

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

MARIA TSOLAKI (AGROS)



Maria Tsolakis, a business family, rose products in Agros

1. The identification

Maria lives in Agros. It is a town in the mountains. Is very picturesque, very touristic. 800 people live there. There is an elementary school and a regional Secondary School.

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

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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.

Maria with her husband and her two professional daughters all full time, run a very interesting company. They also employ other persons to collect the raw material (part time, seasonable personnel) which is the rose. They employ one worker full time. They have also persons for distribution of the products. The two daughters studied abroad at Universities one on chemistry a subject related directly to the work of the company and the second on financial-economic issues.

The business is situated in a modern building with all modern facilities. There is a show room – exhibition place, where tourists can have an orientation and also to buy what they prefer.

They business produces:

- Rose water for sweet
- Rose water for epidermis
- Liger for drinks
- Aperitif e for drinks
- Rose Tea
- Aromatic candles
- Cabernet wine with rose flavour
- Biologic cosmetics
- Pottery

Agros is the town of roses and Maria's company crow many acres of roses to be used at the company. Furthermore they rent other fields of roses in the town.

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The distribution is done by representatives who with commission deliver products in many places across Cyprus. The Rose water Tsolakis is famous all over Cyprus. Other products are exported especially the rose oil, the face creams, body lotion etc. Most of products are sell at the business at the town, as many Cypriots and tourist are visiting this picturesque community and many are going there for the rose business of Maria.

2. The beginning

In 1948 the father of Maria's husband started a company for rosewater. Equipments were primitive and products was for local use mainly.

In 1987 was the starting date when the family undertook to establish officially a company. First step was to expand the company.

At that time the community was gradually becoming an attractive place for visit by Cypriots and also by tourist and local products were sell. Any product, especially rose, was profitable. Expansion of the business was profitable.

At first was a small room with the rose traditional refinery and the tank of water. The family brought in many ideas and gradually new equipment replaced the old. New building were added. New technology was introduced. New knowledge and experiences were added. In order to bottle the rose water and other products, pottery was introduced. Ovens were imported from abroad and now small bottles-cups are produced. To make attractive, decoration is taking place.

In 1990 a loan was given for the expansion. Interest was low. In 2010, the government was giving subsidies for modern refineries and they took the opportunity. At that time the daughter has finished University and was giving valuable advices for expansion to new products.

In 1987 the collection of roses became a reality and gave a real push to the company. They grow roses in two areas on the community. One area was in much lower altitude where the frost could not affect roses. The other plantation was at higher places where frost could affect the product of rose. With this they could have always roses.

Difficulties at the beginning were overcome due to determination, commitment, love of what they are doing, good planning, not taking risky decisions. Careful steps were taken. It was a period of very good cooperation with all involved Maria and her husband mainly.

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Important decisions were taken to go to new areas, to change equipments, to introduce ICT and internet in the business, to base their new development on tourism and make products attractive.

3. The consolidation

The factors which were decisive for the maintenance of the project were many:

- To be patient and not expecting fast results.
- Stable quality of products
- Experiences
- consistency
- Encouragement by others
- Desire and love of the community

In order to maintain alive the project there are some factors which should be taken in count:

- Introduction of new technology
- Marketing
- Use of all available resources
- Delivery on time
- Products to be produced on very good hygiene standards
- Always address more clients

They miss some educational opportunities. They wanted always to learn, but they miss opportunities due to hard work. . They also at the beginning were working with 1-2 products, they should have different products, as clients want opportunities for more choices.

The prediction they made to plan rose trees at two levels to prevent lack of the most important raw material the roses because of the cold winter was important decision. So they have the raw material when they need it.

Another important decision for consolidation was the modernization of the premises, the show room, the guided tour in the business, the pottery products to bottle the rose products.

Now they have an electric generator in case of electric cut.

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4. The future

The business addresses everybody. Products are useful to wide part of the population.

The daughter who is a chemist will determine the future development of the business. One are which looks with a bright future is cosmetics. Now the business send to Athens, Greece, the rose oil as raw material and cosmetics are coming back to the company. The expertise of the daughter will be used for expansion of the company. There is serious thinking that is the time for this. But this is a serious investment, needs a lot of funds-loans. The main idea is, that the new investment, gives a lot of ideas about exporting the cosmetics.

There is a great will for expansion, there is commitment, but also the context of the business gives ground for expansion and development. The business leadership have already introduced plan to expand the rose plantation and renew the rose trees, which is a requirement for further development.

Expansion and development of the company depends of many factors. The will and commitment is an important factor. The expertise is also there as the needed chemistry knowledge is a fact. The selling of the products looks bright due to quality and also high levels of marketing and the increasing numbers of tourists visiting the place. Due to the fame of the company and the large investments, Bank can offer loans for expansion. The experience of all involved in the company guarantees success of the plans for changes.

5. Enterprising women

5.1 Maria feels that has not enough personal life. She feels that business does not allow her for free time. Even though she is active in the women association of Agros and have a social life with other women. The business gives her pleasure as all family is working there.

The business is like her “baby”, she is so proud of the business, she feels the happiness of the creator as she has significant contribution for the establishment and for the development of the business.

Maria is a strong personality. Her husband also. He is a cooperating person and she is open to suggestions. She trust people especially the family persons. She has a significant role in the development of the business together with her husband. Besides the household work trying to grow up the two children she was spending a lot of time for the household. (The business is at the same complex of the house).

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Maria is a determine person and believes in values. She is an active woman in the community and is taking a lot of experiences, ideas, values from this activity. TO build a strong personality with leadership skills with strong determination are values acquired at home but also through the involvement in common activities in the community. The women association was a corner stone for the development of women in the community.

Maria believes that a woman with determination, can be a successful business person. A woman is not inferior than a man. She can do all the activities that a man can do. Besides a woman is a multitask person and can do the same time many types of work. She can also be very good in human relations. A woman can discover new ideas “the female mind is always with new ideas”.

5.2+3 Maria has taught a lot form household which she has transfer to the business. One main value she mentioned is the risk taking. She was not afraid to take important decisions always with her husband. She has developed and improve leadership and organizational skills at the household. She has learned to be patient, a great value in business. She realizes how strong she became working at the household. She has leaned to have everything in time, everything at the right place both very important for the business.

During the work at the household she was active at the women association. She took part in a Grundtvig project with Italy and Greece and participating in a meeting in Italy. The project has opened her horizons. During the household work, she was taking care of rose plantation, planning, organizing things, renewing the rose trees.

Maria did not take higher education due to children and the starting of the business. She wanted. She has compensate herself giving the opportunity to her children to have the higher education.

Many skills and knowledge were acquired by Maria that correspond to the business. Maria mentioned beside the above mentioned , the planning at both placements, the coordination, the budgetary issues, the management issues, the psychological and physical strengths, the environmental sensitivities etc.

5.4 Household is ideal place for a housewife to practice some principles of management. The so many task has to be in an order with a simple programming, with a time table schedule, with a simple way of recording and reporting the tasks. This will facilitate her work, minimize the expenses. Education here plays a crucial role by equipping the housewife with the necessary skills and knowledge how to run better the household. With this practical ways the household can be “modernized”.

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5.5 Maria says that women can succeed in all kinds of businesses. Compared with men have nothing to feel inferior. On the contrary due to the women nature, women can run better than men some kinds of businesses.

5.6 Maria says consistency, sensitivity, planning, dynamism, courage, decision making, knowledge, skills, risk taking, persistence, trust, motivation, caring, quality of products, management skills and many others are values that women should have in order to be successful in business.

5.7 Women housewives need support to do their mission better. There are areas that need to be strengthened. Short course on various aspects could improve the tasks. Courses on psychological strength could improve her personality which is facing many times the feeling of isolation, of hopelessness. Also to give skills how to overcome issues related to the growth of children, of food, of hygiene, of programming, of management etc .