

ERASMUS+ Programme 2015 – KA2 Adult Education
Project n°: 2015-1-ES01-KA204-015937
Document name: O3.- Study and analysis of the professional skills of business women,
applicable to housewives – Lorca (Spain)
Partner: FEUP
Author: Emilio Jurado

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

O3.- Study and analysis of the profesional skills of business women, applicable to housewives – Lorca (Spain)

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. All six businesswomen are from one of the hamlets of Lorca (Murcia): Lorca, La Haya, Tercia, Lorca Urbana and la Torrecilla. They were selected because of their success as businesswomen and because there are not many enterprises ran by women within Lorca.
2. In Lorca, the business network focuses on agriculture (fruits and vegetables such as artichokes, paprika, broccoli, and lettuce), especially from an export approach. Moreover, pig farming has a long-standing tradition in the territory, as well as the resulting industry to process it.

However, the main source of employment can be found within the service and distribution sectors, since Lorca is a highly important trading spot for the localities in the region and Almería.

There is also a slight reminiscence of the leather tanning, textile and pottery industries. The main industrial area in Lorca is Parque Empresarial "Saprelorca", which gathers several enterprises. Among them, we could highlight the importance of the Turkish metallurgic enterprise Noksel. The complex gathers 200 companies employing 3000 workers.

In the area, there are also the industrial parks of Serrata (specialized in chemical and leather tanning industry), La Hoya (agriculture and food industries), and Los Peñones (light industry and shopping centres). Around the locality there are also a few marble quarries in the mountains near Valdeinfierno swamp.

Trade and Services are strong sectors in Lorca. There are more than 2000 establishments in the city and two shopping centres located on the outskirts. In the city centre, one can find several franchises and chain stores

of both national and international brands. On these matters, Lorca is the leader within Murcia, and its influence covers more than 4000km² towards the South West of the region, the East side of Almería and the hinterland of Granada. Thus, Professor Horacio Capel did not hesitate to call it "Subregional Capital", since it provides services for a territory with more than 25000 inhabitants. Furthermore, there are also fantastic facilities for education (University Campus), culture and healthcare.

3. All the businesswomen interviewed play an active role in their community by collaborating with Lorca City Council to promote female entrepreneurs and businesswomen.
4. All six of them are married with children, and spent many years being in charge of the household, trying to find a balance between housework and their jobs.
5. All six of them are middle-age women (between 46-65 years) and they have plenty of years ahead to keep on evolving and training.
6. Four of them started their business with the support and cooperation of their husbands. In two cases, they inherited the company as a consequence of one entrepreneur losing her husband and another one, her father.
7. One of the main reasons for working in their business was contributing to household economy or preserving the company they had inherited.
8. Only two of them had taken part in Grundtvig projects before or during their business activity. The rest of them have worked in projects promoted by Lorca City Council.
9. In all the cases, they feel that their communities support their business.
10. All of them have a medium education level – in other words, compulsory secondary education (ESO in Spanish educational system).
11. Eva María Paco Martínez was the interviewer. She is a professional adult trainer at the Popular University of Lorca and at Red Cross. She has great experience in training, she evaluates adult education and works as a

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manager in many European Projects, such as Sara Project, or Project: Social-Business Challenge for Labour Inclusion: Alliance (Proyecto: Reto Social Empresarial para la Inserción Laboral: Alianzas).

12. Eva visited the businesswomen's enterprises. Each interview took around two hours. All of them were highly approachable and kindly answered the questions.

STARTING A BUSINESS

Only 4 of the interviewed women made the actual decision of launching a business, since the two other inherited their enterprises.

Five of them are supported by their husbands. Had they not had their approval and commitment to be active in the enterprise, it would have been more difficult for them to start their business. It seems like their self-esteem and confidence must be boosted.

Five of them started their business projects and, then, pursued further training in the areas related to their enterprises. The result of this is the survival and permanence of the enterprise, regardless the financial crisis and the earthquake in Lorca (many of them had to move to different establishments in order to continue their business activities). One of them had to rent a hotel hall while her establishment was renovated.

Three of the women involved in the interview had previous experience in their sectors: they had already worked in the same company or in a different company within their sector. However, the other three had been involved in different sectors and decided to start a new project.

The main difficulties faced by the women when they started their projects were being aware of the characteristics of their sector and consistent training in order to keep their business "alive".

Most of them were supported by their families, by their husbands and children, in order to create a balance between their families and their business projects.

Most of them reported that the aspects that made them overcome difficulties

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were learning from them, perseverance, optimism and seriousness.

In most cases, the businesswomen had to face the same problems. Some of the main ones have been improving the spaces in which they develop their business activity, the quality of the products, hygiene and marketing.

All of them acknowledged the importance of housework and the knowledge and skills derived from it, since they are vital when it comes to business decision-making. Housework provided the psychological strength they needed to make decisions.

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ESTABLISHING BUSINESS

There are some factors that have contributed to establishing their business. They highlighted the following:

- ✓ Family Support.
- ✓ Experienced acquired by means of working in the company.
- ✓ New markets.
- ✓ Caring for the employees and knowing how to keep them is a key factor.
- ✓ Short and mid-term targets.
- ✓ Improving customer experience.
- ✓ Improving the quality of the products.
- ✓ Progress in marketing and advertising.
- ✓ Gradual expansion.
- ✓ Launching new products and updating the old ones.
- ✓ Training and self-education.
- ✓ Learning from their mistakes.
- ✓ Improving cooperation and coordination of mistakes.
- ✓ Implementing the internet and mass media.
- ✓ Collective decision-making.
- ✓ High consistency levels.
- ✓ Updating materials and equipment.
- ✓ Delivering products in time.
- ✓ Leveraging on available resources to the fullest.
- ✓ Improving public relations.

THE FUTURE OF THE BUSINESS

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The interviewed women were very cautious when talking about their plans for the future. For them, some of the critical factors for future development of their businesses were the following:

- ✓ Their children's future contribution to the Enterprise.
- ✓ New products and services.
- ✓ Self-funding aimed to expansion.
- ✓ Employing sufficiently qualified staff.
- ✓ Motivating the employees.
- ✓ Achieving the appropriate levels of professionalism for the future.
- ✓ Capacity to analyse the markets and adapt to them.
- ✓ Consistent training for both the entrepreneurs and their employees.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND WOMEN

Six of the women who took part in the interviews reported that they manage their businesses as they manage their budget at home: their spending does not surpass their earnings, family works as a business. They set a link between household and management of their business projects.

Regarding those things they learnt as housewives that have had a useful implementation in their business projects, all of them point out budget management, food supply management, holiday and education planning, etc.

Most of them established that there is a distinctive aspect found in enterprises managed by women: they have a greater insight and organization capacity, among other.

In their opinion, the key drivers for entrepreneurship are:

- If you want to do it, you can do it.
- Believing in your project.
- Enthusiasm.
- Not being afraid, having confidence in oneself and thinking you can do it.

The Businesswomen also pointed out the skills that housewives could reinforce taking into account their experiences in the household:

- Training encourages them to learn, compete and encourage others. Success is contagious.
- Self-esteem, being oneself and avoid thoughts such as “I can’t do that”, because it is always possible.
- Family balance.
- Not being afraid.
- Drive.

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All of them consider training to be vital to run a business. Since they do not have access to many training opportunities, they try to be self-taught.

Household experience offers some of the many skills required to run a business; however, businesswomen believe that structured training courses are necessary and they would lead to a more efficient management. Household training would have a very positive impact in business, since the skills acquired at home would be much more structured and organized. Women could implement all these aspects in a business context and succeed.

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A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSWOMAN'S QUALITIES

The Businesswomen told us their opinions and ideas regarding female success in business:

- Loving their jobs and being committed to them.
- Administrative and management skills.
- Decision-making skills.
- Being able to develop structured plans.
- Budget management skills.
- Time management skills.
- Appropriate customer service.
- Conflict management skills.
- Personal management skills.
- Having a cooperating disposition towards others.
- Being willing to pursue training for herself and her staff.
- Leadership skills.
- Believing in herself and being aware of her strength and skills.
- Being highly consistent.
- Being dynamic.
- Being able to acknowledge mistakes and limitations and learning from them.

The participants believe that housework provides multi-tasking skills, which allow

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them to perform activities in many different areas and levels. However, this is not the case when it comes to men. In this respect, women are aware of the differences and of their subsequent superiority.

They understand the importance of housework for their personal growth and want to modernize their experience at home. In order to achieve that, they need some help. This might be done by pursuing household training: with this sort of training, women could be more efficient, feel sure about themselves and would have to make less of an effort to carry out their activities in the household. Their living standards would improve significantly.

FINDINGS

1. First of all, the most important factor to make Housewives aware of their skills and potential is boosting self-esteem and confidence, since they are often quite low. They need not fear entrepreneurship, nor making mistakes. Feeling supported by their families when starting a new business project is also important.
There are some gender roles imposed by society, and women are traditionally bound to raise the children and manage the household. In many societies, this is still an on-going trend. There is a need to change this situation, starting by making women realize this is not their sole duty, that it should be a responsibility shared with their partners.
2. Secondly but equally relevant, we find a need for training in those areas in which they lack experience: business project management. A training plan should be developed in order to provide the opportunity to acquire the required skills and knowledge to be able to manage both the household and an enterprise.
3. A great part of the non-active population, especially women, can find a productive job if we give them the means to launch a small or medium Enterprise. It is necessary to acquire management and organization skills for both housewives and businesswomen, as well as knowing how to set their targets and develop an action agenda.
4. Lorca City Council should develop a programme to support entrepreneurship and the launching of new enterprises in the territory.