

ERASMUS+ Programme 2015 – KA2 Adult Education

Project n°: 2015-1-ES01-KA204-015937

Document name: **Interviewing entrepreneurial women - Cyprus**

Partner: Cyprus Adult Education Association – Syndesmos Ekpedevsis Enilikon Kyprou (CAEA)

Author: Klitos Symeonides

Employment and Women on the 21st century in Europe: From Household economy to SME economy (Small and Medium enterprises) – MUPYME Project

INTERVIEWING ENTREPRENEURIAL WOMEN

NIKI AGATHOCLEOUS (AGROS)



Niki a business woman at Agros community

1. The identification

Niki is one of the most dynamic woman who became a famous business woman in Agros community in the mountains. From a single person company now she employed 22 full time persons and some part time employees.

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This is a family business. Was established by Niki and her husband at 1986. Now both adult children University Graduate, work at the business one at the Sale department and the other at the accounting department.

They started to produce traditional sweets. Walnuts, cherry, guince, sujukos, marmalade jum, fruits, vegetables in general spoon sweets. Almost all fruits and vegetable of the community are used at the business.

About the community Agros:

Small businesses related to the household is the characteristic of this town and many, mainly women and families have an income. It is 60 kilometres far from the capital Nicosia and 45 from Limassol the second large city. Attitude 1200 metres. Wine yards, rose flowers, many kind of fruits etc are the main products and smoke meat at various types is produced. Light manufacture using the local products.

There are some wine industries, many companies mainly home related, produce smoke meat (sausages, hiromeri, bacon, tsamarella(goat meat), pastourma (beef sausages) etc.

There is a hospital, all services, a regional agricultural Centre, a huge sport centre with Olympic size swimming pool etc. Very good roads lead to the town from the capital and from the second large city in Cyprus. The town is very touristic and many tourists coming to Cyprus are visiting the town.

There is a women organization in the town and women for the last 15 years are working for the development of the town and for the development of their status.

The business is very famous all over Cyprus and many Cypriots and tourist are visiting the business.

The building hosting the company is a 3 floor building, a show room, workshops, offices etc.

Most persons (mainly women) working at the company, are dealing with the raw material and the preparation of the sweets. Delivering the fruits, vegetable, nuts, preparing for the necessary sugar and after to pack ready for the show room or for exporting.

A University graduate as Food technologists is employed at full time. There is a network for distributing the products. There is a store officer, hygiene workers etc.

There is a large network covering the whole country for delivering the products. Supermarkets, shops for traditional food, small groceries, etc. are the places for selling the products. The last

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years, sweets, marmalades, rose sweets were exported in U.K, USA, Australia, Greece, Japan, Holland, France.

2. The beginning

2.1. Niki wanted to study home Economics. Family commitment, children and husband, block her will for further studies. Her mind was always to do something, to create something, to protect the traditional food and the traditions of the community. Her husband was a banker and decided to start a small light manufacture.

2.2. It was in 1986 when her husband decided to join Niki and give up his job for the business. Husband was the first to undertake the task to deliver the products to other places outside the community. Before officially starts, she realized her skills in making sweets and traditional food.

2.3. Niki said that her father was very helpful in encouraging her, giving a lot of initiatives to her, and knowledge and skills. Mainly Niki mentioned that the household was like a University for her learning every day from household tasks. Living in this community which is a paradise of fruits, of grapes, when most villagers were working producing products of fruits, of grapes etc Niki could not stay behind.

2.4. The main difficulty was the space where the business to function. Very small space, then the delay of the health services to give the hygiene licence, the lack of car for the delivery of products, the lack of loans and the lack of suitable equipment and tools.

2.5. Her mother and father, her mother in law were very helpful because children were small and they were helping. Husband as we said was very helpful. In 1992 they managed to have a loan with low interest. That time they had the first expansion of the company.

2.6. At the beginning were working 18 hours a days, was hard work all family and friends were on alert all the time. Psychological and physical strength was needed.

2.7. The basic decision at the beginning was to establish a good name for the company, to promote the local traditional food, to produce products without conservatism. Quality and good services were priorities.

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3. The consolidation

3.1. Good quality, good services, authentic products, genuine products without conservation materials were principles at the beginning. It was a lot of efforts to build the necessary trust among the people-clients.

3.2. The purchases of equipment, of car for delivery purposes, the marketing which was intensive, the expansion of the network of shops to sell the products, also the increase of the products were the main reasons for the future success.

3.3. The main problem at the beginning was that supermarkets and shop were delaying to cover their obligations when they purchasing products. The business did not predict and did not know how to deal with this problem. Gradually the problem was minimized.

3.4. A significant change was when the children of the family joint the business and gave the necessary push. At that time Niki developed her initiative skills and leadership values by changing a lot of things, introducing new products, establishing new markets in other countries etc.

4. The future

4.1. The business is always under changes. New products, withdrawal on not successful products, new personnel, training of manpower, expansion of space, new markets. The last product is liqueur with smell of rose.

4.2. The market determines the future. The demand is high and the business is able to meet the needs of the market. The 30 employees cost a lot, and should be careful steps for any further development.

4.3. All depends on collective ideas and decisions. The will is always there for developments but careful steps are needed. Niki would not introduce new products, she prefer to work with traditional products. They have in mind one product that might be introduced. It will be honey.

4.4. One of the son is interested to introduce the production on honey using aromatic roses. They have done a feasibility study and the results are encouraging. Honey will be one additional main product of the company.

4.5. The plans related to changes in new products require training of personnel and this is a precondition.

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5. Enterprising women

5.1. To be a woman in business is very difficult as you have besides the business the tasks in the household. This is exhausting for the woman who is in business. Besides this difficulty there are also prejudices which at recent times are not strong as were 30 and more years ago. At that time women should stay home to raise children and not to go to business. Today things are changing and women are free to go to business.

Niki was working at household for many years. This was very helpful for her in acquiring many knowledge and skills. Making sweets at home was a practice of all housewives at Agros community and this is a starting point in establishing small business in the community.

At secondary schools Niki was attending classes on accountancy and this helped her in the business. In 1978 was working in Nicosia for 3 years in a company as secretary on sale department. There, she has seen how market is working.

Niki is a very successful woman in all aspects. A good house wife, an active citizen in the community and in the women association, a very good business woman well known in Cyprus and even outside.

She is a good employer running a company with 30 employees. She fined time to serve every client. Sometime important personalities are visiting her business and see the impressive work which is taking place.

She participated in a Grundtvig project with Greece and Italy. This project brought the community near Europe. The project opened her horizons on International work.

She believes that a woman has a hidden dynamic which can come out and reveal a giant. Niki, with so many qualities acquired from household, having the support of her husband succeeded a miracle which few men or women could succeed.

Niki believes that decision making process is developed at the household where so many tasks are implemented. Decision making process is the corner stone for a successful business. Niki found easy to take decisions at business, practicing every day decisions taking at the household. Leadership skills also are practiced at the household and Niki has shown her leadership skills at her business. One important element for a successful business is the time management, and Niki managed at household to command the time.

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5.2+3. There is a numerous issues that a woman can learn at the household which can be transferred to the business. Niki managed to transfer those qualities from household to her business. Managing employees need a lot of skills and knowledge. Need to be patient as progress needs time. Need to be calm, wish a smile, need to be friendly and trust people. Need to know how to motivate employees.

Organizational skills are very important for a business woman. Many organizational skills are everyday practice at the household. To take decisions is a complex issue and there in many time a risk in taking decisions. A successful business woman could take risks base on her experiences and practices. Without risk decisions there is no progress in many cases. Risk management is important for a business woman.

A woman who by nature is more sensitive than a man, can protect the general environment of the household and of the business. The good working conditions is very important for productivity at high levels.

One value for a successful business is the coordination issue. Knowing how to allocate tasks is very important. In the business everything should be in order and each person should know where to be, what time, what to do. A woman is the most suitable person to allocate tasks as at household is one of her basic task.

A strong personality needs time to be formulated. Need a lot of time, a lot of experience, a lot of try and error. A woman at the household is becoming every day stronger and formulate her personality with every day practice. A strong personality of the woman is the necessary value for a successful business.

5.4. Unfortunately nowadays women have no training as housewives. What they do is practicing the tasks at the household, it is like try and error. They use their enthusiasm, commitment and their parents' values transferred to them. They have no training to "modernise" the household. To keep records, to use the most economic ways , to use friendly environment, to try to take some risks, to learn how to deal with pedagogical issues, to keep income-expenses records, to use mass media and new technology for more productive household.

5.5. Women are ideal leaders of businesses, any business as they acquire most of the qualities needed for a business. Household is giving a woman a great advantage to lead a business. The most important advantage is the multitask character of the work of the housewife. The same time a woman is doing 2-3 tasks and have her attention to the tasks.

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Women look more patient than men and have better social contacts. The “women mind” is all the time on alert, is planning, is thinking for the best grow up of children, is , thinking of activities for the better functioning of the household, and of course of the business if there is a business.

5.6. Niki believes that certain skills, knowledge, values, qualities needed for a successful business managed by women. Organizational, leadership, coordination, decision making skills, are needed for the business woman. Commitment, risk taking, strong personality, determination, consistency, dynamism, trust are needed for success.

5.7. The strong family instinct should be strengthen according to Niki. Also should be continues training of business women. Short and long courses are necessary.