

ERASMUS+ Programme 2015 – KA2 Adult Education Project n°: 2015-1-ES01-KA204-015937
Document name: Workshop Summary
Partner: DAFNI KEK
Author: Vassiliki Tsekoura

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

Interviewing Entrepreneurial Women

Marriana Xyga

Accessorie’s Shop

Industry: Commerce and Retailing

Introductory Message

Entrepreneurship in its nature is not only a creative but a communicative action, too. Keeping this in mind, the DAFNI KEK staff within the MUPYME project were in search of those women entrepreneurs not only speak but COMMUNICATING effectively their vision behind their decision to become entrepreneurs – considering also that this decision keeps them active in several roles in parallel, the role of mother, of wife or partner.

Besides the focus objective of the task of interviewing “to bring light to the routes and lives as are perceived by the entrepreneurs themselves” in order to learn and get inspired by them, we were in serious consideration what exactly role model of entrepreneur we wanted to promote –especially considering the time of crisis and the various deficits the target group of housewives are facing daily.

Keeping in mind the profile of the housewives (age, location, educational background, personal and social status) we decided to reach to those entrepreneurs who are not far from the selected housewives’ cultural and educational background, or even in age terms.

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After the prior research in our context of reference (Achaia Prefecture, mainly in Patras area) and taking into account the dominate job industries of the city, we came in contact with the first 5 of the about 15 women entrepreneurs found.

The Identification

Marianna is a 48 year-old mother of 3 teenagers. She was always around Trade and Sales but not in the first line. She used to support her husband giving priority to the family growing up. Last year (2015) she decided to capitalize her personal experience and despite the economic crisis, she opened her own business in Women Accessories – with great success. Today she is proud for this decision, a little anxious with the unstable situation but ready to adapt because she is in love with her job: to make women feel beautiful, to take care of themselves without spending a fortune.

Marianna was always around sales. 25 years ago, she was a freelancer Books sales agent, representing various Editing Houses, emphasizing popular education and learning, simplified science and encyclopaideias. In parallel and for years and after her marriage (20 years ago), together with her husband was involved in Accessories sector, women related. It was an opportunity to meet various distributors all over Greece who promoted, depending on the fashion trends, new accessories in the market. She was the person who could make the most successful choices of the tremendous variety of products and also to learn a lot about what we mean 'faux bijoux'.

We met her at her shop in Patras city where she responded to our question “How does it feel to be at the same time an entrepreneur yourself and a mother of 3 children?” What are the problems and how she overcomes the difficulties arising and challenging her day.

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Location

Patras, Capital of Western Greece. Points of reference: the Main industry is Services. Due to connection directly via Port with rest of Europe, the citizens are influenced by all trends and despite the economic crisis the fashion market is very competitive and pluralistic. Dubbed as Greece's *Gate to the West*, Patras is a commercial hub, while its busy port is a nodal point for trade and communication with Italy and the rest of [Western Europe](#).

As far as commerce and retailing is concerned, Patras used to have a very big market but due to the 2009 economic crisis many shops shut down. Still there are many shops but things don't look that well, especially due to the devaluation of work in the recent years while the cost of life hasn't decreased at all. Because of that, many people prefer cheaper things and so, many retailers turn to cheaper products in order to keep in business. People used to be suspicious towards cheap products, but many have changed their minds and appreciate cheap products much more.

The beginning

Marianna followed her husband's decision, 10 years ago, to start their own shop with women's accessories and not only representing distributors to the market (not to be just the dealer of brands).

She was very active making use of her personal instinct and the experience gained throughout the years... but always joining the decision of her husband who was responsible to meet the distributors, to travel a lot and react - almost directly – to opportunities.

It was a period characterized of a consuming culture – just before crisis on 2009, where they started to understand the shift in economic situation both from the part of distributors and producers and the clients.

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On 2009 they decided to promote the idea of ‘all you buy less than 3 euros’, and this was the starting point of an effective sales strategy at least for some years (till 2013). As the economic crisis was getting deeper and longer than previously assumed, a lot of similar shops started to operate – and it seems as if the same. This is the moment she decided to follow her vision: A shop addressing the woman needs exclusively, with well selected goods in special prices only for her (the woman).

The consolidation

After a family council, they decided to take the risk and open a new shop under her own responsibility in all levels: Financial, Reaching Distributors, selecting the cooperators and making the decisions also respecting hiring sales agents as employees.

The first step was to find a shop in the right place and in the right price (as rent). Due to the financial situation, a lot of traditionally expensive merchant corners became empty after shutting down. She managed really to find the most appropriate – as it seems – palace to operate her shop.

In the meantime she was in search and negotiation with distributors – the old and some new ones. She was experienced in strategic communication, to negotiate in favor of her business but also she was aware about reliability – this was the important element in a chaotic market – “to be trustful and reliable” despite the constraints (a subjective situation that emerged by the government decision in the summer of 2015 for capital controls). This was an unexpected, unregulated situation because all the providers/distributors were much more demanding and needed additional guarantee to sell you products paid in mortgages.

Her skills to communicate clearly, her long experience in sales and reliability contributed a lot in overcoming this obstacle too.

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And the most important, as she says “I feel happy when I see women feel happy buying things which promote their confidence” and is also a great pleasure to “communicate, to share, to support their shopping and taking your suggestion as expertise: I feel proud that I can share the same feelings with them – as part of a symphony.”

The communication skills are very important in marketing & sales especially in crisis period ,as all clients are skeptical when consuming, and make more difficult decisions than before due to limitations and insecurity/unemployment.

You need to adapt to the new situation and try to keep quality in good, affordable prices.

You need to promote a new approach about products that are massive but with quality although cheaper than the brands.

And this approach needs to be elaborated in fair terms – searching not mass production goods only but promoting unknown, talented creators with simple material but great in design.

And this is an approach that wins... because it creates a chain of solidarity, self confidence, and connection of people around ideas, narratives, personal stories and feelings!

The future

“I remain positive and I believe in the necessity of my service: to facilitate the woman’s and each person need to feel beautiful, to wear accessories that emphasize their characteristics and personality.”

“It is not about profit. It is about surviving in dignity. To be proud because you manage, you make other people feel happy and talented for their small consuming decisions and continue supporting the young creators.”



Main message

- Transfer of experience from one context to another and make use of it depending the analogies
- Good communication and effective marketing derives from the personality traits, named reliability, empathy, sincerity, flexibility in decisions
- Fair trade values
- Love for people
- Working a lot of hours
- Promote the talent of your clients: you share in equal terms with them the success – small or bigger one! Only in such a bilateral “win-win” approach, you can feel sure for your future as an entrepreneur.





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