days, to keep herself "moving". But she doesn't like it. She likes the mountains. And she's already looking forward to winter so she can go skiing, another of her hobbies.

Every day that she goes running, she manages to get the most from every detail of the route: "The charming landscape, enjoying the company of other people, discovering new things, new colours ...". That's why she never tires of the areas of Aizkorri and Urbia, where she goes running again and again.

Every day is different and she finds something different.

And nor does she get bored of physical exercise. She blushes if she is called an iron woman, but she has a vitality that does not let her rest "or sleep". And, as she says, laughing "if I can't have the mountains, I will die".