

TURKEY'S WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Women Friendly Brands Platform

June 2023



DAHA AZ KAYNAK DAHA ÇOK VERİM

Son teknoloji damla sulama ve akıllı sulama sistemlerimizle, tarımsal üretimin daha verimli ve kaliteli olmasını sağlıyoruz. Sağlıklı, herkes için erişilebilir gıda ihtiyacının karşılanmasında bugün ve gelecekteki sorumluluğumuzu biliyor; durmaksızın çalışıyoruz.

Gelecek Nesillere Nefes Oluyoruz!





Nazlı BOZDAĞ DEMİREL

Executive Editor

Hello everyone, from the first lines of our book "TURKEY'S WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS", As many of you already know, the Women-Friendly Brands Platform is a social venture story that we brought to life. This platform represents a news website, an awareness library, a project office, a meaningful award program, and much more to us.

When I was already the mother of a son, I held my dear daughter Nehir in my arms in 2018 and then I had the opportunity to observe the transformation of my concerns. Like many of other parents, I started asking myself, "What can I do for our children to grow into a more equal, just and secure future?" Indeed, my entrepreneurial spirit had always brought me back to that crossroad, where I would somehow get stuck on positive barriers in my position. But in 2020, things changed. Entrepreneurship, especially social entrepreneurship, had seeped into my veins and enveloped my entire being. During that time, it was not difficult at all to stand in front of my manager with great determination and declare that I wanted to steer my life as an entrepreneur.

Perhaps this is what shattering the comfort zone looks like. My immediate circle found it somewhat challenging to accept this situation, and I constantly faced the following questions: "What are you doing in the midst of a pandemic? Entrepreneurship, really?" But it was a serious decision for me. I resolutely continued on my path, rolling up my sleeves to contribute a brick to building a future where not only my children but also children worldwide would grow up with equal rights. Being able to embark on meaningful projects that support the same consciousness in our third year, continuing our journey of awareness with joy and involving our corporate supporters in these meaningful programs brought me happiness from every direction.

In the book "TURKEY'S WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS", you will encounter a diverse range of success stories and meet determined, productive, resilient and successful women who can be called venture warriors. You will delve into their entrepreneurial journeys and witness their remarkable achievements.

In this regard, we express our gratitude to our valuable team members who have contributed to the book, our friends who have provided special insights, successful women entrepreneurs who have shared the stories of their life and entrepreneurial journeys, invaluable NGOs that have added value and brought coherence through their contributions, and the brands that have supported our work by advertising and helping us move forward.

We hope that the journeys illuminated by the success of all the entrepreneurial stories written will also light the way for young entrepreneurs.



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03 EDITORIAL

08 ANALYSIS

Emine Perviz Erdem - Nurten Öztürk
Huriye Serter - Esra Baykal

32 Aslı Aksoy

Founder of Elibelinde Agriculture

40 Aybüke Holat

Founder of ACTA SPORT and My Cutie Pie

46 Ayça Özer

Founder of Aicha Lavanta

52 Ayfer Karakoyunlu

Founder and CEO of
Aykaya Ambalaj A.Ş.

58 Ayla Tural

CEO of Celler Energy

64 Aynur Çeşmeliler

President of Trakyam Producing
Women's Cooperative

70 Ayşe Selin Varol

Founder of Captain's Walnut Farm

76 Betül Sezgin

Founder of B+S İç Mimarlık ve
Tasarım Stüdyosu

82 Canan Janan Alkın

Founder President of Robotic
Employment Agency

88 Cansu Yavuz

Founder of Pamuk Atölyesi

94 Cevahir Asuman Yazmacı

Founder of Cevahir Han

100 Didem Şen Pamuk

Founder of Kipos Koçluk
Eğitim ve Danışmanlık

106 Dilara Üzünlü

Founder & Project Manager of
Tech2bio - Smart Hive Technologies

112 Ece Şirin

Founder and Designer of Bee
Goddess brand

118 Eda Şişman

Founder of Mantiye Gıda

124 Elif Aslı Yıldız

Founder and CEO of Patiswiss

130 Elif Yıldırım - Leyla Akça Atik

Co-Founder of Pebble /
Zero Waste Journey

138 Elif Yılmaz Aykan

Youthall Co-Founder

144 Esra Cevahir

Chairwoman of the
Board at Procompo

150 Fikriye Aslan

Founder of Pusula Consulting and
Forensic Accounting Expertise

156	Gizem Oral Kutman Co-Founder of GastroClub & GastroPay
162	Gözde Benzet Founder of Bohemtolia
168	Hale Çolak Tura Founder of Biorootzo
174	Hülya Yorulmaz Founder of Microblading Academy New York
180	İlgin Özdemir Yazgan Founder of Accouchée
186	İlkay Demirdağ Founder and Influence & Investment Strategist of Positive Impact
192	Kübra Yurtsever Kargı NATUVA Founder & Director
198	Mehtap Şeniz Çahan Co-founder of Nazar A.Ş
204	Milka Karaağaçlı İnce Founder of Kismet By Milka
210	Mine Özmen Founder of Hışvahan Boutique Hotel and Restaurant
216	Müge Cergel - Hande Cergel Co-founder of Blum Coffee House

222	Nardane Kuşçu Founder of Narköy and Nar Education
228	Neslihan Kılıç Hacıaloğlu Founder of BloominBag
234	Pınar Ayhan - Feyza Öney Co-founder of Phase Interiors & Development
242	Reyhan Miray Reyhan Founder of Peddon
248	Sedef Budak Founder of Secret Power and Project Development Director at Smart Holding
254	Ayşe Serpil Başay - Semra Özalaybey Co-founder of Renkhane
260	Sevim Yenici Öz Vice President of the Board of Directors at Lidya Group
266	Sezen Sungur Saral Founder of Reeder
272	Sezin Güleriyüz Founder of HFB (HealtyFoodBreak)
278	Sinem Özler Executive Chef, General Manager and Co-founder at Seraf Restaurant
284	Zeynep Dağlı Kastro Founder of Memento



Women entrepreneurs illuminate the future



Their story was born out of needs, some out of necessity, and some out of a white-collar rebellion who believed that another world was possible. They are the brave, strong and self-confident women who break the prejudices, row against the current, remove the word 'impossible' from their lexicon, believe in themselves, take responsibility not only for themselves but for a more livable world, lead the way in the light of logic and science, make production, question and research... What they have in common is their heartfelt belief that a completely different world is possible, far beyond the usual stereotypes, no matter what they have experienced until now. Every step they took with courage, without giving up and without getting tired brought the light together. As the steps increased, the light they scattered also increased. The entrepreneur women who have inspired many other women who have an entrepreneurial idea with their projects but do not dare to take a step, boldly and confidently say: "I'm here too!"

An entrepreneur is defined as a person who undertakes a business by investing capital in fields such as trade, industry and agriculture, and who takes the risks to make profit. Entrepreneurs, who play an important role in stimulating the economy, creating new job opportunities, and innovating in products, services and processes, step forward when they meet consumer demands that are

not met by the existing companies. Being innovative and creative, flexibility, taking risks, and having a broad perspective are the sine qua non of entrepreneurship. Both in the world and in Turkey, the number of entrepreneurs who have a new idea and take courageous steps to realize it is increasing day by day, but the number is not enough yet. The number of female employers, which was 14% and 185 thousand in the third

quarter of 2021, decreased to 12.5 percent in 2022 in the same period and fell to 166.000. Although the data show how difficult the struggle to expand women's entrepreneurship and increase the number of women entrepreneurs is, Turkey ranks 6th among 34 countries in the rate of 'female inventors' showing patent applications among OECD countries. Although the figures are not at the desired level, the increase in the number of women entrepreneurs is promising.

Every startup has a breaking point which starts its story. Their story was born out of the needs, some out of a rebellion, some out of necessity, and some out of the belief of women who did not want to postpone their dreams and wanted to fly freely in the business world.

It is certain that women's entrepreneurship offers important opportunities to economic and social life, and that women create a significant leverage with their entrepreneurial activities in developing the country's economies. It is a fact that women entrepreneurs can play an important role in growing the economy, increasing employment and creating businesses operating on a world scale with a permanent production and marketing approach, especially in our country which has a fragile economic situation. It is very important to increase the participation of women in the production life, to highlight the policies and programs that support women entrepreneurs, and to benefit from these supports so that women can see in themselves the power to activate their potential in economic and social life.

The ways of doing business and expectations of female and male entrepreneurs differ

from each other. In general, when an initiative is put into practice, it is seen that economic expectations of male entrepreneurs and personal expectations of female entrepreneurs are at the forefront. Therefore, we can say that women care more about social reputation than profit when compared to male entrepreneurs.

Women's approach is holistic

According to an OECD-sourced study, it has been determined that women approach the opportunities in an innovative way and have a mindset that will contribute to the development of the new economic environment. In the research, it is pointed out that while male entrepreneurs are generally prone to authoritarian management style, female entrepreneurs approach the concept of management more 'holistically'. Also, according to the research, women are more sensitive about personnel training, teamwork, reducing hierarchy in the business structure, quality issues, ensuring the development of employees in their careers as a result of evaluating the phenomenon of success differently from men, and expectations of customers. Common characteristics of the women entrepreneurs can be defined as being dynamic, independent, self-confident, competitive, ambitious, risk-taking, able to control their own work, challenging, courageous and patient.

One of the most important problems faced by women entrepreneurs is that they are not taken seriously by professionals in both family and business life. Due to stereotyped cultural codes and approaches such as loading the main tasks of the familial life on women, they have

Their biggest supporters are other women entrepreneurs

“Women Entrepreneurship Index of Turkey”, which was realized in 2019 with the support of KAGİDER and Türk Tuborg A.Ş., was conducted to understand the profile of women entrepreneurs, to evaluate their experiences, motivations and difficulties in the process of starting a business and made interviews with 438 female entrepreneurs. When the fields of activity of the companies founded by women entrepreneurs were examined, it has been determined that the leading sectors were wholesale and retail trade and manufacturing. In the research, it was seen that women entrepreneurs borrowed the most from the family during the establishment phase of the company, and they mostly cooperated with private companies in Turkey in the recent past. The motivations of the women entrepreneurs in Turkey towards the beginning of their entrepreneurship stories were questioned with expressions containing “need” and “opportunity”. The vast majority of women entrepreneurs agree with the statement that seeing and evaluating an opportunity in the relevant period was the basis of

their entrepreneurship stories. Self-perceptions of women entrepreneurs and their perceptions about male entrepreneurs stand out as important factors affecting development in this field. For the participants interviewed within the scope of the research, being a woman entrepreneur is mostly associated with adjectives such as courage, strength, independence and freedom. While the perception of entrepreneurship is more courage for women entrepreneurs in metropolitan cities, it is interpreted as being strong in non-metropolitan provinces, thus as facing all difficulties. In the posts about being an entrepreneur, there are comments by women entrepreneurs that refer to strong positive emotions. After their spouses and families, the biggest supporters of women entrepreneurs are their female entrepreneur friends who have started a business like themselves. Women entrepreneurs want to expand abroad and their evaluations about the future are promising. The issue that women entrepreneurs need most is financial support.

to fight against these prejudices as they want to realize their own business ideas. Therefore, one of the biggest challenges for self-employed women entrepreneurs is trying to find a balan-

ce between work and home life. The energy that women entrepreneurs, especially those who have children, spend on taking care of their children on the one hand and maintaining



their business life on the other, make their busy business life more stressful. Another problem faced by women entrepreneurs is not being able to find an investor. Although this perception started to change in recent years, the problem of not being taken seriously might also be encountered by women in search of investors.

The rate of labor force participation is 32.8%

The struggle for gender equality envisages equal participation of women and men in all areas of social life. The first of these is participation in education and business life. Although women's labor force participation rate in Turkey, where women's employment is not enough, has increased four times faster than men's in the last 10 years, according to the results of the household labor force survey of TÜİK, the female labor force participation rate in Turkey in 2022 was 32.8 percent, and 70.3 percent for men. The rate of labor force participation of women in OECD average is 64 percent. While the service sector has the highest female labor force participation rate in Turkey, the female employment rate in this field was determined as 59.6 percent. The

64 women entrepreneurs got investment in 2023

According to Startups Watch data, \$1.6 billion was invested in 300 Turkish ventures in 2022. Excluding revenue, it broke an all-time record with \$825 million. Of the 300 ventures that received investment in which foreign investors participated in one out of every five transactions, 64 have female founders. Last year, 40 of the 294 investments had women entrepreneurs.

service sector was followed by agriculture with 22.6 percent, industry with 16.7 percent and construction sector with 0.9 percent. While it was seen that women participate more in the workforce as their education level increases, it was also determined that closing the labor force participation gap between men and women improved the country's economy, accor-

ding to the research conducted across OECD countries. In other words, increasing women's employment will increase the gross national product of our country and provide social and economic welfare.

The number of women entrepreneurs decreased from 14 percent to 12.5%

If we look at the number of women entrepreneurs in Turkey, we see that the number is quite low as well. Although the number of women entrepreneurs in our country has increased in recent years, it is not at the required level. The rate of female employers, which increased to 14 percent after the pandemic, decreased to 12.5 percent in the July-September 2022 period, according to the 3rd Quarter Labor Statistics of TÜİK. This is considered as a reflection of the global economic crisis, which started with the effect of the pandemic, in the entrepreneurship ecosystem, showing that women entrepreneurs have difficulties in growing and maintaining their businesses. While in the third quarter of 2021, 185 thousand of 1.344 employers were women, we see that the total number of employers increased to 1 million 374 thousand in the same period in 2022, while the number of female employers decreased to 166.000. The data show how difficult the struggle to expand women's entrepreneurship and increase the number of women entrepreneurs is. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that the number of self-employed women, which was 764 thousand in 2021, increased to 863 thousand in 2022. While the number of employers decreased by approximately 20 thousand, the number of self-employed women increased by

almost 100 thousand. These data also show that female employers may have resorted to lay off their employees in order to survive the economic crisis.

According to the Startups Watch data, the rate of '12.5 percent female entrepreneurs in Turkey' stays a few points behind when compared to those of the world. Turkey ranks 6th among 34 countries in terms of 'female inventors' showing patent applications in OECD countries. Last year, 16 percent of patent applications from Turkey were made by women. Portugal has the highest rate of female inventors. 26% of patent applications in this country belong to women. This rate is 22 percent in Greece and 17 percent in Colombia. The countries with the lowest rate of female inventors are Austria with 5.2 percent and New Zealand with 5.5 percent. The average of 34 countries on the list is 11 percent. Even though we are in a better position when we look at the average, we still have a long way to go.

274 million women worldwide are engaged in business start-ups

According to the figures of the countries included in the Global Entrepreneurship Watch (GEM) Women Entrepreneurship Report: Development Through the Crisis Report covering the period 2020-2022, there are 139 million resident business owners/managers worldwide and 144 million women informal investors worldwide. In addition, an estimated 274 million women worldwide are involved in start-up activities. GEM states that 30.2 percent of women entrepreneurs surveyed worldwide are expected to employ six or more employees in

the next five years. This rate is expected to be only 18.7 percent in the next five years.

30 percent loss of female workforce during the pandemic in America

While the way of doing business changed with the Covid 19 in 2019, the pandemic negatively affected women's participation in employment, not only in Turkey but also in the whole world. While the loss of female workforce increased to 30 percent during the pandemic period in America, 2022 was launched as a record year in the resignations of middle and upper level female managers. Since the responsibility of the household is still seen to be on women in many countries, especially working from home disrupting the work and home balance caused burnout syndrome in 87 percent of women. Those who did housework during online meetings, and the mothers who took on the role of mother, business person and teacher during the time the schools were closed, could not stand the pressure of home and society in this unfair competition and resigned after a while. Although the opening of schools relieved women after the pandemic ended, the remote working systems, performance criteria, and disorder of working hours affected women the most.

Growth in e-commerce boosted women's startups

With the pandemic, of course, there was a rapid growth in e-commerce too. As of the first

6 months of 2022, e-commerce volume in Turkey increased by 116 percent compared to the same period of the previous year and amounted to 348 billion TL. In the first 6 months of 2022, the number of orders increased by 38 percent from 1 billion 654 million to 2 billion 294 million pieces. When the e-commerce expenditures realized in Turkey in the first 6 months of 2022 are proportioned to the population aged 18-70, the per capita e-commerce expenditure was 4 thousand 964 TL. The growth of the sector has also encouraged new initiatives. As a result of the trainings, especially women entrepreneurs started to be more active in the market places with their own production. With the appreciation of local productions and brands, the number of women who gathered these manufacturers and launched them in the marketplaces increased.

The rate of technology-based women entrepreneurs is quite low in Turkey. The rate of women entrepreneurs in the ecosystem of technology entrepreneurs all over the world is 17 percent, while this rate is around 15 percent in Turkey. In technology entrepreneurship in Turkey between 2010 and 2017, women entrepreneurs mostly took initiatives in e-commerce, marketplace, biotechnology, baby and parent-related issues.

The most important issue is access to finance

Access to finance is one of the most important

issues for entrepreneur women. Mentoring systems, angel investors, free trainings are increasing day by day. Access to information, data and fund has become much easier than before. The ways to reach finance are either in the form of grants and supports or via the investors and funds. Angel investors are not only financiers, they prefer the areas they have experience in and provide added-value to the entrepreneurs. First of all, they want to see the business plan. Of course, a wisely prepared business plan will convince the angel investors. For this reason, it is very important to prepare a presentation and to be prepared for questions that may occur.

KOSGEB is mostly preferred

In addition, Crowdfunding Platforms and many corporate companies also provide financing to entrepreneurs. KOSGEB (Small and Medium-Sized Industry Development and Support Administration) has provided women with a support of around 1 billion TL in the last 5 years. Many banks also provide support for this purpose. KOSGEB has free trainings for women who want to start their own business. Entrepreneur candidates can get the grant support they need by making an Entrepreneurship Support Application to KOSGEB. Being over the age of 18, holding an entrepreneurship certificate, not having received a KOSGEB loan before, and having a business idea among the sectors supported by KOSGEB are among the conditions of KOSGEB's women entrepreneur

grant support for 2022. Entrepreneur women do not have to have high school, associate degree or undergraduate education. Being able to read and write is sufficient to receive grant support from KOSGEB. The establishment must be realized within 1 year after the grant application is made. Women who want to get entrepreneur loan must follow Entrepreneurship Training. For 2022, KOSGEB's support for traditional entrepreneurs was 65 thousand TL, and for advanced entrepreneurs 365 thousand TL.

Support to entrepreneurs from the Credit Guarantee Fund

The Credit Guarantee Fund, which aims to facilitate businesses' financing needs and their access to credit, and in cooperation with TOBB, TESK, KOSGEB, public banks and private banks, is another institution that helps women entrepreneurs get the loan supports they need. These supports are delivered to women entrepreneurs through the banks that are partners of KGF and the financial leasing companies, in which these banks are the dominant partners, or the authorized financial leasing companies and financing companies that are partners of the KGF. In this context, the maturity limit of business loans is 5 years and the principal grace period is 1 year. In investment loans, the maturity is up to 10 years, while the principal grace period is 3 years maximum. The upper limit of the bond for the loan is also applied as 2.5 million TL. KGF, which

**We appreciate the value of every drop for the soil
and strengthen the nature-friendly practices.**



supports women entrepreneurs, gave 620 million bond fees to 3 thousand women. To apply for the Credit Guarantee Fund, there are some terms, for example: operating for a maximum of 2 years as of the application date; for women entrepreneurs: to operate based on a business idea, at least 50 percent of the total shares must belong to persons who have not completed the age of 55 and are at least primary school graduates; for young entrepreneurs: at least half of the company's total shares must belong to persons who are over the age of 18, younger than 30 and at least primary school graduate as of the date of application.

KAGIDER (Women Entrepreneurs Association of Turkey) takes part among the organizations that support women entrepreneurs. Providing training, guidance and mentoring support to women in entrepreneurship by carrying out projects with many private sector and public institutions together, KAGIDER offers women entrepreneur candidates training on business plan creation, intellectual property rights, law, financial legislation, marketing, sales and human resources management thanks to its 2-day training called "I'm Establishing My Business".

In Turkey, the banks also have support loans for women entrepreneurs. Some of the banks which offer special maturity opportunities and loans without collateral for women entrepreneurs are as follows: Akbank- Loan for My Business, Halkbank- Loan for Women Ent-



preneurs, QNB Finansbank- Women Export Support Loan, Ziraat Bank- Special Support Package for Women Entrepreneurs, Türkiye İş Bankası- Women Export Support Loan, ING Bank- Women Entrepreneurs Platform, Garanti Bank- Women Entrepreneurs Banking, TEB- Support Loan for Housewives.

Incentives for women entrepreneurs from online marketplaces

In recent years, e-commerce platforms, which encourage the increase in the number of women entrepreneurs in online marketplaces, also support women entrepreneurs. With more than 32 thousand women entrepreneurs and 132 women's cooperatives, Hepsiburada is the first e-commerce platform that supports women entrepreneurs. Supporting women with the Power of Technology for Women, Hepsiburada

burada provides commission discount up to 75 percent in the categories determined by Hepsiburada on sales, also priority display rights in campaign fields, 500 TL gift voucher to be used in sponsored products advertisements, 2 advertising banners support worth 30 thousand TL, free photo shoot support for up to 500 products, stock and price integration support, free online e-commerce trainings and mentoring support.

Giving support for women by implementing the Strong Women Program, Trendyol offers marketing and integration for women, 80 percent discounted commission, advertising support on website and in-app, 14-day payment opportunity within the scope of Trendyol SME support package, free money order/EFT and free checkbook. It also offers another supports such as a bank support package that includes staff salary payment and exemption from commercial loan file costs.

Besides, the Ministry of Family and Social Services offers a long-term and interest-free loan support for women entrepreneurs. Although a period of 8 years is given for the repayment of this loan, no repayment is requested within the first 2 years.

The Agriculture and Rural Development Support Institution also provides grants up to 70% of the project for entrepreneur women engaged in farming. Apart from farming, this support can also be used in areas such as meat production, beekeeping, milk production and

mushroom production. Women who do not have sufficient capital for farming can also receive support through the Pre-Accession Assistance Tool IPARD, created by the European Union (EU) to support candidate and potential candidate countries.

In order to support entrepreneur women working in Turkey, regardless of the sector and region, and starting in 2021 under the direction of Turkish Enterprise and Business Confederation (TÜRKONFED), with the support of Türkiye İş Bankası and in cooperation with the United Nations Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Unit (UN Women), the 'Project of Women Power in Entrepreneurship' also offers important opportunities for women entrepreneurs. Within the scope of the project, online and face-to-face trainings and mentorship support are provided to entrepreneur women on technical subjects such as digitalization, e-export, and marketing. Networking with the institutions that are active in the market, creating channels where women can exhibit their products and come together are among the works to be carried out. Among the trainings given to women within the scope of the project are the following: Company establishment, taxation processes, brand journey of the enterprise, institutionalization and human resources management, labor law and option rights, foreign trade, purchasing and supply management, quality management and process development.

n's entrepreneurship for sustainable agriculture
constantly update our sustainability policies in this sense.





“If you have a business idea, don’t delay, it may be the right time today”

Stating that although the number of women entrepreneurs has increased in Turkey, the desired figures have not been reached yet, KAGİDER Chairwoman of the Board Emine Perviz Erdem says that the rate of female employers in Turkey, which increased to 14 percent after the pandemic, decreased to 12.5 percent in the July-September 2022 period. She adds that in order to make progress, this must be seen as an inclusive and difficult struggle. Addressing the entrepreneur candidates who have business ideas, Perviz Erdem tells: “If you have a business idea, do not delay thinking that it is not time. The best time might be today. To set up and grow a business, you have to start somewhere. You are not alone on this way.”

KAGİDER, which was founded in 2002 by 37 women who experienced the problems women met during the entrepreneurship and wanted to change them, has been working for the spread of women's entrepreneurship since 20 years. Being aware that the problems met by women entrepreneurs are the result of the inequalities and injustices faced by women in all fields, KAGİDER strives to empower women in the society, and focuses on activities that will support the representation of women in the economy, social life, local governments, politics, decision mechanisms; in short, in all areas of the life.

Stating that they support entrepreneur candidates to establish their businesses and that they provide training and mentoring support to those who have established their business and want to grow, KAGİDER Chairwoman of the Board Emine Perviz Erdem says that although the average rate of women entrepreneurs in Europe is nearly 35 percent, after the pandemic in Turkey, which had increased to 14 percent, decreased to 12.5 percent in the July-September 2022 period according to the 3rd Quarter Labor Statistics of TÜİK. She speaks as follows: "Unfortunately, we are taking one step forward and one step back in this struggle. If we want to make progress, we have to see how inclusive and difficult this is as the whole country. In this regard, the public, private sector and relevant NGOs need to work in cooperation."

"Women employment and women entrepreneurship should be supported"

Perviz Erdem points out that although there are public missions to support women's employment and women's entrepreneurship, this issue should be extremely comprehensive and policies should cover all dimensions of the issue, and she adds that NGOs that work on women should be included in the process

Education speeds up the process

KAGİDER provides trainings for entrepreneur candidates, consisting of basic knowledge and skills for business life, perspective on career development and management, and employment skills. It offers trainings such as Interview Simulations, Technology, Project Management, Entrepreneurship and Sustainability which can be beneficial for young women in their employment. In addition to these, she also gives trainings on Storytelling, Gender Equality and Relationship Design that would shape their business lives. Besides, the participants have the chance to get direct information about the sectors from the representatives of different sectors through speed networking panels. All GKL graduates who have participated in this program in 12 years form a large network today. It is ensured that they stay in constant contact, so they continue to learn from each other and grow stronger together.

while creating policies related to women. Perviz Erdem tells the following: "First of all, women's access to education, information and digital adaptation should be supported. Equality of opportunity should be provided to young girls and women, first in the family, then in the education process, and then in the business life, by working resolutely for gender equality. A policy of equal pay for equal work should be applied in workplaces, and glass ceilings should be removed,



also lactation rooms should be separated, nursery practices should be implemented. Nursery and elderly care centers that will take the responsibility of taking care of children and old people, which are still seen as the primary duty of women, should be increased by local governments and access to these centers should be made possible. A quota of women can be introduced in recruitment, and in fact, strong female role models can be increased by strengthening women's representation from the business world to politics, from local governments to the public and media. Programs that would enable the private sector and the public to buy from women in tenders can be carried out."

Emphasizing that equal opportunities should be provided to women in education and employment, as well as in political, economic and cultural fields, and gender equality should be taken into account in finan-

cial and monetary policies, medium and long-term planning, Perviz Erdem tells: "Existing laws to strive violence against women should be implemented with determination. This violence can only be prevented by deterrent punishments. In this context, Istanbul Convention should be re-signed and implemented immediately. What lies at the base of all this and something that the public must do is to include gender equality in education schedule. In this way, it may be possible to raise new generations who have adopted and internalized the principle of equality. Young women who envision their future as equal also draw up a good career plan in the future, take part in employment, set up their own business and hire other women... This is how we can break down the prejudices in the minds of men and women."

"You should buy from women, the country should win"

Perviz Erdem says that as KAGİDER they have many projects for entrepreneur women to make more purchases from women in public tenders, to prepare young women for business life, to make them use technology more, to develop trade and export connections and networks, to facilitate their access to the market, and support their production in the agricultural sector. She underlines that they have many projects aiming to provide equal opportunity in companies. Expressing that one of the works they attach importance to in this context is the 'Women of Commerce' platform, Perviz Erdem says that thanks to this platform, they make it easier to reach the women entrepreneurs who provide the product or service needed in the procurement processes in the public and private sectors. Perviz Erdem continues her words as follows:

"This is a platform that we established by saying

Advice from Emine Perviz Erdem to candidate entrepreneurs:

I recommend entrepreneur candidates, who have a business idea, to clearly identify their startups, financial models and investment needs. This data will enable the investors to see how much to invest in you and which investment options are suitable for your venture. I think it is important to clearly know that the potential and competitive advantage of the venture is high in the market. It is important for a startup to know that the market potential is high. The fact that the competitive advantages are clearly stated is another important point that the investors or grant providers would want to know about. Teamwork, the skills, experience and commitment of your teammates are among the key points that lead your venture to success. There are investment funds, programs and platforms especially for women entrepreneurs. I recommend being prepared by doing some preliminary research on how these

funds and investors can be reached. Prepare a presentation to be presented to the investors and donors, including the items I mentioned above. Such presentations are one of the important tools that grab the attention of the investors and help them think about investing in your startup. The more investors you hold meetings with, the more you will improve yourself. By communicating with potential investors, you can learn more about your venture and explain the needs of your investment. You can realize your shortcomings and work on these issues. As KAGİDER, we have modules in our training programs that explain how to access resources for startups in need of investment and how to make the most effective presentations to find financial resources. We offer serious information and training support to women entrepreneurs in this field. I recommend them to take advantage of it.

'You should buy from women, the country should win'. Whatever the product or service you want to buy, you can easily reach the female entrepreneur who provides it in your region through a search engine. We hold city-by-city consultation meetings to expand the network of women entrepreneurs in Anatolia. At KAGİDER, we are working under the roof of Genç KAGİDER in order to ensure that young women are better prepared for professional life. 'Women Leaders of the Future' (GKL), which we have been organizing

together with Sanofi Turkey since 12 years, is one of these programs. Within the framework of the project, we organize a comprehensive training and mentoring program to prepare disadvantaged young women for business life. The number of our graduates in this project, which is carried out to contribute to women's employment, has exceeded 1500. We also have an online education portal called 'My Dream Partner' for young women. Our aim is to empower young women as they prepare for the professional life."



Being an entrepreneur brings power, courage and freedom

President of TOBB Women Entrepreneurs Board Nurten Öztürk states that the number of women entrepreneurs in Turkey is not yet at the desired level and adds: “We should be aware of this. A bird cannot fly with one wing. In order for our country to achieve its goals, women need to be more involved in the economy. We all know that being an entrepreneur for women brings many positive attributes with it, such as power, courage, freedom. Therefore, women need to enter into the ecosystem of entrepreneurship.”

In addition to pioneering the development of entrepreneurship culture among women, which set out to develop the female entrepreneurial potential in Turkey in terms of quantity and quality; The Women Entrepreneurs Board of The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB), which offers career development opportunities by teaching women personal development paths, carries out many projects that are sustainable, beneficial and support the development of women. Saying that women's entrepreneurship is an opportunity for development, equality and economic development, President of TOBB Women Entrepreneurs Board Nurten Öztürk tells that every step to be taken to ensure women's strong, effective and equal participation in business life should be seen as an investment in the

development of society and economic development.

Noting that although half of Turkey's population is women, one-third of the employment consists of women, Öztürk adds that women's entrepreneurship has an average of 10 percent of the total entrepreneurial population. She speaks as follows: "We must be aware of this. A bird cannot fly with one wing. In order for our country to achieve its goals, women need to be more involved in the economy. Although the number of women entrepreneurs has increased, it is still far below the desired level. Especially the pandemic period affected women the most. We all know that being an entrepreneur for women brings with it many positive attributes, such as power, courage and freedom. Therefore, women need to enter into the ecosystem of entrepreneurship."

Advice from Nurten Öztürk to prospective entrepreneurs:

"You may have a million ideas, but they are all worthless unless you bring them to life." I think the word sums up entrepreneurship in the best way. It's not enough to have a good idea for entrepreneurship. Because the way to be successful is to present the idea as a product and to make the product marketable. If the entrepreneur brings the idea he dreams of to life in line with his goals, he creates a business idea. Therefore, entrepreneurs who think strategically, are ambitious, and believe in their dreams and themselves should model their ideas well. Women who want to be entrepreneurs; First of all, he should define the product or service he will sell well, analyze the market well, and get to know his competitors

closely. He should pay attention to what kind of market he will present the product or service he has developed, who will be the customer base and their qualifications. I recommend that women who want to enter business life go to the Chambers of Industry and Commerce in every province and reach out to our board chairman and members. They can access up-to-date information on many issues such as KOSGEB supports and incentives. I attach great importance to the participation of new entrepreneur women in the trainings organized by the provincial boards, to develop themselves, to meet with role models, and to listen to the stories of failure to learn as well as success stories.

81 provincial heads working in 81 provinces

Emphasizing that the researches show that the performance of companies with a high number of women in their management and staff is higher in almost every field, Nurten Öztürk says: "In a world where half of the population and talent are women, we should not ignore this resource. As TOBB, we organize seminars, panels and similar trainings and events in order to provide entrepreneur people with the basic information they need in their establishment and subsequent business processes, which will enable them to use these features more effectively and efficiently,

and those who consider to start with a business. We attach great importance to mentoring support. Each of our 7 thousand members is a role model in their own sectors. We bring our women entrepreneurs together with our members and enable them to share their experiences and knowledge. 81 provincial heads are developing many projects that will pave the way



What does the TOBB Women Entrepreneurs Board do?

With the "Women Writing the Future" project, it empowers women to develop mobile application software. With the "My Sister" project, it organizes trainings to equip women with the necessary competencies to become entrepreneurs. With the "Our Business is Clean" project, hygiene training programs are created for micro-enterprises operating in the service sector, helping them to continue their activities. She explains that the profession has no gender in order to increase women's employment in the industry and to contribute to meeting the need for qualified employment in the industry with the "Women's Hand in Industry" project. It also organizes the "Entrepreneurial Women's Power of Turkey" competition.

for women entrepreneurs according to the dynamics and structure of the province. While some efforts are made to encourage women for the industry in our industry-intensive provinces, the cooperatives are prominent in provinces where agricultural activities are intense."

Financial literacy is something important

Mentioning that one of the most important problems faced by women entrepreneurs is the difficulty of accessing financial resources, Öztürk advises women entrepreneurs to develop themselves in financial literacy and to follow the daily agenda closely. Reminding that the contracted banks offer special privileges for women entrepreneurs thanks to the guarantee given by the Credit Guarantee Fund to women entrepreneurs, Öztürk recommends researching and applying for the support of EU funds, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and KOSGEB.

"Ya sevdiğiniz işi yapın ya da işinizde sevilecek bir yön bulmaya çalışın"

Ayrıca kadınları ihracata yönelten, markalaşma sürecinde destek olan, tasarım odaklı ve dijitalleşme süreçlerinde çalışmalar yapan birçok marka bulunduğunu da kaydeden Öztürk, "İşini büyüme hedefi, tutkusu ve potansiyeli olan kadın girişimcilerimiz iş hayatında büyük önem taşıyor. Kadınlarımız öğrenmeye her zaman açık olmalı. Ayrıca kendilerine güvenmelerini, güçlü ve zayıf yanlarını belirleyerek cesaretle adım atmalarını öneriyorum. Başarısız olduklarında hemen yılmaları, başarısızlıklar öğrenme fırsatı verir, başarının önemini hissettirir, yön verir. Dolayısı ile kadınların, kendilerini geliştirmeleri, hatalarından ders almaları, teknolojiyi ve yenilikleri takip etmeleri ve cesur olmaları çok önemli. Sahip oldukları becerilerinin farkına varıp akıllarına koyduklarını hayata geçirebileceklerine inansınlar. Bir fikre,

bir işe tutkuyla bağlanmaktan korkmasınlar. Ben her zaman 'Ya sevdiğiniz işi yapın ya da işinizde sevilecek bir yön bulmaya çalışın' derim. İnsanın sevdiği işi yapması halinde başarısız olma şansı yok. Kadınlar gelişme, değişime ve farklı bakış açıları ile kendilerini sürekli geliştirmeye çalışmalı. Benim yoluma devam ederken karşıma çıkan sorunlarla mücadele yöntemim, azimle ve kararlılıkla sorunların üzerine gitmek ve yılmadan çalışmak oldu" şeklinde konuşuyor.

"Either do what you love or try to find a way to love your work"

Noting that there are many brands that encourage women to export, support the branding process, and work in design-oriented and digitalization processes, Öztürk said, "Our women entrepreneurs, who have the goal, passion and potential to grow their business, are of great importance in business life. Our women should always be open to learning. I also recommend that they be confident in themselves and take bold steps by identifying their strengths and weaknesses. When they fail, they should not be discouraged immediately, failures give the opportunity to learn, make the importance of success feel and give direction. Therefore, it is very important for women to improve themselves, learn from their mistakes, follow technology and innovations, and be brave. Let them realize their skills and believe that they can put into practice what they put in their minds. Do not be afraid to be passionate about an idea or a job. I always say, 'Do what you love or try to find a way to love your work'. If a person does what he loves, there is no chance of failure. Women should try to develop, change and improve themselves with different perspectives. My way of dealing with the problems that came up while I was on my way was to go after the problems with perseverance and determination and work tirelessly."

Support for women entrepreneurs should be increased

ZÜLÂL KOÇ

President of TOBB Diyarbakır Provincial Women Entrepreneurs Council

We are lagging behind the Turkish average in women entrepreneurship in Southeastern Anatolia. Women living in metropolitan cities in Turkey and those living in Anatolia have different opportunities. Therefore, regional positive discrimination should be implemented to increase support for productive women and to contribute to the economic empowerment of women who want to create a market by introducing regional purchase obligations on marketing platforms. In Diyarbakır, there are currently 15 active women cooperatives according to 2021 data. There



are a total of 25.000 registered firms in Diyarbakır for tradesmen and artisans, with 2.150 of them being women. There are 1.800 registered women entrepreneurs in the Chamber of Commerce. One thousand of them are actively working. The number of our women who work informally from their homes and seasonal workers who are also unregistered is over a thousand. There is nothing that women cannot achieve by demonstrating their productive intelligence. The business world is the area where we need the most contribution and inclusive attitude towards the talents of our women. This world needs our love, effort and indispensability more than ever. With this belief, we as women will continue to make the world more beautiful.

AYNUR ÇEŞMELİLER

President of TOBB Tekirdağ Provincial Women Entrepreneurs Board

The number of women entrepreneurs in Turkey is low, but it is possible to increase this number. If a woman wants to do something, there is nothing she can't achieve. I hope that women's workforce will increase by 35% in the next 20 years compared to today. Women's entrepreneurial ventures in our province are more prominent than in other regions. In Tekirdağ, women's ventures in agriculture, tourism, and industry stand out. The support given to women in our country is mostly in the field of employment. More concrete and easily accessible support should be provided for entrepreneurship. The procedural complexity also makes it difficult for women



to access the supports. In addition, tax and social security premium incentives should be implemented for women who have the courage to start their own business. Currently, these two incentives are available for young entrepreneurs and those who have started their businesses before the age of 30. However, 30 is an early age for a woman and the age limit should be removed for women. The support of mentors and advisors can be provided to help women in the early stages of their ventures and make their businesses easier. Although women are allowed to sell products they produce at home tax-free up to a certain amount, e-commerce platforms do not allow those who are not tax-liable to sell on their platforms. Urgent legal arrangements should be made in this regard, and the way should be opened for our women to sell on these platforms.

Giriřimcilik kültürünün kadınlar arasında gelişmesine öncülük etmeyi amaçlayan ve kadın girişimciliği konusunda genel politikalar geliştirerek görüş oluşturulmasına katkıda bulunan TOBB Kadın Giriřimciler Kurulu 81 ilde 81 bölge il başkanı ile faaliyet gösteriyor. Farklı illerden değerlendirmelerde bulunan il başkanları kadın girişimcilere verilecek destek ve kaynakların artırılması konusunda hemfikirler...

CEVAHİR ASUMAN YAZMACI

President of TOBB Şanlıurfa Provincial Women Entrepreneurs Council

In our province, unfortunately, the rate of women entrepreneurs is not at the desired level compared to other regions in Turkey. When we look at the number of women entrepreneurs registered in Şanlıurfa Chamber of Commerce, we see that there are many family businesses, and the number of women who are partners in these businesses is around 900. When we look at it sectorally, the number of women entrepreneurs in the service sector has increased in the last 10 years. We established Urfa Agro Women's Enterp-



rise Production and Operation Cooperative to bring our disadvantaged women into the economy and contribute to the regional economy. We are making uninterrupted production for 12 months in this facility, which will have the highest technological level. As Urfa Agro Women's Enterprise Production and Operation Cooperative, we aim to support refugee women in our region and to create a model that will meet the needs of Syrian women living in neighboring lands at their own homelands with their own labor force. Sustainable success, energy and production for our city, for our country and for our world can only be achieved through work and design.

MEHTAP ŞENİZ ÇAHAN

President of TOBB Muğla Provincial Women Entrepreneurs Council

I believe that the number of women entrepreneurs in Turkey is insufficient. To increase career development opportunities for women, we should teach them personal development methods. We should also provide seminars, panels and other educational and training activities to help those with an entrepreneurial spirit to use their skills more effectively and efficiently, and to provide basic knowledge and guidance for those who are considering starting and continuing a business. Coaching systems should be developed to provide support to new entrepreneurs for a certain



period. I find the support provided by the government insufficient, and there is room for improvement in this regard. I hope to see more women in high-level executive positions and in the management of the country in Turkey's future. Especially in Muğla, as indicated in this report published in 2020, the province maintains a high position among the 81 provinces in terms of representation in politics and the economy, participation in production activities, and education rates. As the TOBB Muğla Provincial Women Entrepreneurs Council, I think that projects such as 'Kız Kardeşim' carried out in collaboration with TOBB, Coca Cola and Habitat Association, and the project of 'Geleceği Yazan Kadınlar' in partnership with Turkcell, are beneficial.



“We support to increase the rate of female entrepreneurs to 50%”

As President of the Board of the Entrepreneur Businesswomen's Federation (GIFED), Huriye Serter says: “Our aim is to support the increase of the rate of women entrepreneurs, which is 12.5% today, to 50%. In this context, we have focused on “financing”, “encouraging”, “education” and “opening to new markets”. We attach great importance to providing training support to increase the management skills of women entrepreneurs, to strengthen their presence in business life and to make them permanent and sustainable.”

The Entrepreneur Businesswomen's Federation (GIFED), which was established a year ago by meeting entrepreneurs and businesswomen's associations under one roof for the first time in Turkey, works with 8 founding associations within its body. Arguing that although there is an increase in the rate of women entrepreneurs compared to previous years, this figure is not enough, Huriye Serter notes that women should be supported financially on the path of entrepreneurship and this number would increase if the level of education increases.

Stating that together with the angel investors and start-up commissions they formed as GIFED, they have developed projects that will support young people and women entrepreneurs and bring them together with angel investors, both before and after the venture, Serter tells: "If the entrepreneur does not have equity capital, which women generally do not have, the ways to reach finance are either through grants or donations or investors and funds. Among them, the angel investment networks are quite up-to-date. A clever business plan will convince the angel investors. It is also very important to prepare a presentation and be prepared for questions that may come up. In addition, Crowdfunding Platforms and many corporate companies also provide financing for entrepreneurs. As GIFED we organize programs and camps for trainings on starting a business, mentoring and role model studies in our commissions."

Emphasizing that their aim as GIFED is to support the increase of the rate of women entrepreneurs from 12.5 percent to 50 percent, Huriye Serter says that they focus on "financing", "encouraging", "education" and "opening to new markets" in this context. Telling that "We attach great importance to providing training support to increase the management skills of

women entrepreneurs to strengthen their presence in business life and to make them permanent and sustainable," Serter also gives the following advice to women who want to start their own business:

"Those who want to start their own business should first know themselves very well and see their capacity. This is particularly important. Then they should identify what they have and then plan with all clarity what they need. Apart from this, they need to invest in their brands, it is also very important for them to proceed through the right channel to reach the customers. Especially with the pandemic, there have been radical changes in the sales and marketing sectors. Keeping up to date with all digital developments will provide them with great advantages. In addition to all this, they should follow their opponents very well. They must think about how they can differentiate themselves to stay one step ahead in the competition. And most importantly, even if they fall, they have to find a way to get up. They should not forget that they are the biggest motivation to continue on their way."

"The support given to women entrepreneurs is insufficient"

Expressing that as the number of women investors increase, investments in women entrepreneurs would also increase, Serter speaks as follows: "I wish all women entrepreneurs and managers to take responsibility for being investors on their own. We need to understand women's existence, journeys and motivations in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and find ways to encourage more women to take steps to be heard. Not only women, but everyone should work to raise awareness about the challenges women face in entrepreneurship, to empathize and to support them."



“Social movement must be started to increase women entrepreneurs”

Brand Rooting Specialist Esra Baykal, who also provides mentoring support to entrepreneur women, says: “Just like the calls for literacy, a development policy and a social movement should be organized to increase the number of entrepreneur women.”

As the author of 'Being a Brand That Understands Mothers' and 'The Journal of Brands', Brand Rooting Specialist Esra Baykal points out that both the number of female employees in employment and women's initiatives are quite low in Turkey, while emphasizing that supporting women's education and their participation in the economic system are the key elements of women's transformation.

Stating that the rate of especially technology-based women entrepreneurs is very low in Turkey, Baykal tells: "It is obvious that there is a lack of education, knowledge or motivation here. Why is the number of women investing in technology so poor, while Turkey ranks 2nd in the world in gamification and e-gaming, and while our technology bases are increasing day by day? I think that Turkey should get out of service production and turn to abstract economy and technology production. Our women need to improve both their careers and their intellectual stances by receiving training in this field at an early age."

Saying that women who want to be entrepreneurs do not know exactly where to apply and how to prepare their business plans, Baykal adds the following: "In this sense, a social movement needs to be organized. Just like the calls for literacy, there are many things that need to be done, such as a development policy that will increase the number of women entrepreneurs, rules, special training for school-age girls, mentoring programs, and an increase in the number of associations. In my opinion, the public should join forces with the private sector, and this kind of work should be done under one roof and their access should be increased."

"If women transform, the world will be a much more creative and livable place"

Underlining that 70 percent of women in Turkey are housewives living away from economic support,

Baykal says that as female employment decreases, young girls cannot find a role model for themselves, find it difficult to choose a profession, are limited and cannot develop their vision. Baykal states that the fact that most of the women are at home today affects around 25 percent of the GNP, and that the reason for the low level of welfare we experience is that women are away from the workforce. Saying "This means that we have a difficult task to increase the rate of working women from 24 percent to 40 percent in a 10-year period," she points out that as long as women are at home and men are at work, one should not expect a solid economic policy.

"Hold on to the power within you"

Expressing that there are many studies that show that women's organization and creativity rates are higher than men's, Baykal tells that women's rate of motivating their employees and establishing sustainable relationships is much better than men's. Stating that the future is not only based on foreign language skills, mathematics and science intelligence, but that the developing technology will destroy certain professions in the medium term, Baykal speaks as follows: "At this point, we have two options: to make technological inventions or design them for newly emerging needs. An intellectual perspective is essential for both. Mentoring systems, angel investors, free trainings are increasing day by day. In fact, access to information, data and funds is much easier than before. In fact, only the courage remains to be needed. I recommend that our women entrepreneurs embrace the power and fire within them and trust themselves. I suggest that they discover their own strengths and go on with it while developing ideas based on their own needs and implementing them with a smart planning. There are many channels to consult, as long as they are intentional for it."



ASLI AKSOY

Founder of Elibeline Agriculture

EDUCATION: Graduated from Business Administration at Middle East Technical University. Then she completed the Executive MBA program at Koç University as part of the Turquality program.

“Producing is an addictive satisfaction and sharing is the greatest pleasure”

While she was a white-collar employee in corporate life, her dream was to return to the Aegean, her father's home, to deal with the land. Having effected by the fertility of Anatolian lands and the biodiversity it offers and thinking about the question “What can I do?”, Aslı Aksoy started the production of asparagus, which she was very impressed with during her business trip abroad. Her story which started with the women in her village in Muğla on a land of 2.5 acres, reached 100 times the size in 7 years. Aksoy says: “Producing is an addictive satisfaction and sharing is the greatest pleasure.”

Aslı Aksoy was born in İzmir as one of the two daughters of a father who said "Do a job well or not at all" and of a mother who said "Do whatever you do with passion". After Karşıyaka Anatolian High School, she graduated from Business Administration at Middle East Technical University in 2003. Then she completed the Executive MBA program within the scope of Turquality program at Koç University.

She started her career with internship in human resources department at Philsa A.Ş. in İzmir which she loved so much. Afterwards, she worked as Sales Manager at AXA Sigorta and as Brand Manager at Sun Tekstil A.Ş. In 2007, she turned her direction to İstanbul by saying "It is a must if the matter comes to career". She started working as Retail and Brand Manager of BGN, a women's clothing brand operating abroad mainly in France and Russia. Her adventure of İstanbul came out of necessity, but her roots were in the Aegean. She was separated from a large family, and her friends remained in İzmir and Ankara. Although she was lonely and sad, she was also excited about a new job. On the one hand, she was trying to get used to İstanbul, on the other hand, she was a hardworking, determined woman who was fed by work.

She used to travel a lot due to her job and enjoyed seeing different countries. As a young woman, she was also impressed by the attraction of the fashion world. Although she enjoyed her job, she realized that this was not the life she really wanted, after 5 years. In 2013, her longings had already evolved into dreams, and her dreams had already evolved into goals in which she had placed the "real Aslı" in it! In parallel with her new goals, she decided to give up her fashion business and work in food industry. She worked for three years as Marketing Manager of Nar Gourmet, which brought natural and organic product groups and traditional and

"They said it was not a job for women"

"When I started this business, they told me 'You cannot do it in the village'... Although they didn't actually say it that way word for word, they implied this. After renting the field, the people in the coffee shop of the village laughed in the sleeve, while planting my seedlings... When only women worked in the fields, they told me 'This is not a job for women'. Of course, I could not understand them... We started with the women who were my neighbors. I have been working with the same core team since the first day. I call our asparagus as "my daughters"... We raise them with women's sensitivity, patience, physical strength, manual labor, care and love. We bend over and get up 10 thousand times a day for a sensitive cut and we walk 100 km per person in the season... We also drive our tractors ourselves and make our own shipments. I mean, there was always the darkness of the mentality that thought that a woman's career was limited to having children. We all lived and we're still living that. Those who are yet to set off are likely to survive as well. However, the number of women entrepreneurs is increasing and our work is becoming more visible every day. The values we created have already begun to speak loudly for us! This will accelerate women's participation in the economy with high momentum and cannot be stopped anymore. We are about to cross the critical threshold."

local products of Anatolia to the consumers, and this became a new school that she enjoyed very much.

Aslı Aksoy had in mind to settle in her father's land for good and deal with the land one day. The fertility of Anatolian lands and the biodiversity it offered, and the values created by the women who produced in countryside impressed her a lot. Her perceptions were constantly circulating with the ideas of new products and production models and she used to ask to herself "What can I do?" The answer to the question she was looking for was asparagus, which was placed on her plate at a fair in New York, which she liked very much due to its appearance and taste, and its harmony with the grilled meat. When she returned to Turkey, she began to research asparagus sorts. Its production supposed to be difficult, there were people who said "What will you do with asparagus?.. Deal with walnuts.." Although its homeland was Anatolia, there was no place for asparagus on the tables and no one knew much about it. Aslı Aksoy also researched and tried to get information from producers in the Netherlands and Spain. She read a lot and followed Asparagus on internet. Then she worked in the fields of Nomad Tarım in Sarıcakaya-Eskişehir, the largest producer of asparagus in Turkey, and learned the most there.

On the other hand, she began to look for fields for herself by travelling all over the Aegean region from Bergama to Torbalı, from Aydın to Dalaman. But the lands were very expensive, the rents were too high. Finally, she knocked on the door of her villager Hasan Abi from Muğla. Hasan was a hardworking farmer and also open for new ideas. She said: "Let's start together! You know the land very well. You can set your labor on and open a small area in your field for me. And I will bring you a new product idea, information about it and its seedlings with high added-value for our country. We will try this together". Finally, in 2014, she

established the first asparagus orchard in the form of a pilot production on an area of 2.5 acres. She did not leave her job in İstanbul immediately. While learning about the farming, she followed the development of the plants. The result was magnificent. This was going to become a success!

Aslı Aksoy made her first commercial planting in 2015 in Muğla Yeşilçam Village on 20 acres of land. Just months before the first harvest in October 2016, she returned to her village in the Aegean as a person who collected the years of her happy childhood of İzmir, her studentship at METU, and her multi-year professional work and life experience of İstanbul in her mind, and as a person who dreamed and had passion about a healthy and good food. So she became a white-collar farmer. Then she was a happy farmer who was stunned every day while touching the soil, planting the plants, cultivating it with labor, and winning from what she had grown. So she began with her lifelong doctorate.

Elibelinde: Symbol of woman, labor and fertility

Stating that she learned patience and reliance after working with the soil, and she experienced the pleasure of protecting, owning, producing and sharing while she enjoyed every moment of it, Aksoy named her brand 'Elibelinde' as she felt that a new life began and her attitudes changed and developed over time. She explains why she chose this name as follows: "Woman is the symbol of labor, productivity and fertility. As one of our traditional motifs, we know it from rugs and carpets. At the same time, it symbolizes luck, fortune and joy, a woman who takes energy from herself."

"Elibelinde represents us, women farmers, our passion for the land, the work we do, the wishes that pass through our hearts every morning while doing our



“Set up big tables, eating alone only fills your stomach”

Advice from Aslı Aksoy to entrepreneur candidates...

“Plant seeds! Plant various seeds in different places! You are both much luckier and very talented in this regard. Be very curious, meet a lot of people and travel a lot. Then decide that which of the seeds you planted are your favorites. Then give them more effort so they can grow faster and develop more. When it's harvest time and it's time to eat, set up big tables. Crowded tables! Eating alone only fills your stomach.”

“Also, let's not attach too much

meaning to the details and concerns that we will understand over time that they are not really so important. Let's not let it stand on the way of our fully-equipped competencies hindering shining through. Because it is often ourselves who do this to us. I think the secret is to set out once. It doesn't matter how our story ends or continues; this is our first, most difficult but greatest achievement. Because proving as you succeed, persuading as you prove... It gets easier every day or we get stronger each day for better or worse.”

work, our strength when we are together, our trust and success step by step by being clamped around a single common goal."

She runs the field together with the women of the whole village

As the production of asparagus is a perennial process, no product could be harvested for the first 2 years. The harvest begins in the third year and the field is fully productive hardly in the fourth year. The production continues in the same field for ten years. Aksoy tells: "At our first harvest, there was such a joy in our family who supported us since the beginning, and it would surpass the jolliest harvest festivals. Since 2015, together with my neighbors in Yeşilçam Village of Muğla and the women of the whole village, we have been processing the Elibelinde fields, reached 40 acres today which was 20 acres at the beginning. Until now, we built the workplace, which we converted from a stable into a packaging facility with a cold store." In 2018, Aslı Aksoy received the Good Agricultural Practices Certificate from the Ministry of Agriculture which confirmed that they made sustainable production by taking care of the environment, animal and human health. She completely rejected the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers and started the transition to organic agriculture in 2019.

Their target: 200 tons of production in 2025

Realizing the first harvest with 7 tons of product in March 2017, Aksoy increased the amount of the harvest to 10 tons in 2018 and planted 20 more acres, when bringing her total land to 40 acres. Aksoy founded Asparagus Tarım A.Ş. in 2020 and leased an area in 212 in Antalya Tigem Boztepe Enterprise. She invested in the company with a 25 percent partnership share, and she completed the planting in 140 acres

in the spring of 2020 and in 70 acres in 2021. While the production was 20 tons in 2021, it increased to 80 tons last year. Aslı Aksoy predicts to increase the annual production capacity above 200 tons per year in 2025, when the fields with completed investments will be suitable for a full harvest.

It has grown 100 times in 7 years

Saying that her goal is to create a new market in Turkey and become an exporter, Aksoy tells the following: "For this, the planted areas need to reach a few thousand decares of land in a short time. To achieve it, we support the contracted and organized production. On the other hand, we evaluate new investment projects and work specifically to integrate women's labor into the global value chain. Our work is not only for fresh asparagus, but also for processing and freezing, canning/pickling and drying it. Thanks to the innovative production techniques, we implement harvest programs also outside the spring season. Considering that the total domestic production of our country in 2022 was around 250 tons, we can say that we are taking firm steps towards our goal with these growth figures. The size we have reached today is 250 acres. It has been 7 years since the first day and we have grown 100 times until now."

Started with 2 women, now reached 50 people

Expressing that producing and sustainable safe food is a vital issue for Turkey's future, Aksoy says: "The solution to the deep economic and social problems created by rural-to-urban migration is here too: Creation of sustainable and reliable job opportunities. We have achieved this in our village for 7 years. We started with 2 women, now our team has reached 50 people with the addition of our Antalya field. In one field, you create an economy which will last for at least 12 years."



Aksoy tells that they are working on correct use of limited resources and avoid contamination of the resources while preventing low yield and crop losses while these are still on the field.

Underlining that although women's labor is at the heart of the production of the agricultural order in Turkey, the decision makers in the sector are men, Asli Aksoy speaks as follows: "As a woman and female entrepreneur, you are subjected to an additional proof and persuasion process at each stage, beyond the work itself. It's like an invisible hand over you all the time... It's like it wants you to slow down. In fact, it doesn't do it willingly, but it just does it... But to achieve it step by step and by making women's efforts visible and sticking them together around a single common goal... Proving as you succeed, persuading as you prove... At the point we have reached today, and this time as women, we are being appreciated for achieving these things. This means turning a disadvantage into an advantage. But I don't think there is any rightfulness in the core of the either case. However, as long as equality is not internalized as an understanding, every moment we



Dealing with the soil is much more than just being able to produce a vegetable; it is a profound subject. Agriculture is truly more than just food production. It is a way of life and a set of values with a passion within it. When you protect it, serve it, and contribute to its development, I believe that the value created by this also creates a difference.

can turn it into an advantage is very valuable, because then it is possible to get support because we are a women's initiative."

She got the biggest inspiration from Gamze Cizreli

Asli Aksoy, who selected as 'Woman Entrepreneur Who Made a Difference in Her Region' at Turkey's Women Entrepreneurs Competition organized jointly by KAGİDER, Garanti Bank and Economist in 2021, is a member of KAGİDER and speaks English fluently. Stating that successful entrepreneurs who do their job with passion impressed her a lot, Aksoy got the biggest inspiration from Gamze Cizreli -a strong, passionate, unyielding woman entrepreneur who does her job with love. Years later, Aksoy took part in Gamze Cizreli's project "From the Women of the Land to the Tables" in Big Chefs Cafes, and went to the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Conference organized by the Tunisian Government with the United Nations. This was one of the unforgettable moments for her. The book that fed Aksoy's entrepreneurial side the most was 'Starbucks-Putting Your Heart to Work'.

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AYB KE HOLAT

Founder of ACTA SPORT and My Cutie Pie

EDUCATION: Graduated from Department of Political Science at İstanbul Bilgi University. She got her master's degree in Political Science at Sciences Po Grenoble, France.

She founded Turkey's first horseman ready-made sport clothing brand

Aybüke Holat, who has been a professional rider since she was 5 years old, founded Turkey's first horseman ready-made sport clothing brand 'ACTA Sport' when she was only 25 years old after witnessing the difficulties experienced by the riders while importing all their clothes from abroad. When the sales stopped due to the cancellation of the competitions during the pandemic period, Holat launched the second ready-made brand My Cutie Pie which appeals to the 0-14 age range.

Aybüke Holat is a young, successful, ambitious and hardworking female entrepreneur. She is only 29 years old and already the founder of two important enterprises. Aybüke Holat, who completed her undergraduate education in the Department of Political Science at İstanbul Bilgi University and got her master's degree in Political Science at Sciences Po Grenoble in Grenoble, France; has been participating in competitions as a professional sporter in show jumping branch since she was 5 years old. Having obtained many national and international awards and degrees, Holat completed her refereeing training in 2018 and started to work as a national referee in competitions in Turkey first; then she was selected by International Federation for Equestrian Sports (FEI) in Switzerland and promoted to international refereeing in 2020. In addition to her professional career and initiatives, she is currently a show jumping referee in international competitions in many parts of the world.

Holat both studied and worked since a very young age due to economic and familial losses. She had the chance to get ideas in many different sectors and organizations. She wanted very much to start her own business, to start something from scratch. Among the sectors she worked and observed during this period, the most exciting was the ready-made clothing and the production process of this sector. Holat also founded the first domestic horseman ready-made clothing brand ACTA Sport in Turkey in 2018 by combining riding and ready-made clothing, two fields that she knew and got excited by. In the equestrian branch, the brand attracted great attention in the domestic market in a short time, since the athletes in Turkey had to buy imported products until that day. Currently, its products meet with the sporters in both the domestic market and international equestrian sports clubs. The cessation of all sports competitions and the lockdowns

due to the pandemic led to the birth of Holat's second ready-made brand, My Cutie Pie. My Cutie Pie is a ready-made brand for girls and boys aged 0-14. At the moment, its products are being sold through its own website www.mycutiepiekids.com and many e-commerce channels such as Trendyol and Hepsiburada.

"I became an entrepreneur to work harder" says Holat, as one of the people who feed on work. She is a person who is happy to start the day at 05:30 in the morning. She had a very active childhood and youth with the influence of her athletic side. Stating that her biggest capital while founding her business was the experience she gained and the network she established, Holat says: "I am a young entrepreneur in the field of ready-made clothing. I have two brands: ACTA Sport and My Cutie Pie. In our collections, there are models designed separately for boys and girls from newborns up to 14 years. It is unspeakable joy to see a product that you have carefully designed, created and produced with a great deal of effort, on sporters and children. That's why I love my job so much."

"It was not easy to direct customers to a new brand"

Emphasizing that ACTA Sport is currently the only and first domestic horseman ready-made clothing brand in Turkey, Aybüke Holat reminds that they are a niche area as a target market and adds: "There is a habit that customers buy from abroad since years and use during an active sport such as horse riding. It was not easy to redirect this habit to a new brand. By analyzing the needs of the sporters and the shortcomings of other brands, we produce innovative products that meet all the needs. With the fabrics we use in our products, we offer our customers the required durability, comfort and maximum flexibility. We provide freedom of movement thanks to the four-way stretch techno-



Advice from Aybüke Holat: “Take action!”

“A baby never gets up and walks in an instant. He/she falls down many times; firstly he/she starts to crawl, then he/she falls again, maybe gets injured; he/she is afraid, crying... But after 1 year or 1.5 year, he/she starts walking... He/she tries once and does not succeed the first time. There are hundreds of trials and efforts for this purpose. So my humble advice is: everything may not happen right away, you may fall many times... The important thing is to persevere, learn and move on. If you have a dream that you truly believe in, you can overcome all difficulties with the faith and determination in your heart to make it come true. Actions give sound more than words. That's why I want to say to all the entrepreneurs who have dreams: “Take action!”

logy in our riding pants, which are the most preferred by riders. In addition, all our products have performance features such as wind protection, water resistance and UV protection. They also have stain-proof, antibacterial and anti-odor qualities.”

Stating that in My Cutie Pie, they created their collections with colorful designs that adapt to the colorful world of children, inspired by their energetic spirit, Holat says that 100 percent of the products are made of cotton fabric by the design teams in Turkey and England. Expressing that “We are improving ourselves every day to do what we do in the best way possible”,

Holat adds that they are trying to turn the processes into an advantage by following the changes in the industry where competition is very intense. Holat, who notes that although the company's goals during the establishment phase were mostly in the direction of physical stores, they created all their strategies to expand on online platforms with the pandemic, and says that ACTA Sport is more export-oriented, while My Cutie Pie is growing mainly in the domestic market. Holat notes that they prioritize digitalization and green transformation in both the raw materials used in their products and their production processes.

As owner of two important brands at a young age, Holat wants to reach more people from all over the world. Saying that they are growing day by day despite having a small team at the moment, Aybüke Holat speaks as follows:

"My biggest and only capital was my network when I started my venture. From the catalog shooting of my brand, up to the printing of business cards, the professional people with whom I was in contact for years voluntarily supported me. This was something really precious for me. Despite the long years passed over it, my eyes still fill with tears while I share this. I

"Hard times create powerful entrepreneurs"

"I had and still have the urge inside me to leave something behind that is beneficial for someone when producing and creating something from scratch. This kind of anxiety was always intense in me. I have always had short and long-term dreams about my life and my career. So far, I had the courage to follow my dreams and the things I love. I wanted to create a sustainable, productive and happy life order that stood on its own feet, and to be an "entrepreneur". In the stories of successful entrepreneurs, I think the common point is that they went through financial difficulties and they experienced absence. Hard times and changes create braver, more risk-taking and powerful entrepreneurs."

would like to tell you a memory that I have never forgotten: We would do our first shooting with samples of my brand that I could barely produce, but of course I did not have a budget. I asked a professional photographer friend of mine if we could dress up and shoot a few acquaintances. He voluntarily brought professional models from the agency he worked for. Another friend of mine as hair artist came and did the hair, and someone else said: 'I'll do the make-up'. After all of this, we made a shooting that was almost equivalent to the catalog shootings of the world-famous major magazines. All these people were persons who earned money from their jobs professionally and they worked there voluntarily that day under very cold and difficult conditions, and also so diligently. Touching people's lives in this way is so meaningful for me on my entrepreneurial journey..."

Entrepreneurship is a journey to discover yourself and your potential

Aybüke Holat says that entrepreneurship is a difficult journey, regardless of man or woman; and she adds: "I think entrepreneurship is the journey of discovering yourself, your potential and what you can do, and it is a kind of mood, lifestyle, perspective... The subject we call self-motivation is very important. I am a person who is more motivated when someone says "You can't do it, it's impossible", and a person who works much more and becomes happy when she makes it possible what seems impossible. Being a woman, being a woman entrepreneur is not an easy position, not only in Turkey but also in the whole world. There is a perception and mentality that always connects women's achievements to other things; like her luck, her family, her husband, or anything else. Firstly, we need to change this mentality. Of course, there were difficulties due to being both young and a woman, whe-



There have certainly been challenges arising from being both young and a woman, where things didn't go as planned. However, I didn't see these challenges as obstacles but rather as experiences that would teach me something valuable for my personal growth. I continued to progress towards my goals, keeping in mind that these experiences would contribute to my development.

re things did not advance as I planned, but I did not consider them as obstacles; on the contrary, I continued to move towards my goals while seeing them as experiences that would teach me something for my development."

Emphasizing that the rate of women entrepreneurs in Turkey is still around 13 percent, Holat points out that Turkish women have always made great efforts to production and society throughout history, Aybüke Holat continues her words as follows:

"Women are working hard and will continue to work hard to move the society forward in every field, both today and in the future of Turkey of course. Awareness and awakening of women are increasing day by day. We are a generation who knows how independence and participation, being able to make our own decisions are necessary for familial and social balance, and wants to share roles and responsibilities equally with men. For this reason, I believe that women's power and participation rates in the economy will increase in the coming days."



She studies Sufism and Political Philosophy

Aybüke Holat, who has voluntarily taken part in NGOs in many different fields that concern both women's employment and the other issues of society since her university years, is an entrepreneur also as a member of KAGIDER. The short film made by Holat, as the brand film of ACTA Sport, won one of the awards for best films in Chicago Film Festival. She got also many prizes and medals in the show jumping branch due to her sporter identity, and she speaks English and French fluently. While being impressed by Hannah Arendt's book "The Human Condition", which emphasizes the potential of continuous renewal, rebirth and beginning in human life, at the time of creating her own venture, Holat continues to read the books of political philosophers over and over again and prefers sufistic books that explain meaning rather than matter. She finds it very valuable as an entrepreneur who produces and tries to provide benefits and especially reads the books of Cemal Nur Sargut in this context.



AYÇA ÖZER

Founder of Aicha Lavanta

EDUCATION: Tourism and Hotel Management

An enterprise story with lavender scent

Ayça Özer, who worked in tourism sector for 12 years and decided to establish her own venture after becoming a mother, started to grow lavender, which she saw in Bulgaria and liked very much, in her land located at the foot of the Istranca Mountains. Özer started the production by planting lavender on 30 acres of her 82 acres field in Demircihalil village of Kırklareli, and today she grows lavender on 55-acres planted area. Also establishing a facility that produces essential oil by steam distillation in Kırklareli, Özer launched Aicha Lavanta, a natural cosmetics with herbal ingredient.

Ayça Özer followed her education on Tourism and Hotel Management, and she is a female entrepreneur who decided to fly on her own wings after working in corporate life for 12 years. Being a mother of two children, Özer's entrepreneurship story started as a necessity. After becoming mother, the question "Hectic business life or kids?" made her feel like she had to make a choice and she decided to move to a system where she could be flexible according to the situation, while making her own work plan, adjusting her working hours and creating her own working conditions. After saying goodbye to her job in tourism sector, which she continued uninterruptedly, Özer was very impressed by the lavender fields she visited in Bulgaria. She decided to grow lavender in her field located at the foot of the Istranca Mountains in Kırklareli.

In 2018, converting 30 acres of 82 acres of her land in Demircihallı village of Kırklareli into a lavender field, Özer carried out first an intensive



feasibility study and then started her farming adventure by bringing 52 thousand medicinal aromatic plant 'Lavandula Angustifolia' lavender seedlings from Bulgaria, the world's largest lavender producer country. Increasing the number of seedlings to 110 thousand in 2019-2020, Özer is currently growing lavender on 55 acres



Advice from Özer to entrepreneur candidates:

"We need to be aware of the moment we live in. Everything we experience takes us somewhere and makes us who we are. I believe we should stand behind our decisions. If the decision is ours, the result is also our result. Both success and failure... Doing our work in best possible way without worrying about success, leads us to success anyway. It's good to be brave. Sometimes you have to act without thinking too much. Thinking too much can bring you down. Also, you should not look at something only for yourself. It is necessary to ask the question "Who can I carry up when I go up?" If you have a good business idea, don't wait for the perfect time to start. First of all, we have to start from somewhere."



of planted area, and her goal is to increase the number to 80 acres this year.

In June 2020, Özer also established a facility that produces essential oil by steam distillation, where she transformed these seedlings, which were reproduced from rootstocks, whose purity and originality was preserved, into pure lavender oils, in Kırklareli. Then in February 2021, they also put on sale cosmetics with herbal content, which they scented with their own essential oils, produced in GMP standards, and produced under the brand of Aicha Lavanta.

In the lavender field, where Özer works intensively with women together, the production process starts in the spring months and is intense until the end of July, which is the harvest period. With the winter period, the plants lie dormant. Özer is spending the summer with her family in Kırklareli. Ayça Özer, who applies sustainable natural farming methods in her field, opens the field, which creates a visual feast with its purple flowers and spreads its smell over an area of kilometers, to visitors in June. Due to its close location, the fields attract many visitors from Istanbul,



especially on weekends. Tours, excursions and invitations are organized to these fragrant lavender gardens. The harvest begins in July, and this time the factory, where essential oil is produced, gets a very busy month as it also serves other producers in the region. Then the sales and marketing of natural cosmetics continues for 12 months.

Ayça Özer says that “Everything we produce complements and sustains each other. Investing in lavender in this region is very valuable in terms of both employment and tourism. In fact, the business model I have built is very suitable for me and my family”. Özer speaks further as follows: “Having always a plan, being able to organize, and the ability to always plan 1-2 steps before of what I was doing helped me a lot when I was constructing a job that I did not know from scratch. So, the business has definitely grown, the needs and demands have always taken it one step



We implement sustainable and natural farming methods on our field. We do not pollute your bloodstream with the cosmetics you use on your body. Our soap, which you use to wash your hands, does not pollute the water, and therefore, we do not pollute the soil. Our entire production and story complement each other. I will say it again: we work not to destroy but to create. Everything we produce complements and sustains each other.”

further. I am not sure if I am where I dreamed of today, because dreams are constantly being updated. As I take my work to a higher point, I also carry my dreams to a higher point. Neither I nor my job or my dreams are at the point where we started. Well I am glad we're not.”

“We work not to destroy, but to create”

While saying that production is included in all stages of her work, Özer underlines that they value all living things in nature. “Even though I am very afraid of it, the snake that lives in the field is also very precious to us. We are working not to destroy it, but to create. We never use synthetic chemicals in our fields. We do not have the right to pollute the living space of the creatures living there” says Özer. She adds that they harvest rainwater in their fields and then use the water they collect for irrigation. Stating that they use the tree roots in the field as fuel in their own dis-

tillation facilities and that they send the lavender wastes that come out while extracting lavender oil to the bio fuel facility to be converted into energy, Özer speaks as follows: "The natural cosmetics we produce contain herbal ingredients. We do not use synthetic chemicals. We do not pollute your blood with the cosmetics you use on your body. Our soap that you wash your hands with does not pollute the water, so we do not pollute the soil. All of our production and our story complement each other. I will say it again; we are not working to destroy, but to create."

"Production lies in the nature of woman"

Noting that 95 percent of her brand is created by women's labor and that's why she is very proud, Ayça Özer says that they do not discriminate between men and women while working, and everyone supports each other. She emphasizes that despite the increasing number of entrepreneurial women in Turkey, it is difficult to survive economically. Özer continues her words as follows:

"It lies in the nature of women to produce. Most importantly, women can do many things at the same time. I think this brings advantages in entrepreneurship life. Entrepreneurial women need to be supported economically. Tax benefits can be created for them. Marketing what I produce is the most difficult issue, it requires very high costs. Opportunities should be created and supported in this regard too. I believe that once a woman, who enjoyed working and producing, will not give up easily. I am very hopeful about the future. We tried to do what our mothers couldn't. I am sure that our children will do the things better than us."

Her motto of life: "The hand that gives, also takes"

Özer, who does not limit the persons she was influenced by in her career journey, states that what we learn at every stage of life is reflected in our work and the way we do business. Noting that she took a phrase of a former boss, whom she loved very much, as her life motto: "The hand that gives, also takes", Özer underlines that she strives to become the "hand that gives" financially and spiritually as much as she can. Özer adds that "I also do business with the nature. My life motto is also valid for the nature. In fact, we need to realize that while we live, I think that every person we meet, every event we encounter, is experienced in order to add something to us. I'm one of those people who always see the glass half full. We do business with people, sometimes we get tired, but we must never forget that the person against us is also a human."





AYFER KARAKOYUNLU

Founder and CEO of Aykaya Ambalaj A.Ş.

EDUCATION: Graduated from Göztepe Anatolian Girls Vocational High School, department of Textile Ready-to-Wear

Expanded abroad with organic and recycled packaging

As an entrepreneur, Ayfer Karakoyunlu founded her own brand Aykaya Plastik in 2005 and started the production of organic packaging with organic raw materials by creating a difference in the sector in 2018 in order to minimize the damage caused by plastic packaging to nature. She expanded abroad with her own brand OGW (Organic Green Word). Stating that Aykaya Plastik decided to continue on its way as Aykaya Ambalaj in its 16th year, Karakoyunlu says: “Our biggest goal is to move forward to be the best in organic and recycling. The world is constantly changing towards a sustainable and circular economy. Whoever adapts to this change survives. We will not just stay standing, but we will run to the future.”

Ayfer Karakoyunlu is an energetic entrepreneur who prioritizes personal development mentally and also develops her perspective physically and constantly. Born in İzmir, Karakoyunlu graduated from Göztepe Anatolian Girls Vocational High School for Girls, department of Textile Ready-to-Wear. Karakoyunlu, who started her business life as a pattern operator in a textile company after graduating from high school, became İzmir Regional Manager of Küçükler Tekstil Armoni İplikleri after working in this company for 6 years. In this period, Karakoyunlu met the packaging industry and continued her career as a Sales- and Marketing Specialist in different companies.

She had decided to become an entrepreneur when she was still a child while she saw her father

both running her own business and struggling to work elsewhere. She planned to take a step when the suitable conditions were created and she decided on her business idea. As her education and expertise field was textile, she decided to take part in the packaging sector, another branch of textile. In 2005, she established her own brand Aykaya Plastik in a small office as a sole proprietorship. When supplying packages for many packaging companies especially in textile, in Turkey and abroad, Karakoyunlu aimed to minimize the damage caused by plastic packaging to nature and she didn't want to be limited only to plastic packaging production, but also started the production of organic packaging with organic raw materials and made a difference in the sector. She expanded abroad with own brand OGW (Organic Green Word). Ka-



“First invest in yourself”

“I have always made it my goal to support a person in my life. Because none of us is born under equal conditions. If we support each other and try to live in unity and solidarity, I am sure that the world will become more beautiful and equal. I try to maintain this idea by participating in various commercial, social and volunteer activities, and I recommend this to people. The only capital of a person is herself. Therefore, one of your life goals should be to be individuals who have developed themselves spiritually and physically with the awareness of ‘investment starts in yourself first’.”

rakoyunlu, who has started to spread the use of organics in the packaging industry, currently has a working system in which she cooperates with local and global companies. In its 16th year, Aykaya Plastik decided to continue on its way as Aykaya Ambalaj A.Ş. Aykaya Ambalaj has a wide range of products ranging from biodegradable waste bins to organic cargo bags, from pizza, hamburger boxes to medical products such as cesarean bag, bypass pocket, and textile products.

Focuses on steps that will make difference in the sector

The first name that left a mark on Karakoyunlu’s



career journey was her father. She was impressed by the advice she received from her father and his perseverance. The woman boss when she started her career also inspired her with her entrepreneurial story. Despite being a primary school graduate, her boss, who started her business life by producing at home with a single sewing machine, later turned her business into a factory where she employed two hundred people. Stating that her

dreams as an entrepreneur woman were to establish her own company and to make a difference in her own sector both in Turkey and abroad, Karakoyunlu adds: "I have the business life that I dreamed of. I still focus on business steps to make a difference in the sector. Today I am exactly where I dreamed of in my career."

"From our ancestors we learned not to use up, but to use consciously"

Karakoyunlu tells that they are advancing towards the goal of becoming a dynamic and innovative company by closely following the innovations in the packaging industry in our country and in the world. She says: "From our ancestors we learned not to use up, but to use consciously. With our

OGW brand, we continue to respect the mother earth and support nature with our biodegradable bags without harming any living creature in nature. We call this project "Organic Green World". Our next biggest goal is to move forward to be the best in organics and recycling. The world is constantly changing towards a sustainable and circular economy. Whoever adapts to this change survives. We will not just remain standing, we will run to the future as well."

"A person who knows what she wants could find her way"

Expressing that she is proud to be a woman entrepreneur in Turkey, Karakoyunlu speaks as follows: "The number of entrepreneurs in Turkey has



"Our aim, both yesterday and today, is to reduce the negative effects of natural resources consumed day by day on nature, to protect our world and to raise awareness among people. The effects of my business idea on my success; to follow the world agenda, to produce focused on customer requests, to not avoid correct information in our business activities and to be completely sensitive to nature and people. We have made it our duty to act with the awareness about nature and environment for a sustainable life."





increased considerably since I started the sector compared to today. I attach great importance to increasing the power of entrepreneurial women, as I believe that the participation of women who are equipped, nurturing and have a broad perspective in every field as well as in their individual life, not only in daily life but also in business life, can improve the world in every aspect. Since the hero on this path is a woman, the first duty is on the woman herself. Afterwards, this task can be further shared with men to make advance. I believe that the power and place of women in the Turkish economy will increase by 100 percent in the coming periods."

Ayfer Karakoyunlu, the mother of an 11-year-

old girl, takes part in many volunteer projects as a participant and manager. Karakoyunlu, who has training certificates on Heart Guidance Trainings (chakras, subliminal affirmations, neuro format) for her personal development, received the Woman Entrepreneur of the Year award in 2022. As a person who speaks German at A' level, Karakoyunlu is also a member of the Aegean Clothing Manufacturers Association and a board member of the Fashion Textile and Confectioners' Site, and a member of the İzmir Chamber of Commerce, the Aegean Exporters' Association, the Turkish Clothing Manufacturers Association, the Fashion Federation and the Be My Future Association.



AYLA TURAL

CEO of Celler Energy

EDUCATION: Graduated from Sofia University of National and World Economy, Department of International Economic Relations. She completed her MBA in Energy Management at İstanbul Kemerburgaz University.

Exported the first electric energy from Turkey to Europe

Ayla Tural, who had been actively playing licensed football in Turkey Women's National Football Team for many years and had a UEFA B Coaching license, has become an entrepreneur while being a popular name because of her work in the energy sector, although she was very successful in football. Ayla Tural broke new ground in the energy sector in 2011 and realized the first electrical energy export from Turkey to Europe with Celler Energy, which she founded with her father together, and managed to reach high volume turnovers by making trade of electrical energy.

In the story of Ayla Tural, whose roots date back to the Ottoman Empire; the biggest factor determining the fate of her ancestors and her own family was 'migration'. Tural's great-grandfather Nuri Bey, who lived in Konya-Karaman region during the Ottoman Empire, was serving as a band chief in the Ottoman army. After the post-war treaty between 1877-1878, known as the War of 93, between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, the soldiers who took part in the war were sent to the Balkans, one of them was Nuri Bey. As a result of the Balkan Wars in 1912, the family remained in the lands separated from the Ottoman Empire. Turkish families living within the borders of today's Bulgaria until 1989 experienced the biggest migration in Europe as a result of the assimilation policies that the Bulgarian government tried to implement at that time. The Turks, struggling to survive under pressure, found the solution by immigrating to their homeland Turkey, and Ayla Tural was one of those Turks who returned to her homeland from Kardzhali, Bulgaria on January 16, 1991 and established a life as a family from scratch.

Ayla Tural completed a part of her primary education in Bulgaria, a part in Sweden and the rest in Turkey. After receiving her secondary and high school education in Turkey, she returned to Bulgaria, the land of her birth, for university education. As the only Turkish student who graduated from the University of National and World Economy in Sofia with a degree in International Economic Relations in 2005, Tural studied politics, international relations and leadership at Bahçeşehir University between 2006 and 2008. In 2015, she got her MBA master's degree in Energy Management at İstanbul Kemerburgaz University. Since 2006, she has held many seminars and actively participated



in conferences in the fields of international relations, international investment, economy, finance, energy trade, risk management, marketing, business management and strategy development, sports management, energy law, culture-art relations, and Turkish history.

Professional football player

Actually Ayla Tural's childhood dream was quite different. Unlike her peers, she had a great interest in sports, especially football from a young age. Her dream was to be a football player, then a football coach and then a manager in a club. She actively played licensed football in five different clubs and Turkey Women's National Football Team between

“Be open to change”**Advice from Ayla Tural to candidate entrepreneurs:**

Don't be afraid to make mistakes and fail. If you take the right initiative at the right time, you will begin to climb the ladder of the success. Don't be afraid to take risks and learn risk management. Strive to be the best in your field of the activity. Do not stay away from social responsibilities. Give great importance to time management. Always be a researcher and make your final decision after getting the opinions of your teammates and the people you take into account before making important decisions. Improve your

missing aspects and believe that you can do the best in your field of the activity and realize your dreams. Be very careful in the selection of the staff, take care of the happiness of your teammates, adopt a democratic management style and always be fair. Grasp the needs of the target mass and their current customers, make the right diagnoses and determine the roadmap you need to follow in this direction. Meet with your competitors, monitor their activities. Follow all the innovations brought by the age and always be open to change.

1994 and 2004. She managed women's football clubs. In 2015, she became the owner of UEFA B Coaching license by participating in the training and exams jointly organized by UEFA and Turkish Football Federation for the first time. She realized her dreams, but the life took her to a very different track and after completing her university education, she started working in the energy sector.

Achieved the firsts

Tural, who worked as a field operations coordinator under the command of Erdoğan Demirören at Demirören Holding headquarters between 2005 and 2010, later turned her direction to entrepreneurship. She founded Celler Energy Company with her father İsmail Tural together while aiming

to be more successful in the energy sector and to perform successful works. The main field of activity of Celler Energy is import-export, wholesale and retail energy supply, mainly cross-border trade of electrical energy and wholesale energy supply. Achieving a first in the energy sector in 2011, Tural realized the first electrical energy export from Turkey to Europe by Celler Energy within the framework of the ENTSO-e system, and by trading electrical energy, she succeeded in bringing her company to high-volume turnover. While Tural achieved outstanding achievements that she never had dreamed of during her 18-year work in the energy sector, she also broke new ground in cross-border energy trade.

After successfully realizing the export-import

and wholesale of electrical energy across borders between 2011 and 2019, Tural established a new consultancy company with her father to share her experience and knowledge in the energy sector. With A&A Trading and Consulting Company, they provide consultancy services to companies that want to make trade of energy across borders but do not have experience in this field.

Adopted a democratic HR Management style

Stating that the most effective factor that brought them to success is to work hard in a disciplined way, to do research, to be fair, to maintain commercial ethical norms, to develop a working model that took into account the legislation, market conditions and economic conjuncture, Tural says: "The most important thing for our business is to comply with the commercial laws of our country. By adopting and applying a democratic HR management style, we have happy staff and can ensure the satisfaction of our customers we serve. The companies

engaged in trade in the energy sector can achieve higher turnovers with staff of 15-20 people than factories employing 350-400 people. In this respect, we have the advantage of being one of the rare sectors that create large volumes with less human resources in terms of number of staff."

Pointing out that the development of women's employment and entrepreneurship will have positive reflections on Turkey's social and economic future, Ayla Tural argues that although the number of female entrepreneurs in Turkey is less than half of the number of male entrepreneurs, women are more assertive. Telling that women entrepreneurs have the potential to make their dreams come true, Tural underlines that the government, priva-



I have to say that we did not succeed in the test to guarantee women's freedom. Equal representation of women in all areas is important for the sustainability of economic and social life and for us to successfully build our future. Despite all the obstacles, it is inspiring that we carry forward the duties with passion, which we undertake in a male-dominated world.



te sector, sports clubs, non-governmental organizations and the public should work together to benefit from this potential for economic and social development.

"Rights are not given, they are taken with struggle"

Tural says that it is essential to break down prejudices against women for the development of society and when she talks about the firsts she has achieved as a woman manager operating in the energy trade, she encounters male managers who have difficulty to believe at first. Tural explains that after a short conversation this perception completely changes, but that she has to make extra efforts to overturn this prejudice and adds: "A positive perception towards women should be created, sufficient and necessary opportunities should be offered to entrepreneur women by believing them. For this, I think that private sector managers should give women a chance. The impression I have gained in many socio-economically developed countries that I visited during my 18-year business life was that the women of these societies have achieved their present rights by struggling for centuries. It turns out that rights are not given, they are taken with struggle."

Her father is her biggest source of inspiration

Ayla Tural, who loves to work and tries to do her job in the best way, is a planned, programmed and responsible person. It is very important for her to work disciplined, to finish the job on time, to fulfill the promise. She also prefers to plan what she will do in the short, medium and long term and follow a road map in this direction. Always trusting her feelings, paying attention to being logical and



objective, Tural was influenced first on her career journey by her father, İsmail Tural, who touched the lives of many people with his deep intellectual culture, leadership skills, benevolence and visionary perspective. Erdoğan Demirören, with whom she had the opportunity to gain a big experience in business life, is a name she always remembers with gratitude for what he contributed to her in this journey, while Brazilian writer Paulo Coelho's book *The Alchemist* and her university teacher Prof. Dr. Milço Stoimenov's book *The International Finance* were also her bedside books that she read with great love and inspiration.

Tural took William McFee's statement "The world is not interested in the storms you encountered, but whether you brought the ship to the port or not" as a philosophy of life. She became a member of the Association of Supporting Contemporary Life, Board of Women Entrepreneurs at İstanbul Chamber of Commerce, KAGİDER, Acute Search and Rescue Association, JCI Eurasia and Think Tank of Bahçeşehir University for a while. She took part in many social responsibility projects. Ayla Tural speaks English, Bulgarian, Russian and Swedish.



AYNUR ÇEŞMELİLER

President of Executive Committee of S.S.Trakyam Women's Initiative
Production and Business Cooperative and TOBB Tekirdağ Provincial
Women Entrepreneurs Board

EDUCATION: Student of Business Administration at Namık Kemal University

Women farmers of thrace region demolishing glass ceilings

If we say it as in a Turkish idiom, Aynur Çeşmeliler is an entrepreneur with “10 ingenuity on 10 fingers”... She is a woman who always struggles and is not afraid of trying new things or making mistakes. She does not turn her back on innovations and looks to the future with hope. One of those women who enjoy life by working... Both emotional and strong, she did not only inspire the women around her with her story, but she also mobilized many women with the cooperative she established. She is an entrepreneur who made women who had never been in business life as partners in her dreams.

Having entrepreneurship at the focal point of her life, Aynur Çeşmeliler is always excited about new jobs and opportunities. She was born at a village in Tekirdağ. After studying at the village school until the fourth grade of primary school, she was sent to the city center at her father's request to study secondary and high school. But actually she never wanted to go... Because she loved her village, the natural life, running freely in the fields, picking fruits and vegetables from its branch, and helping her family. She used to come to the village on weekends and during summer holidays and help her father, who was a farmer in the field. They used to get up at the morning prayer and first gather chickpeas and lentils and then go swimming in the sea. Working in the field was a great pleasure for her. Her father, who saw her firm intention to work, was always supportive and she worked harder to deserve her father's trust. On the other hand, her mother played a very important role in the development of her daughter with her respectful and unobstructed attitude about the decisions she made.

The happy childhood she had and the sense of trust she received from her family helped her to develop her strong character and become the Aynur of today. She wanted to be very successful and after high school she immediately started her business life. She started her career as an accountant. At the age of 18, she began to operate the first movie house in Muratlı. She sold fish and bread on the beach in Tekirdağ. While starting two different boutiques, she was still very young. One day, when she saw the training and franchise announcement of a tourism company, she stepped into this field. In her mind, she had the thought that her work should have social aspects as well. That's why she started to participate voluntarily in Cherry Festival organizations of the municipality and when the day came, she undertook all the orga-

nizational work of the municipality. She bought electric wheelchairs for disabled children with the income of her organization. Meanwhile, she started to run a wedding hall business. She noticed the high demand for winding yarns from abroad and opened a wool shop in Malkara and then a land office in Çorlu. Aynur Çeşmeliler continued to work, earn and invest in new areas and then started a jewelry shop too.

As the sector expanded, associations and social projects entered into Çeşmeliler's life, who has worked actively for 29 years. She was elected as the Deputy Chairwoman of Malkara Chamber of Commerce in 2017, and as the Chairwoman of Executive Committee of TOBB Tekirdağ Provincial Women Entrepreneurs Board in 2018, and then she founded the S.S. Trakyam Women's Initiative Production and Business Cooperative, which was established by the joint work of women. Aynur Çeşmeliler, who left her education unfinished after high school due to her intense work tempo, returned to it after years by entering the department of Business Administration at Namık Kemal University at the age of 51.

As someone who has been dealing with trade for years and residing in Malkara, Aynur Çeşmeliler knew the problems and needs of the region. The pandemic period reminded once again how important local producers are. Thanks to the cooperative, they wanted to increase the number of women entrepreneurs in the region and to create an initiative that would benefit women. As they knew that capital and self-belief were essential for being an entrepreneur, they first aimed to provide this as a cooperative. During this period, they met with representatives of various institutions and previously established cooperatives. They researched and evaluated the processes of successful and unsuccessful cooperatives together with the team of women entrepreneurs board for 2 years.

“There is nothing a woman can’t do if she wants to”

Until now, women have been oppressed due to local pressures, gender discrimination, lack of education and financial conditions. Now I can say that the criteria have changed and I see stronger women. Our work also shows this. We have a very open future, I look to the future with hope, but we all have to work hard. There is nothing a woman cannot do if she wants to. The studies provided by institutions for entrepreneurial women like literacy trainings, other kinds of supports and all trainings on the basis of provinces make us even more hopeful. Within 20 years in the future, I believe that the number of successful women who rule Turkey will increase. The hands of working women will touch the villages, the cities, the fields and the factories during the development of the economy. I think that female power will increase by 35 percent compared to today.

They gathered 77 mukhtar and reached women

In order to reach the women who have a say in the region, they reached the mukhtars of 77 neighborhoods through their spouses, held motivation meetings with the cooperatives established as an example for women, and set out with those who wanted to join the cooperative. The cooperative was established with 320 suppliers and by 68 women members.



After the establishment; firstly they examined what was planted and produced in which neighborhood and divided the products that could be most productive according to the fertility of the soil. In order to be able to produce other than traditional methods, they provided training for 150 people through the relevant District Directorate of National Education and Agriculture. They received the hygiene documents such as product cultivation, packaging, cooking techniques etc. in the name of each woman. The workshops of common use were established for women who could not find opportunities at home or who wanted to work collaboratively. They bought the products they produced on behalf of the cooperative after passing certain tests. By selling the purchased products to very good companies as intermediaries, they ensured that women's lands and handicraft products reached the right customers.

Per week, they sold 1.5 tons of couscous to a hotel

In addition, they became partners in the projects of the Metropolitan Municipality at the meeting of Agricultural Development Summit and so they provided the production workshops with a boiling pot, dough kneading machine, dough rolling machine and tomato paste machines and offered them to the use of women free of charge. They delivered the products to the kitchens of big hotels using both the internet and direct sales channels. In its season, they managed to sell 1.5 tons of couscous per week to a big hotel in Antalya.

Lavender fields established

The development and transformation process of women was not limited to these. They received training on cultivation of aromatic plants in stony, barren, unproductive and unused areas, and they planted small plots in certain parts of the region. Some kinds of plants, such as 165 acres of lavender, 50 acres of golden grass, 20 acres of daisy, 10 acres of black cumin, thyme and rosemary were planted. Sowing with guarantee of purchase was done without using pesticides. She established a distillation center in the region at the expense of women entrepreneurs. At the moment, the works of aromatic oil extraction are being done at the facility of these women entrepreneurs.

Old schools became training centers for women

With the principle of 'not without education', Aynur Çeşmeliler and her team took permission from the Ministry of National Education for 7 worn out and unused old schools, doing paint and white wash, renovation and cleaning works and finally they made them reusable. While transforming the interiors of the schools into communal and educational workshops, they also built a nursery

with trees such as linden and apples in their gardens. They opened these schools to the service of neighborhood women and bought 10 tablets and 18 computers with the contributions of the Chairwoman of TOBB Women Entrepreneurs Board, Nurten Öztürk. They taught women to use the internet so they could sell their products. In order for them to become entrepreneurs in the future, they also provided trainings such as taking photos, using pages, and selling products in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce.

Bone broth production facility established

Another notable initiative among the ventures established there was also the following: Turkey's second largest meat combination facility located in Malkara, and the bones from here were going to waste. The cooperative also found a way for the utilization of these bones. There was made an investment for a production facility that could reach a capacity of 800 liters with a single shift per day, with at least 12 women. The production of bone broth and collagen was the first stage of the work. The second step was to grind the boiled bones and use them as animal food. Another zero-waste project in the region was the utilization of the plants that remained after the first harvest and fell to the ground. These were used in products such as tomato paste, şakşuka and menemen.

"The hardest thing was to convince the women"

Aynur Çeşmeliler, who says that women who have not been involved in the economic life in the region until now, are included in the working life and the results are excellent, adds that the most difficult thing when starting this work was to convince the women. Çeşmeliler speaks as follows: "Women had a very big prejudice against us because of the cooperatives they knew before. First, they did not want to take participation in the cooperatives because their spouses or older brothers also



We aim to make our cooperative one of the leaders that comes to mind when it is spoken about supporting women. Our main goal is to commercialize women's production, increase the numbers of our female entrepreneurs and play a role in the education of girls. As the farmer women of Thrace, we are breaking down the glass ceilings.

had no positive intention for it. To overcome this challenge, we invited the officials of successful cooperatives. We let them speak about their experiences, while asking them all the questions in our minds and planning to take the necessary precautions. In this cycle, every woman is responsible for the product she produces. They work very meticulously because they are aware of the fact that they can be banned for 3 years for their mistakes.

Ancestor seeds were taken out of the dowry chests

Underlining that their main goal is to transform the products which can be produced into value-added products by women, Çeşmeliler states that many of the women in the villages kept their ancestor seeds as dowry, and that they caused these products in their dowry to be showcased. Telling that they are working actively with 2 production workshops, 1 cafe and 5 sales shops in the cooperative, Çeşmeliler says that jam varieties produced by women and other products such as honey, molasses,

cut, couscous, mangır, tomato paste, breakfast sauce, vinegar, goat cheese, walnuts, tarhana, cereal products (lentils, chickpeas, beans, kidney beans and black-eyed peas of ancestor seeds) meet with consumers through the sales channels.

Emphasizing that their main strategy is sustainability, Çeşmeliler gives the following information: "First of all, our aim is to support activities that will increase women's economic power under the roof of cooperatives and to grow together by encouraging those with entrepreneurial potential to establish their own businesses. We are a cooperative of entrepreneurs, women and naturally women-raised children. We are a fast-growing cooperative that can create different product concepts and spawn different entrepreneurs. Most importantly, we have a sustainable structure. We provide scholarships to female students in our region. We are also working on including the prominent agricultural products of our region such as lentils, ravioli, melons, and mulberry within the scope of geographical indication products."



AYŞE SELİN VAROL

Founder of Captain's Walnut Farm

EDUCATION: Graduated from department of Economics at Dokuz Eylül University

Turned her route to agriculture for a livable world

Ayşe Selin Varol, who resigned from her job while working as a Finance Specialist in Qatar, started walnut production on her family's land in Muğla and founded Captain's Walnut Farm. Thus she became one of the female entrepreneurs who turned to agriculture in her career journey for a more livable world. Varol says: "Our goal is to produce clean, handcrafted foods with local and ancestral seed inputs that respect nature and people while reshaping our products in line with the needs of the society we live in, and to bring the habit of clean nutrition to our country in a sustainable way."

Ayşe Selin Varol borned in İzmir as one of two daughters of a sailor father and a cheerful mother. She graduated from İzmir Private Turkish College and then Department of Economics at Dokuz Eylül University. As a young person trying to learn, pursue her dreams and make the impossible happen, she searched for ways to study abroad during her college years and took part voluntarily in many different projects in many countries as European Union projects. She decided to stay in the country and continue her education in Economics at Bradford University at the end of a project she worked with disadvantaged youth in England. During this period, Ayşe Selin Varol, who loves trade and has been asking the question "How can I create income" since her childhood, gained many different experiences during her education, from selling flowers on the street to babysitting, from EU project writing to translation. And then her dreams led her to become CIMA- Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, an accounting certification of international level.

At the beginning, Ayşe Selin Varol's dream was not to be an entrepreneur. She wanted to start a job in a corporate company parallel to the education she received. She desired to have an orderly life, which she later realized that it was an imposed career goal that was supposed to be good. She worked as Finance Specialist in the construction industry in the Middle East for more than 10 years, and gained experience in domestic and foreign companies. Meanwhile, she met her husband in Oman, got married and had one child. At first, her life with her husband was going as planned and they thought they

were very lucky. But after a time, they felt something was missing. They dreamed that their children would not grow up in an apartment but in a garden where they could play freely, eat vegetables and fruits plucked from their branches instead of the foods in the package, and deal with nature and land instead of television and shopping centers as a weekend activity.

On the other hand, Rıdvan Çolak, Ayşe Selin Varol's father, retired from the position of Deputy Director of İzmir Branch of the Turkish Maritime Enterprises, was influenced by the walnut trees he saw in the USA, Brazil, Chile and Peru, where he went when he was still on duty. He began to dream about it like a retirement job. He planted 1500 pieces of local walnut trees on his 50-decare land in his hometown Muğla. After 6 years, he started to get fruit from his trees, but had difficulties in selling his walnuts. Learning about this difficulty her father was experiencing, Varol took action and established an e-commerce site. The site was in high demand in a short time. Varol, who was already questioning about life, work and the future, resigned from her job in Qatar after things went well and returned to Muğla with her family.

Established in Turkey, the garden hosts the most varieties of domestic walnut

Varol, whose entrepreneurial story started with Captain's Walnut Farm brand, works on the farm with her father, mother, brother, husband and brother-in-law. On the website of www.cevizhane.org, they both make sales and give information about healthy nutrition, local seeds and agriculture. At the Captain's Walnut Farm, which is exemplified as the garden that hosts

Don't give up!

With the possibilities we have now, everything that is imagined can be realized. In regard of what we and the previous generation have accomplished in the face of impossibilities and 'got water from a flint', I can say anything is possible. Everything you imagine is possible. What matters is your happiness. The subjects which make you happy will change from year to year and you should change too. Go after what makes you happy. I built a world for myself by making domestic production and I am living the life I dreamed of with my family. Imagine where you want to see yourself and run after it. I fell many times and it was not all lavender and roses. Life in the countryside is not easy at all. However, if you have a life you have created, a brand that symbolizes this, and if you have clawed your way to the top, it is not easy to give up. So, don't give up!

the most local walnut varieties established in Turkey, women from the region who have never had a working life or have left their education halfway, some of whom are illiterate, do work. Ayşe Selin Varol tells: "They are the values of our village and our region. Our women with ancient knowledge and experience that will



make us different from everyone else. Everyone knows about technology or there are white collars everywhere, but how many of them in our lives have touched the ground? Here is our difference."

Target: To produce clean, handcrafted foods with domestic input

Varol states that her interest in healthy nutrition increased while she was working in Qatar and she had the opportunity to examine the diets of different cultures and received training on different cuisines, including raw nutrition, vegan and vegetarian. She speaks as follows: "We have taken the right production as a basis to move good and decent nutrition beyond preference in a sustainable way. We have determined our goal as to produce clean, handcrafted foods with local and ancestral seed input, in accordance with the principle of respect for nature and human beings, to shape our products

according to the needs of the society we live in and to gain the habit of clean eating in a sustainable way in our country."

Started to export

Expressing that they started exporting as a locally produced family company and exported the gluten-free and sugar-free handmade pastes they produced to Europe and the chips produced from domestically produced quinoa, Varol emphasizes that they work with an export-oriented approach while travelling to target markets every day. Saying that as Captain's Walnut Farm, they aim not to produce the popular product by following the trends, but to use the age-old knowledge of their ancestors as a guide in the production processes, to share and increase their awareness, Varol adds: ""We carry out our activities in a transparent, open, fair and accountable manner, by offering equal



I realized that only having the unlimited possibilities is not happiness. What I possess did not make me as happy as sitting around a table and having a meal as a family. Currently, my family and I are producing with the land and we have established our own world, this world makes us much happier. Our children grow up in a garden where they can play freely, eat vegetables and fruits plucked from their branches. We became integrated with the nature and land.



employment to women, with the philosophy of recycling and zero waste.”

Supporting agriculture is necessary for women to continue production

Pointing out that although positive discrimination is applied for women entrepreneurs in commercial life, this does not apply to women who work on the land, Varol underlines that the increase in the female workforce in rural areas is possible with the increasing demand for correct and clean food from the metropolis. Saying that it could be possible for women to continue production in rural areas with clean lands and the continuation of their support for agriculture, Varol continues her words as follows:

“The more we simplify our lives and act with the principle of zero waste, the more we will achieve prosperity. Even if we move to a more modern life, so much of the garbage and waste we produce. Our country is an agricultural country and we should support the agriculture. I think that women are more successful in the production and service sectors. The fine and meticulous thinking of women due to their nature makes a difference in the final product. Woman is tireless. We are republican women. Increasing the number of women entrepreneurs is a task of the entrepreneurs like us who could be role models. A woman who says “I can’t do it, because I’ve never worked in my life” gets such a self-confidence that at the end of the day she can say “There is nothing I can’t do”. The woman is the power of the woman. We need to empower and support each other.”

Ayşe Selin Varol got her support and inspiration for embarking on an entrepreneurial jour-



ney and making domestic production from the family of Ahmet Okan Çağlar and Nurçin Çağlar, the founders of the We Live Healthy Platform. The biography of Sakıp Sabancı, which she read while still in middle school, was one of the books that inspired her on her journey. In addition, Varol’s books on personal development and functional nutrition are the most important pieces of her library. Varol, who drew the roadmap as a woman entrepreneur with the mentorship support of KAGİDER and UNDP and EBRD, shared her experiences with women as a KAGİDER women entrepreneur and as a speaker in the United Nations Development Program UNDP program, and she was proud of this. Varol speaks English and German, and is also a professional swimmer.



BETÜL SEZGİN

Founder of B+S Interior Architecture and Design Studio and
Chairwoman of İzmir Business Women's Association (İZİKAD)

EDUCATION: Graduated from Interior Architecture and Environmental Design of
Faculty of Fine Arts at İzmir University of Economics (IUE)

“The hardest step is the first step, get out of your comfort area”

Betül Sezgin is an example of the fact that there is no obstacle in life that cannot be overcome with will, determination, courage and self-confidence, and that it is not too late for anything. She got married at the age of 19 and studied Interior Architecture at the university when she was 35 years old as the mother of two children. Sezgin, who is passionate about education, learning, research and development and actively works in non-governmental organizations, has been the chairwoman of İzmir Business Women's Association (İZİKAD) since 2020. Sezgin states that the first step in entrepreneurship is the most difficult one and says: “Get out of your comfort zone”.

Betül Sezgin is a name who will inspire everyone with her story. She is the story of perseverance, determination and passion which teaches that one can achieve anything if she wants, and it is never too late to start... Betül Sezgin was born in İzmir and lived in Ankara until her age of high school. She wanted to study psychology or architecture at university. While she was preparing for university intensively, her love changed all her plans and got married at the age of 19 and settled in İzmir. Although she married at an early age, she never gave up on her desire to study. She attended different trainings, courses and received certificates to improve herself but these were never enough for her. Meanwhile, she had two daughters. At the age of 35, when her youngest daughter was 4 and her eldest daughter 10, she decided to continue her career and go to university. And she entered İzmir University of Economics, department of Interior Architecture and Environmental Design. She didn't mind the age difference with her classmates. She was a very hardworking student. She did her project homework with her children at home. During this time, she struggled a lot because of being a mother, but she never gave up.

She wanted to start the business life as soon as she finished school, but she did not know what to do. Again during this period, she decided to go to her sister with her daughters, who was living in England. She attended the trainings given at Chelsea College of Art and Design in London, and then completed her internship at Capita Symonds Architecture British Design Office, also headquartered in London. Her daughters advanced their foreign languages with her together too. Her internship experience abroad improved Sezgin even more. When she returned, she started to be a partner in various projects of her friends. She found herself within the business life while being busy with the works of friends and acquaintances.

As a person who entered the university late, it was difficult to adapt to business life. However, this difficult process did not discourage Betül Sezgin, on the contrary, it increased her motivation and enabled her to establish her own company and enter business life. Sezgin, who founded the B+S Interior Architecture and Design Studio in İzmir, has been working in designs of housing, offices, factories etc. She works at different scales by making concept and application projects in her designs. Betül Sezgin decided to become an entrepreneur while she was still in high school. In these years, she used to earn her pocket money with the lessons she gave by different techniques besides her own notes of school. She meticulously applied this creative process in her projects after becoming an Interior Designer as someone who enjoys creating creative solutions, creating a product and communicating with people. Betül Sezgin, who is in this sector since 15 years, initially took on work mostly in İzmir and its surroundings, but today the majority of her projects continue in other provinces of the Aegean region and İstanbul. Sezgin plans to focus on the overseas projects which she continues to work on in London in the near future. And she has a design and application team from different disciplines.

Became the President of İZİKAD

Betül Sezgin, who is very active in social life as well as in business life, started to research associations in order to meet people from different professions and to understand social relations in business life. Thus, her path crossed with the İzmir Business Women's Association (İZİKAD). Sezgin, who also works in different non-governmental organizations and has leadership skills, joined working groups in İZİKAD, where she joined as a member, chaired the committees and then held almost all positions such as member of board and general secretary. She assumed the presidency as of February 2020.

“Working person is self-confident and has a high expectation from life”

Betül Sezgin gives the following advice to young people who are just at the beginning of the way: “Don’t be content with reading, make sure you practice the knowledge you acquired in your profession; in other words: work! Get involved in business life at the first opportunity. Working is also being involved in social life and assimilation of cultural life. A working person is a self-confident individual and has a high expectation from life. This person can construct her own life and find the power in herself to not allow others to determine her own way of life. While you are studying, take advantage of all the opportunities that will give you an advantage in business life. It is a must for entrepreneurship to take action and not give up with the studies done as a result of good analysis. Losing is sometimes inevitable on this journey, but taking lessons from mistakes and continuing on the way will enable you to make the right decisions and have the power to exceed the limits.

“Learning is my passion”

Meanwhile, Sezgin, as a person who loves to learn and discover new worlds, decided to take the exams again and study at the second university. She is still continuing her education in the department of Sociology at the Faculty of Letters at Istanbul University, says: “Learning is a passion for me. As I learn new things, I realize that

how limitless knowledge is and I take great pleasure in being part of this cycle. I have not yet reached the point I dreamed of. I think this is a journey. I think it is more important to be on the way than to reach it. Sometimes you find yourself in unexpected places. This may not cause you to lose your motivation, but rather to see and analyze the risks, take precautions and become stronger. Even though I am happy with where I am now, I will always continue to work for something better and different.”

“We must be stronger, more visible and more active”

Stating that it is very difficult to be a woman entrepreneur in Turkey, Sezgin draws attention to the fact that women with university degrees and professions face discrimination when they take their first steps into the business life. Sezgin adds: “A male-dominated view on women that fosters the perception of ‘she can’t do’ still stands like a shadow on the business life of this country from the lowest level to the highest.” While struggling with the natural difficulties of entrepreneur women on the one hand, she emphasizes that they are trying to break this perception. Expressing that they are working hard to increase the effectiveness of women in business life, to raise awareness and to build bridges with other business people, both national and international, at IZIKAD, where she is the chairwoman of the board, Sezgin speaks as follows:

“As I have my own business, I did not encounter any glass ceiling, but there were difficulties I met while expressing myself in the institutions and companies I was in contact with. Due to taking part in a women’s movement, it was easier for me to get through these challenges. But because of this reason, there were many business women who gave up and walked away. We need to be stronger, more visible and more active

in order to move forward without giving up. In corporate companies, you can exist as a woman with a family business, but the decision-making mechanisms are still predominantly male. However, when there is a woman-man communication, which we call the zipper system, you can both look at the problems from different angles and reach the result quickly. So where there are only women or only men, the success rate is always 50 percent lower."

Sezgin says that despite all these problems and discrimination against women, she believes that the place of women in Turkey's future will be better than today, and notes that women's problems are the lack of self-confidence due to the lack of economic freedom and, as a result, the inability to stand on their own feet in business life. Sezgin points out: "One of the important factors that increase women's entrepreneurship is that women entrepreneurs have role models, highlight women who can share their inspiring experiences, and be visible and accessible. I believe that the most important reason for all the problems experienced, from femicides to violence against women, from being confined to

home to their inability to assume a role other than being a wife and mother, is the lack of economic freedom of women. That's why we need to bring our women into business life. We believe that this rate will increase day by day and we continue to work and struggle for it."

Her source of inspiration:

Chanel and Vehbi Koç

Gabrielle Bonheur Chanel, the creator of one of the most well-known fashion brands in the world today, and considered one of the most successful women entrepreneurs in the world, was one of the names that Betül Sezgin was most influenced and inspired by in her career journey. The book "My Memories, My Views, My Advice" by Vehbi Koç is one of the books she inspired by in her career journey. She has a good command of English and an intermediate level of Italian as a second foreign language. As a member of the Board of BASİFED and GIFED besides being the Chairwoman of the Board of İZİKAD, Sezgin is also member of WPO (Women President Organization), ESIAD, İSTO and İzmir Chamber of Interior Architects and a volunteer of İYTE Foundation.



The first step in entrepreneurship is the hardest step. Getting out of the comfort zone is not easy for people to leave the places where they feel themselves safe. The biggest obstacle to entrepreneurship is to get out of this area of safety and to cope with the difficulties it brings. It doesn't always need a team, finance, or special talent to be a good entrepreneur. The courage, long trials, decision-making opportunities and research form the essence of the entrepreneur.



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CANAN JANAN ALKIN

Founding President of Robotic Employment Agency

EDUCATION: Graduated from Turkish Music State Conservatory at Istanbul Technical University and from Business Administration at Anadolu University

Established first robot employment agency of Turkey

She was dreaming of being her own boss, like any other white collar worker. Canan Janan Alkın, who believes in lifelong education, does not give up on working and producing, and always focuses on the better and further, is a successful entrepreneur who founded the first Robot Employment Agency of Turkey. Robot Employment Agency, which manages the digital recruitment processes of companies and offers them digital candidates compatible with their business goals, also offers time-cost-benefit-efficiency advantage.

Canan Janan Alkin is a versatile entrepreneur. She feeds her soul with music and believes in continuous education. Being always planned, she calculates her next step beforehand. In her agenda, the plans for 3 months later are already clear. She is one of the three daughters of a family whose father is engaged in trade and mother is retired from fine arts. Due to her passion for music, she studied at Turkish Music State Conservatory at ITU and then graduated from Business Administration at Anadolu University. Afterwards, she studied at the departments of Public Relations and Social Service Specialist. She is still a 2nd year student of Computer Programming. Believing in importance of education, she likes to develop herself in different disciplines and 'collect diplomas', with her own words.

Having wanted to become a newscaster or a helicopter pilot as a child, Alkin put into practice her dream of flying and being in the sky as a flight stewardess. But when she got involved in this job, she realized that it was a difficult profession. Afterwards, she changed the sector and started to work in Boronkay Automotive, which was also the distributor of Rover and Mini Cooper. Then she started working at Bayındır Holding and took part in the positions of Sales and Marketing Manager and Corporate Communications in different firms of the holding. After working at Bayındır Group for 16 years, she joined Bayek A.Ş., the subsidiary of Türkiye İş Bankası A.Ş., and became the Regional Manager of European Side. After working as Deputy General Manager at Makro İnşaat, one of the subsidiaries of the group, she entered the IT sector with the group company TerzionDX and assumed the role of Deputy General Manager in this company.

"Don't leave it in your thought what you believe in, start off!"

After entering the IT sector, Alkin became intensely

interested in artificial intelligence and renewable energy. Like every white-collar worker, she dreamed of starting her own venture, and she had achieved her career goal in corporate life. When she could not realize her different ideas or thought about bold projects and didn't get approval, she decided that it was time to fly with her own wings. Alkin tells her story as follows: "After a certain age you want to control your life yourself, be flexible and free in your decisions. These feelings led me to become an entrepreneur. That was followed by taking action and not postponing, not leaving whatever you believe in, and starting off. Thus, the rest happened by itself".

New generation consulting company

When thinking to implement her own entrepreneurial idea, Alkin decided on artificial intelligence and established the first robot employment agency of Turkey by turning to robot employment, which she saw as a major deficiency in the era of digital transformation. Stating that they manage the digital recruitment processes of the companies by the Robot Employment Agency, a new generation consultancy company that helps businesses redesign their businesses for the digital age, Alkin says: "Our aim is to provide companies with time-cost-benefit-efficiency by presenting digital candidates in line with their business goals. We offer measurable performance evaluation services, and compliance and design processes which need to be implemented when hiring digital employees."

2 of 10 employees will be digital employees

Noting that the competencies of each robot employee are different just like human employees, Alkin says: "Just as not every candidate is suitable for every job; it is the same for digital employees too. While the

Put the ego aside, started over from scratch

Saying that the breaking point that enabled her to take the first step was an economic crisis, Alkin tells her story as follows: "I had an interesting career journey with sudden rises and breaking points. Besides Expert, Responsible, Manager announcements, authority vehicles, signature authorizations in company signature circular, trainings, I had a very cool 13 years. Then, while there was an economic crisis, the company changed owners. Staff interviews and company mergers, where the fear of 'How will I be affected by this' created by uncertainty was experienced, were troublesome periods. My real story started just here. When the company

I worked for changed owners, at the point when it was my turn, they said that "There is no vacant position as Manager or Assistant Manager, only the position 'Responsible' is vacant, but because of being a Manager, we cannot offer you this position." Then I put my ego aside and started over from scratch. The peak one day before, the dip one day after ... I think it was the most traumatic period of my business life. Accepting the difficult moments in our lives, believing that they will shape our future, persevering and not giving up... After a while, someone resigned. The European Side Region assigned to me and I was back to my old motivated days. The result was a hitherto unheard of budget success. I never gave up working, and I always did my job in the best way."

right digital employee will speed up your business processes, the wrong digital employee can turn your investment into a digital stack. To be successful in digital transformation, the companies must focus on both technology and the digital employees who will interact with it. According to the researches, 2 of 10 employees will be digital employees in the coming period and this number will increase gradually.

Robots will work for us!

In Robot Employment Agency, digital workers, like any employee, are an automated team member trained to run a business process faster and more accurately. It takes tedious and repetitive work off the employer.

While digital workers precede in speed, accuracy, scale and performance, human workers can focus on creativity, ingenuity, collaboration, empathy and learning. Stating that the efficient use of qualified workforce will positively affect the profitability of the organization with a good digital employee experience, Canan Alkin adds that "More profit, increased productivity and performance will help the company both save and earn more money. As you prepare your organization for the future, helping employees do their jobs is the only way to make it more productive and profitable. We prepare you for the future with the digital employee experience. We can all sit back and relax! Robots will work for us."

Fear of technology will be tough for those who resist change

Underlining that the fear of technology will be compelling for companies that resist to keep up with the mega-transformation, Alkin states that they made agreements with many domestic and foreign partners after the company was established and they created working conditions with legal contracts, and that they signed confidentiality agreements with each of the software company partners since there was no other example in the industry. Alkin tells the following: "On request of our customer, just like a human worker, we demand job descriptions expected from the robot. After determining the most suitable digital employee for the job, we present candidates to the company for 20 minutes. If we have two candidates who are suitable for the same job, we have our customer meet with both of them and leave the decision to the customer. We do that in such a way just like presenting candidates and leaving the decision to the firm in a human recruitment process, by stating the pros and cons. After that, the work process is defined to the robot only once and the robot starts work within 48 hours. It can work 24/7."

We must take on responsibility

Arguing that by 2030, women will take on more qualified roles all over the world and that increasing their digital skills will provide them an advantage, Alkin draws attention to the fact that the support given to women entrepreneurs in Turkey is not sufficient. Underlining that support premiums, incentives and tax advantages can be provided to women entrepreneurs, Alkin says: "In addition, it can be planned to organize coac-

Advice from Alkin to entrepreneur candidates:

Entrepreneurship is the ability to see the opportunity. Be curious, don't worry, don't be afraid to fail and to try. If you haven't tried it, how will you know about it? Life has no rehearsal, it is necessary to step out of the comfort zone and take some risks. Start out when you believe in yourself. You will be caught in the storm and rain from time to time, and you will see sunny days sometimes. You will start a new journey with yourself to determine the route and take the responsibility, such as driving a car for the first time or using a boat for the first time. Enjoy it with your free will... Reveal your potential, don't be afraid to experiment and make mistakes. For me, the hardest part is to take action at the right time. Because once you start, the rest will come. Get advice from the persons who are experts in their field, so that the risk of error is reduced. Build relationships and exchange ideas with powerful people. Asking for help when needed will never make you weak. It's always good to be compromising and cooperative. We all have blind spots, it's not easy to improve our weakness, change habits and try something new. Based on my many years of experience, I can say that no organization, which listens to its customers, observes its competitors, and makes its employees happy, could fail. Also, do not stay away from art and science."

hing programs by going to their regions of interest and professions for digital transformation and increasing competencies. In solution process, we must all take on responsibility. We should analyze the situation well, identify the bottlenecks and take action by listing the solutions that would encourage participation, take the lead and encourage them."

Names that shed light on her path

Betül Mardin, the doyen of Public Relations, was the name that was most influenced by Alkin in her career journey. Having attended the trainings of teachers such as Acar Baltaş, Güneş Ufuk and Polat Doğru and receiving one-on-one coaching support, Alkin is a strict follower of the seminars of marketing guru Philip Kotler abroad. Peter Thiel, Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers*, the true story of success, is one of the most influential books recently for her. In addition, Ursula Le Guin's book *The Dispossessed*, in which she questions concepts such as politics, gender inequality, discrimination and freedom, is also one of her bedside books. Alkin defines Seth Godin's 'Purple Cow' and

'Dip' as one of the beautiful and influential books that can give ideas about entrepreneurship and being different, and she believes that watching TED talks is an incredibly valuable archive about every aspect of life.

A versatile entrepreneur

Speaking English and German, Alkin is an entrepreneur with a strong social aspect. She loves learning new things, making researches, eating delicious food, visiting exhibitions, traveling and meeting new people. Music and sports are her two hobbies that she cannot give up. She plays violin, plays tennis, makes tango, paints walls, and lately she's become interested in antiques. Stating that music especially improved herself in terms of creative intelligence, Alkin says: "Personal development is a good thing, I love working, I try to do what I do in the best way possible. Is the procedure human or process? I am a planned, programmed, responsible person. Discipline is important for me, such as getting the job done on time and keeping it when promised. I plan what I will do after 10 days or 3 months and I like to act accordingly."



She describes herself as: "Personal development is a good thing, I love to work and I try to do what I do in the best way, not just casually. Is the procedure a human or a process? I am a planned, programmed, responsible person. Discipline is important for me, such as getting the job done on time and keeping it when promised. I plan what I will do after 10 days or 3 months and I like to act accordingly."





CANSU YAVUZ

Founder of Pamuk Atölyesi

EDUCATION: Graduated from Tourism Management at İstanbul Ticaret University

She started from the needs of her baby, became the voice of mothers

The story of Cansu Yavuz as an entrepreneur started from the needs of her baby. The inside part of the stroller she used for her son was very hard, uncomfortable and made the baby sweat. She couldn't find a cushion to meet their needs in the market and made a special order sewed, a comfortable, colorful baby stroller cushion which a safety belt could be attached to. After a while, when many mothers asked to her "Where did you get this from?", Cansu Yavuz thought: "Well, why shouldn't we produce this?" and she founded Pamuk Atölyesi with a very small capital.

After being graduated from Tourism Management at İstanbul Ticaret University, Cansu Yavuz studied English language in England for 1 year. Having worked in hotels during her school life, she expanded her social circle in this process while also gaining lots of experience about business ethics and discipline. After graduating, she continued to work at sales departments in tourism sector.

She recently worked at a world-leading travel company that made online reservations, and while she was working there, she realized how the developing technology made human life easier. The idea of being able to reach every channel with one click excited her. She says: "I had to establish such a business model which had to work for me while I was sleeping, and be productive 24/7," but she did not know how to achieve this. She knew about the psychology of making sales and the methods of persuasion. Then all the rest was to find the most suitable product to sell. And this business idea came about when she least expected it, due to the needs of her baby. Cansu Yavuz tells this story as follows: "Since we were a family that loved to travel, our son was in the stroller since the day he was born. For this reason, it was very important for us to hold him comfortable. But the inside part of the stroller was very hard and made our baby sweat. At first we put covers and blankets, but we couldn't fasten the safety locks. We wanted to have something on which our son would sleep comfortably, not sweat and would have a colorful product suitable for the belt transitions. None of the products we searched were comfortable for us and we had a baby carriage cushion sewn according to our wishes. Wherever we went, mothers began to ask where we got it from. Then we thought: 'Well, why

shouldn't we produce this?' and we found ourselves in the middle of this job. We made a few products and started selling them on the internet. There was such an intense interest that made me resign from the last company I worked for and then I established Pamuk Atölyesi with a very small capital."

She grew up with the whispered rumors

Pamuk Atölyesi became a brand that attracted great attention and demanded by mothers in a short time. Cansu Yavuz trusted in her product very much and the product made sales by itself in the first stage. In a completely organic way, with the help of the whispered rumors, the brand became recommended among mothers. It reached the current position after the right sales actions and with the capital that came after the sales and the right advertising investments. In this process, which started with baby stroller cushions, the production is carried out in 13 different categories and also there are design registrations in 3 different categories. Expressing that their aim is to make their brands more known while producing healthy, functional and pleasant products, Cansu Yavuz says: "According to the statistics, only 20 percent of small businesses could continue their existence for more than five years. As we finish our 6th year as Pamuk Atölyesi, our company is currently in its maturity period. There is strong brand awareness about it and we have also a loyal customer base. While making long-term plans, we are also able to carry out our daily activities without any problems. Our aim is to show the trend we caught in Turkey to the world as well."

"Don't be afraid of making mistakes; be afraid of not being able to compensate your mistake"

Stating that they work with a team of 6 people



beside women workers who sew at home, Yavuz adds: "Textile was a sector that was completely beyond our knowledge and it was risky for us. We discovered it by making mistakes. The more we discovered, the more we liked it and we figured out the essence of the business. The best thing of your own business is that you can dream freely. 'Do not be afraid of making mistakes, but be afraid of not being able to compensate your mistakes.' Because we made our shoppers leave us happy by compensating every mistake we made, and this created a trust in the families. This is a company that takes care of its product and trusts it. I do not mention them customers because each of them is from our family. Pamuk Atölyesi is a familial organization and they are our most valuable supporters. We continue our business life with this motto. Once there was an ad, I'll never forget. It was about a very famous bank, and there was a boy selling water. I liken our story to it. First he sells water, as he earns money; then he buys an umbrella, a stool,

Advice from Cansu Yavuz to entrepreneur candidates:

You may not know what you want. You can't find it without trying. Even during my very unhappy jobs, I tried to think like this: "I get experience and earn money at the same time, how lucky I am." Every advice I got, every job I experienced prepared me for today. Now without Monday Syndrome, working hours is much more enjoyable. Maybe I didn't discover that the world is round or I couldn't set foot on the moon, but I made a difference in my own world. I tried to transfer all my experiences to those who wanted to create. If I could be an example and encourage even one person, I would be very happy! When I say 'I'm glad that..' every day, wouldn't you mean it too? Wishing everyone to achieve their dreams one day...

earns a little more and then he begins to sell lemonade. We also worked very hard, and we added new products as we sold. And as we sold, we stood by many families during their parenting journeys."

Saying that being a female entrepreneur in a male-dominated sector increased her self-confidence, Yavuz points out that in recent years, some platforms have played a more active role in Turkey to support women in a positive way, and that she received commission- and sales support from the leading marketplaces because of being a female

entrepreneur. Noting that another e-commerce company offered support by placing bulk orders with the mentality of "Supporting Women and Serving the Country", Yavuz adds that these steps are extremely motivating and exciting for women entrepreneurs.

Yavuz argues that it is a great pleasure to be appreciated and supported by someone, even though it is tiring to have more than one role, as being both a mother, a business woman, a wife at the same time, and she speaks as follows: "We are few and women have to leave their job especially after being mother. Insufficient state support in baby care, familial pressure, career problems caused by taking a break from the business life keep women at home and destroy their self-confidence. Although there are some loans and support packages for women, it is unfortunately very difficult access to them and this is almost deterrent. In order for support for women to make this a national policy

and to increase their activities in every field, it is necessary to encourage them more and to allocate additional funds to companies for this. In recent years, Turkey has taken a big step for raising women in economic fields. Despite this, the potential that our women can reveal has not yet been fully explored, and the participation of women's labor force is unfortunately lagging behind compared to men. For the goal of sustainable development, everyone in the society should take an equal role in economic, social and political life. I think we will hear brand new stories of women entrepreneurs in the coming years, thanks to the advanced communication network, social media, women's support platforms and government support. With more active role of women, the missing pieces of the puzzle will be completed."

Cansu Yavuz, a mother of two children and fluent in English, plays an active role on social platforms for the campaigns of babies suffering from SMA.



"To reach the goal of a sustainable development, everyone in the society should take an equal role in economic, social and political life. I think that we will hear brand new stories of women entrepreneurs during the coming years, thanks to the advanced communication network, social media, support platforms of women and government support. With women taking on a more active role, the missing pieces of the puzzle will also be completed."

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CEVAHİR ASUMAN YAZMACI

Founder of Cevahir Han

As a pioneer, she changed the viewpoint on women in Şanlıurfa

She is an entrepreneur as the symbol of perseverance, determination and courage, who struggled with all the difficulties in Şanlıurfa, where the traces of the feudal structure still continue. The entrepreneurial story of Cevahir Asuman Yazmacı started after the bad food she ate and the bad service she received. Yazmacı, who brought the 700-year-old historical Samsat Han in Şanlıurfa into service as Cevahir Han Restaurant, using her own resources and without any support in a male-dominated sector, became the name of courage in the region as the first and only female entrepreneur of Şanlıurfa.

Cevahir Asuman Yazmacı is an entrepreneur who inspired her fellows as a woman and broke new ground in a geography where the traces of the feudal structure still continue. Cevahir Asuman Yazmacı, as granddaughter of İbrahim Pasha, the founder of Hamidiye Regiments and the commander of Milli Tribe during the reign of Abdülhamid II, was born in Viranşehir district of Şanlıurfa. Yazmacı, who lost her mother at a young age, has been in business since her childhood. She ran a pharmacy for 11 years between 1993 and 2004. What started her entrepreneurial story was the poor quality service she received at a restaurant in the historical mansion she went to with her guests together. She felt a great embarrassment towards her guests in the mansion, which was run by the former Teacher's House and was known as the best place in Urfa. The food and the service were bad. In February, they were trying to heat the 60-person hall with two 3-burner electric stoves. After being embarrassed in front of her guests, she asked the business manager: "Everything was so bad, why is that?" and she got the answer from the manager: "It is so, whatever turns you on!" And she gives the following information: "And it didn't work for me. The manager's response revealed the entrepreneurial spirit in me, which I was unaware of, and my entrepreneurship story began."

Setting out with the aim of raising awareness, Yazmacı visited the governor's office and aspired to run the historical mansion. She wanted to change the perspective on women in the city where the feudal mentality was dominant and also to host the guests coming to Şanlıurfa with delicious food in a beautiful place. After determining that the conditions in the historical mansi-

on were bad, the governor's office tendered the management of the mansion for a contract. Yazmacı participated in the tender bid as the only woman among 19 men and won. Yazmacı broke a new ground in Şanlıurfa in 2005, when becoming the first and only female entrepreneur in a male-dominated sector in the city. In 2015, she broke a new ground again and brought the 700-year-old mansion, which is known as Sam-sat Han in history, to tourism by using her own resources and without any government support. And for the first time in the city, she carried out the restoration of the mansion. Yazmacı welcomes her guests to Urfa in the historical place that currently serves as Cevahir Han Restaurant. Cevahir Han, which also has 'sıra geceleri' program specific to Urfa, has also become a gastronomy center where the local dishes are also served. Today, Yazmacı keeps the centuries-old tastes alive and aims to carry them to the future.

In the beginning, it was very difficult for Cevahir Asuman Yazmacı to do business in Şanlıurfa and in a male-dominated sector... She had to change 23 employees in 1 year. Her teammates, who were used to working with a male boss for years, had difficulty working with a female boss and taking orders from a woman. Yazmacı was especially sensitive about hygiene. She told her colleagues: "You cannot change me, but I will change you. The reason I got into this job is to raise awareness in this city." Then she achieved her dreams step by step.

Employing 50 people in Cevahir Han and also being the major investor of Getir in Şanlıurfa, Yazmacı employs approximately 100 people in Getir. Yazmacı expresses her feelings as follows: "What we do is actually to serve people. There-

Advice from Cevahir Asuman Yazmacı to candidate entrepreneurs:

Whatever job you do, first gain experience elsewhere. Learn very well what you are going to do. Then follow your dreams and focus on the work you will do with the right team without giving up. The success will surely come. Be the captain of your own life. Life is like the relationship between the captain and the sea. Just as the captain has a route while he is on his way, and because he knows the destination, he proceeds without deviating from the target. So the person should behave in the same way in her life. If a person has a goal, she will definitely reach it, even if there are difficulties in front of her. Don't be an ordinary person; you must have different and extraordinary aspects from everyone else. Be open to innovations and technological developments. Meet with qualified and insightful people. Recognize the value of counseling and learning. Books alone are not enough to develop yourself. Join the conversations of leaders and pacemakers and benefit from their experiences. Work disciplined to realize your ideals. Discipline is essential for success and produce useful things for people.



fore, it is our priority to touch the hearts of every person we serve. And I think I've touched hundreds of thousands of people so far. This is the part of my job that makes me the happiest."

Yazmacı, who has been in the sector since 18 years and looks at her business from a guest perspective, not like a boss, has grown and continues to grow by displaying an upward graphic in this way. She calls her teammates "internal customers", and thinks that if she cannot make them happy, they will not make their guests happy too. Yazmacı has been measuring performance and monitoring the business with confidential customers for nearly 18 years. Especially hygiene is indispensable for her and she never compromises on hygiene. In addition, she uses social media effectively in the digitalized world.

It is difficult to be a female entrepreneur in the East

Telling that she is a role model for the women

of the region and especially for the women in Şanlıurfa, Yazmacı argues that she has changed the perspective of men about women in the city. She says: "It is difficult to be a woman in the feudal world, but it is a little more difficult to be a woman in Turkey. And it is much more difficult to be a woman and a woman entrepreneur in the East. Taking the initiative, I tried to change the viewpoint about women in the East in general and in Şanlıurfa in particular. I tried to explain what women can do on this journey that I set out with the perception of 'she cannot do it, because she is a woman'. I have shown the biggest difference with my work and my stance."

A versatile entrepreneur taking an active role in NGOs

Stating that she always tried to do her job in the best way and continued on her way with perseverance and determination, Yazmacı defines herself as "I have argued that the biggest obstacle in front of a person is the lack of ideality, and that in order to destroy it, one should dream and then take action". Underlining that her goal is to work with a human focus, Yazmacı attaches great importance to civil society studies and is actively involved in many NGOs. As Vice President of Women Entrepreneurs Board at TOBB, Provincial President of TOBB Şanlıurfa, President of TOBB Southeastern Anatolia Region, Vice President of Eastern and Southeastern Industrialists' and Businessmen's Federation, President of Entrepreneur Women's Association in Şanlıurfa, and Board Member of ŞURKAV (Şanlıurfa Culture Education and Research Foundation), Yazmacı adds that she is very excited by young entrepreneurs and that it is very valuable for her

to share her experiences and produce together with them.

Yazmacı says that although it is difficult to be a woman entrepreneur in Turkey, she is on the side that looks to the future with hope. She speaks as follows: "I always look at the issue of women as the glass half full. Okay, I accept that there are some problems. Is the work done enough? No it is not. For example, we need to work hard to empower women and our girls socially, to ensure gender equality, and to have equal access to health and education with men. Approximately 50 percent of our population consists of women. This means over 42 million women live in this land. Compared to Europe, we have a very young female population. I predict that if we can use and mobilize this potential correctly, we will be in a much better position. In a changing and developing world where intelligence takes precedence over wrist power, women should be more present with their intelligence and take an active role to make the beauties present."

"It is not enough to be an entrepreneur; you need to be a social entrepreneur"

Yazmacı, who also advises women to be social entrepreneurs and draws attention to the importance of taking part in NGOs, says: "It is very important to produce together and to combine forces. Civil society activities always make people happy and enriched. I learned this by experience. Moreover, I sincerely believe that; if you move things forward for the society you live in, it will definitely increase the quality of your life too. As the society develops, you will naturally have better conditions in that developing society. Let's use our knowledge, interests, talents and

roll up our sleeves to leave a beautiful tomorrow for our future. Let's take part in all the works we do with our whole personality, with our courage, knowledge and talent so that the result will be better and our standards will rise."

Hazreti Hatice was the first name to leave a mark on Cevahir Asuman Yazmaci's career journey. The Seagull, The Little Prince and The Kite Runner are her bedside books. Yazmaci, who has a good level of English and Arabic, has been deemed worthy of many awards so far. Some of the awards she received are as follows: Dünya Newspaper's award of Successful Businesswoman of the Year in Turkey in 2005, an award from the Turkish Language Institution for naming the business in Turkish and using the Turkish language well, the Woman Adding Value to Her City award organized by the Ministry of Social Policies in 2018, Gastronomy Evaluation 2017 Emerging Values award.



I have adopted it as a principle to be the voice of women who have been trying to exist right in the middle of this hot steppe for centuries and to stand by every woman who has made a point of success. I have continued on my way with the belief that if women, who make up half of the society, become stronger, the society will gain power and make progress, and I think that I still have a long way to go.





DİDEM ŞEN PAMUK

Founder of Kipos Koçluk Eğitim ve Danışmanlık

EDUCATION: Graduated from Business Administration at İstanbul University

“Daily goals bring enthusiasm, long-term goals bring meaning to life”

She met with coaching on her journey of personal development and self-discovery, which she was interested in to increase her awareness. She thought: “That’s good for me; why shouldn’t it be good for others too?” and started her professional coaching journey with the training she received. Didem Şen Pamuk provides coaching training to the managers and employees individually and corporately. She helps them maximize their physical and mental performance by coaching them on many issues such as stress and conflict management, gaining nonviolent communication skills, overcoming burnout syndrome and maintaining a “well-being” state.

Didem Şen Pamuk, who completed her education at the Faculty of Business Administration at İstanbul University after the education at FMV Private Işık High School, joined the working life with part-time jobs since her second year at the university. Şen Pamuk went to America after the university as au-pair for 1 year. She continued a language school there and improved her English. After returning to Turkey, she started her professional life as a Training Assistant at Intercon, a subsidiary of Interbank.

After a career in finance, she ended her corpo-

rate life when the company was closed due to a merger in 2010. Her life had been a struggle, and she wanted to stop for a while, slow down, and decide what to do. Şen Pamuk always stood out with her positive features and opened new doors with her different perspectives. In this period, she met with the coaching thanks to the trainings she received in her journey of personal development and self-discovery, which she was interested in in order to increase her awareness. Then she decided to shape her career in this direction by giving a new direction to her professional life.



Advice from Didem Şen Pamuk to candidate entrepreneurs:

Having a vision makes the life meaningful. If the things you are busy with in your daily life and your instant choices serve this vision, it is inevitable to reach it. Vision is like a compass and it sheds light on your decisions. "What do you see yourself doing happily in the future?" This question should be asked to young people. How do they feel in this vision and how do they see themselves? Is that image clear and bright? If these are in the proper place, the job of those young people will be much easier. Daily goals, enthusiasm, long-term goals add meaning to the life. Young people should always have goals that won't be too hard but create a slight tension.



Inspired by "Epicure's Garden"

She received trainings from the strongest institutions in this field in order to develop herself in the best way. After completing 1850 hours of coaching training, Şen Pamuk became a professional coach with ICF certification. In 2012, she founded the company Kipos Koçluk Eğitim ve Danışmanlık, which means 'garden' in Greek, referring to the garden of Epicurus where he talked about happiness with his philosopher contemporaries.

Şen Pamuk, who started to work with great enthusiasm, wanted to share with everyone the methods she had experienced and benefited from. At Kipos, Şen Pamuk ensures that both professionals and coaches acquire and develop the skills necessary to maximize their existing potential, with a personalized approach in the fields of leadership, employee loyalty, firmness, agility, emotional intelligence and well-being.

In addition, she also tries to help these people manage stress and conflict, acquire nonviolent communication skills, overcome burnout, achieve and maintain "well-being", and maximize their physical and mental performance.

Specialized in increasing group performance and firmness, positive psychology, neuroscience of leadership and productivity, and employee happiness, Şen Pamuk also prepares development programs tailored to corporate needs for companies. She helps to provide corporate support that will increase employee happiness and creativity, and to set functional systems with the units working in an organizational sense and in a correct flow.

"It is necessary to be open to innovations and to keep moving forward"

Şen Pamuk says that in today's world where technology is advancing rapidly, the entrepreneurs

should be open to innovations and consciously dedicated to learning, growth and development, and adds: "Today I am in the place I dreamed of. When I look at what I am doing, I see myself as a talented football player who occasionally scores good goals in the star team. There is a constant change and development. When it comes to achieving sustainable and stable success, it is necessary to add new skills, to be open to innovations and to keep moving forward."

Didem Şen Pamuk feels great satisfaction of helping the people she gets in touch with evolve for the better. In its coaching program, Kipos takes into account the issue of speed, which is a contemporary issue, especially in adult learning. She tells the following: "While both coaching and teaching, we do not have the opportunity to allocate time, energy and resources like we did in 2010 when I was on training. No one has that kind of concentration now anyway. For this reason, I aim to let the persons learn by doing and

graduate as learned, with hybrid, practical methods and in a way that supports assignments. I also give a vision of measurement method so that the graduates can do accurate work and become professional quickly, even if they are inexperienced while coaching."

Şen Pamuk, who states that she is very impressed by the examples in which women reveal their feminine power as an entrepreneur, says that her close friend Ayça Sarc is a name who inspires her with her feminine feature and evaluates what there is and creates something out of nothing. She adds that she admires Ayça Sarc's energy to focus on good things and transform, who implemented the 'Yorganlar Fora' project to bring awareness to quilt makers from ancient crafts, and reminds them of the quilt phenome-



One of our foremost goals in coaching training is to recognize one's own uniqueness and to realize the strengths that will contribute to life, to remove the obstacles to reflecting this and to open the way for realizing one's potential. Doing so gives the person a life of satisfaction.





non, and now creates Ova Sofra in partnership with a local family engaged in farming in Çeşme. While emphasizing that the founder of Insider, Hande Çilingiroğlu, is also a source of inspiration for her with her worldwide growing initiative, Şen Pamuk says: "I'm sure Hande Çilingiroğlu has never asked herself if she could do it."

"As collective consciousness increases, respect for humans, animals and nature increases"

Pointing out that it is difficult to create an ecosystem in which women will be encouraged in entrepreneurship without breaking the belief that "man is the head of the home and the man earns the money", Şen Pamuk states that the new generation will change this cycle and adds: "The demographic structure is changing and the new youth will not adopt the classical family structure. The new generation seems to stay away from

imposed identities. I guess the stereotyped themes such as "man is the head of the home; he is the breadwinner; the female is the mother; the housewife" will change in future. Thus, I expect that the energy of the woman, whose social burden is reduced, will participate more in business life." Şen Pamuk says that she dreams of a better world where women would live without the need for positive discrimination and that this would no longer be an issue. She tells that as the collective consciousness increases, the awareness of respect for nature, humans and animals also increases, and this gives hope for the future.

Şen Pamuk, who speaks fluent English, gives voluntary seminars to scholarship girls every year at Turkish University Women's Association. At the same time, she helps provide scholarship opportunities to support women who want to return to business life as an academican or teacher at the coaching school but do not dare.



DİLARA ÜZÜNLÜ

Founder & Project Manager of Tech2bio - Smart Hive Technologies

EDUCATION: Graduated from Electronics Engineering at Gebze Technical University

Saw the decrease of the bee population in the world, established the smart hive technologies initiative

Dilara Üzünlü, a very young entrepreneur, only 23 years old, established Tech2bio initiative which has a very important role in the continuity of the natural balance and agricultural production, with the smart hive technologies she has developed based on the 60% decrease in the world's bee population during the last 10 years.

Dilara Üzünlü is a very young, but also a successful, hardworking, challenging female entrepreneur. As graduate of Gebze Technical University- Department of Industrial Engineering, Üzünlü's entrepreneurial adventure started while she was still a student at the university. Üzünlü, who turned towards the startup ecosystem with her friends she met at the university clubs and continues to work in many fields such as business development, project writing, 3d modeling, games, artificial intelligence, IoT technologies, gained experience with her internships and then she started her entrepreneurial journey at the beginning of 2020 with the support of her father Mithat Üzünlü, who was also an engineer.

When starting her career, Dilara Üzünlü's goal was to gain economic independence with her own free will. As someone who was born and grew up in İstanbul, expressions such as tension, boredom, and fatigue which appeared on the faces of employees trying to get to work in the early hours of the morning in busy locations such as Levent, Beşiktaş, and Maslak created a prejudice against the business world in thoughts of Dilara Üzünlü since her high school years. She didn't want to be in their shoes. According to her, the only way to achieve this was to realize her own dreams instead of fulfilling the dreams of others. The internships, observations she made and experiences she got in line with this perspective were also the basis of her step towards entrepreneurship.

Saying that "Today, I am in the infancy of my career adventure, which I dreamed of and took a step by breaking my own shell" Üzünlü often talked with her father about bees and they discussed how important bees were in our lives. The number of bees in the world, whose contribution to the



annual agricultural production in the world is 265 billion euros, has decreased by 60 percent in the last 10 years. In Europe, 9.2 percent of bees were considered under threat. For this dangerous situation, the European Commission created the EU Reference Laboratory for bee health and has been conducting surveillance studies since 2012 to estimate the extent of the bee deaths. In order to prevent these problems, it is vital for beekeepers to detect bee diseases or pests at an early stage, to take precautions and to reduce the use of chemical products, as well as the environmental conditions of beehives and the health status of bees should be controlled in detail.

While bees are so important in the continuation of natural life, Üzünlü, also with support of her father, created her plans based on the question "How

“You only have one life, live to fulfill your dreams”

“No matter what, you are bound to make mistakes. This is not a crime; on the contrary, it is a situation that should happen so that your experiences with mistakes will show you the right way. There is no single way to succeed. The right way could be found if you work hard and follow the way with perseverance. On the other hand, planning but correct planning is very important. A roadmap should be drawn from A to Z. You should always act with the

worst case scenario in mind. Your emotions shouldn't get in front of your logic. If the logic and emotion are intertwined, it will be inevitable to hit the wall violently. Women entrepreneurs need to support each other. We support each other with the logic that unity makes stronger. Finally; my motto: 'Carpe diem'. You only have one life; live your life not to meet the demands and needs of others, but to improve yourself and fulfill your dreams.”

can we find solutions to problems at the optimum level with an analytical approach?” and took the first concrete step by participating in MEB approved certification course of Expert Biologist Yalçın Sezer, President of İstanbul Honey Producers Association. Then she founded the Tech2bio - Smart Hive Technologies initiative, which set out with value propositions such as healthy bees, quality bee products, gaining experience for beekeepers, saving time and cost, managing of the beekeeping maintenance and the disinfection operations, and minimizing the use of chemicals.

Bee diseases are detected at an early stage

Üzünlü speaks as follows: “We optimize beekeeping activities with the technology we developed. The monitoring of bee health in smart hive technologies available in the world is based on the temperature, humidity and sound parameters in-

side the hive. However, today's technologies cannot carry out in-depth analyzes on bee diseases, and the observed values are insufficient to detect the symptoms of bee diseases, and also they do not offer the opportunity to take precautions at an early stage. On the other hand, Tech2bio - Smart Hive Technologies can detect signs of bee diseases approved by experts at an early stage, by integrated sensor systems placed in the hive, due to the technology it provides. The obtained data are analyzed with algorithms created in the presence of expert beekeepers, and beekeeping activities are optimized according to the disease type of the hive. While the solutions offered by Tech2bio minimize the financial, labor and time losses of the beekeeper, they also lay the groundwork for the correct direction of activities and the production of healthy bees and quality bee products.”

Stating that as Tech2bio they are currently ope-



rating at Technopark of Gebze Technical University and Informatics Valley, Üzünlü emphasizes that they focus on two main problems regarding bee life and beekeeping operations. Pointing out that the first of these is the prevalence of traditional beekeeping and the other is the serious increase observed in bee deaths, Üzünlü adds: "The main factors related to these topics can be listed as late detection of bee diseases and pests, unconsciousness in hive disinfection and maintenance of the hives, and inability to follow sudden climate changes by beekeepers. On the other hand, the outputs of these factors pave the way for drug-added bee products, negative effects on human health, workload, maintenance costs, loss of time and low exports. We have a very simple algorithm structure, when we determine the effects of the conditions and situation inside the hive on the production amount accurately and in real time, we can significantly increase efficiency with some simple operations. Just data-logging doesn't work. It is necessary to collect many factors in real time, to analyze them correctly, to produce and implement

the right management processes. These are some examples; environmental conditions (flora, nectar amount, water, other needs), climatic conditions (controlling the entrance and exit of the hive according to the weather forecasts), emergency conditions (wasp, bear, physical attacks), health conditions (diseases, parasites), managing the hive population according to the conditions, expanding or contracting, monitoring the productivity of the queen bee, monitoring the eggs and brood."

Noting that her initiative is currently at an early stage and on an investment round, Üzünlü says that they aim to be commercially sustainable with domestic production and reasonable prices to take part in sectoral competition, and to be among the customer target group, and they aim to enter foreign markets too, especially with B2B and B2C beekeepers, beekeeper associations and their members, and with the businesses related to bee and bee products. She underlines that they want to make contribution for workload, time and cost savings of beekeepers with B2C target group; also they aim to contribute to the quality standardization of the bee products and to increase the export of bee and bee products with their B2B target group. Dilara Üzünlü says that they create customer channels directly by online distributors and NGO channels. Üzünlü adds that they plan to restructure the incomes-structure with annual rental and monthly subscription sales models.

"Being a female entrepreneur is being on a knife edge"

Expressing that being a woman entrepreneur in Turkey is like a journey on a knife edge, Üzünlü says that the perception of "You are a woman anyway, you get positive discrimination", which is common



Recently, successes of women entrepreneurs in Turkey have intensified.

I am following these developments with pride and admiration. This progress, like the butterfly effect, is becoming a reference for female entrepreneur candidates. I believe that there will be at least a 70-80% increase in the power of women in the sector during the coming years, and their contribution to the economy will also increase.

among men, undermines the value of the work done. She points out: "It's not the value you put forward, but it's your being a woman that comes to the fore. Therefore, we as women should show that we are confident in describing the work we do/will do. We have to underpin the image and we have to express our success very clearly." Üzünlü also underlines that as a young woman, she faced many prejudices until now.

Stating that the success of women will destroy these judgments sooner or later, Üzünlü emphasizes that women have a more complex thinking system than men, which is a great plus value especially in crisis management and analytical thinking. She speaks as follows: "I think that in the coming years, there will be an increase of at least 70-80 percent in the potential of women in the sector, and thanks to this, the contribution of women to the economy will increase as well."



Her father was the most influential she was inspired by on her career path

Dilara Üzünlü's career journey was influenced most by her father Mithat Üzünlü and Princess Diana. Üzünlü speaks English and beginner level Albanian. İlber Ortaylı's book "How to Live a Lifetime" and Viktor E. Frankl's book "Man's Search for Meaning" inspired her in her entrepreneurship story. Dilara Üzünlü, who takes part in KADEM, KAGİDER, Entrepreneurship Club, Empowerin in Agrifood communities, has KOSGEB traditional and advanced entrepreneurship certificates and also beekeeping certificate. Ranked in the top 10 among more than 300 female entrepreneurs participating in EU-supported EWA program, Üzünlü is in constant contact with entrepreneurs she met at other universities, including Gebze Technical University.



ECE ŞİRİN

Founder and Designer of Bee Goddess brand

EDUCATION: She studied at the University of Maryland and Boğaziçi University, Department of International Relations

Shines light from Anatolia to the world

Bee Goddess brand, which was founded by jewelry designer Ece Şirin 14 years ago saying “A magic light from Anatolia to the whole world”, is today a world brand preferred by world stars such as Madonna, Cate Blanchett, Kate Winslet, Rita Ora, Emilia Clark, Olivia Colman. Established by Ece Şirin, who set out to introduce the power of Anatolian women to the whole world, Bee Goddess became Turkey’s fastest growing designer jewelry brand by reaching 55 sales points in 15 countries on 4 continents.

Ece Şirin, who went to Belgium at the age of 15 due to her father's job, who was an attache in NATO, completed her high school at American High School in Belgium, and the University of Maryland and Boğaziçi University in the USA. Having a multicultural perspective as she continued her education life in different countries, Şirin's free education was an important step in her journey of self-discovery. After graduating from International Relations at Boğaziçi University, Ece Şirin worked as a senior manager in marketing at world-leading companies such as Pizza Hut, Pepsico, PFSI, SAS, The Coca-Cola Company, Doğan Burda Rizzoli and Microsoft MEA for 14 years. Change was always a part of her life as she grew up in different sectors and cultures. Şirin has signed many important projects throughout her professional career.

Having worked hard for 14 years and had a brilliant career, Şirin had always an entrepreneurial nature and also dreams. After 14 years of corporate life, she started to question "Who am I, what can I do more?" Her greatest wish was to contribute to the representation and marketing of Turkey's image abroad by creating a global brand. During this time, she was designing jewelry for herself. Everyone around her liked this jewelry very much and it attracted great attention. Her close friends asked her to design it for them as well, and this was a start that led her to realize her own business idea. Thinking "Why not", she immediately got to work and took the project seriously. Her designs would be different; she was going to make designs that would have a story, that would appeal to the soul of each person, and that would make each woman feel special and unique. Her subjects were psychology, mythology, different belief systems and philosophies in which she had interest and made intensive studies. And after 1.5 years of intensive reading, research and development, she founded the Bee Goddess brand

in November 2007 to create a meaningful and useful world brand that would meet the needs of this age by combining her marketing experience and her personal interests.

Inspired by mythological goddesses

Since the first day, Ece Şirin designed universalized mythological heroes chosen from different civilizations of the world as a collection in her original and high quality designs, which have a visual identity and are interconnected with each other. Phoenician Goddess Tanit representing love, power and creativity; Manj emphasizing universal harmony, luck and fertility; Minerva symbolizing three different periods in a woman's life and the other Goddesses known by different names in Rome, Greece, Egypt and India but whose stories and message are the same, such as Moon Goddess, Artemis, Isis, Ishtar, Bee Goddess, Uma were the biggest sources of her inspiration.

Bee Goddess, founded by Şirin with the slogan "It is a magic light from Anatolia to the whole world" and while saying "It is impossible for us to realize anything we do not imagine," is now spread over 4 continents, 14 different countries and more than 55 prestigious sales points. Bee Goddess currently has 16 boutique stores in Istanbul, İzmir, Bodrum, London, Munich and Berlin, with its last boutique opened at the iconic KaDeWe shopping center in Berlin in last November. Bee Goddess is the only Turkish designer jewelry brand in the most important points considered the pinnacle of the design world, such as Harrods, Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, Galeries Lafayette, Lane Crawford and Maxfields.

The choice of world stars

With its spirit, light and inspiration; Bee Goddess, which has a unique spiritual power in essence, has beco-

Advice from Ece Şirin to candidate entrepreneurs

Let them seek the strength they need within themselves and hold on to their dreams tightly. Our infinite potential comes into play when we find and light our spiritual light. In this way, we first illuminate ourselves and then the lives of others. In order to be successful, it is very important to believe in ourselves and be aware of our value, to love and embrace ourselves with a mother's compassion and to feed our souls. I have touched the lives of tens of thousands of women through Bee Goddess talismans. My

greatest desire was to help others gain the strength and courage needed to fulfill their destiny, as I did myself. I made this dream come true by discovering the light within me. Our dreams are what make life worth living. Our dreams are our destiny. The journey to fulfill our destiny is also a heroic journey. Therefore, the most valuable advice I can give to everyone is: "Dream big and move forward with courage and love on the way to achieving these dreams. You shine so that the world shines!"

me a brand chosen by world stars such as Madonna, Cate Blanchett, Kate Winslet, Rita Ora, Emilia Clark, Olivia Colman. There are collectors who have 50-100 different designs of Bee Goddess jewelry. Stating that the reason of the world stars for choosing the designs of their brand was to open the doors of their inner potentials, Ece Şirin says: "Bee Goddess is a brand in star energy. These are talisman designs that do not take power from the stars, but give them power and raise their light. The Bee Goddess brand is the fruit of my long years of enlightenment and spiritual pursuit. By sharing the wisdom that gives me light and renews me, I have taken a step towards healing, empowering the whole world, and reaching 'oneness' beyond borders. My aim was not only to make beautiful designs; rather, it was to introduce the power of Anatolian women to the whole world, to give life to talisman jewelry, which had the wisdom to connect today's women to her own light, to discover the power of her soul and to

express this power to herself and the whole world to write her own life story."

There is nothing for Ece Şirin called difficulty, because she does not judge any situation. She sees what others call difficult as her own area of growth and development. She feeds her soul with her work, always works hard, and her brand is the biggest source of pride and gratitude. Şirin speaks as follows: "The moments when we actually grow and develop are the times we overcome the difficulties. I do not qualify anything as success or failure. I think that when a door is closed or not opened, there is always something good. The most important thing is that we should do the best we can." She underlines the need to believe in the flow.

The fastest growing jewelry brand of Turkey

Rather than making beautiful jewelry designs, she aims to introduce the power of Anatolian women to

the whole world. Şirin states that her brand is growing at a pace which inspires and encourages all the creative and entrepreneurial women. She adds: "The global growth journey of our brand, which has a unique spiritual power at its core with its spirit, light and inspiration, is very exciting. I am happy to have proven the power of Turkish design to the whole world." The company she founded with very limited equity has become Turkey's fastest growing designer jewelry brand by reaching a staff of 100 people operating in places such as America, London and Germany today.

Explores the hidden wisdom of symbols

Expressing that she is a world citizen living on four continents with the addition of London and İstanbul stops in Los Angeles and Dubai, Şirin emphasizes that ancient wisdom is a source of inspiration for the creative wise person inside her. Şirin tells the following: "This wisdom sometimes flows into my heart from the verses of our holy book or the story of a hero in mythology, or sometimes from a miracle in a flower,

an insect in nature, or a wonderful work of art. With every journey I take into the mysterious world of ancient symbols, I discover the richness of my being and, like a honey-making bee, transform this wisdom into jewelry design in its purest form."

Noting that 80 percent of the employees in her company are women, Şirin draws attention to the low number of women in business life in Turkey and underlines that more women should be given opportunities in business life in order to raise moral values such as creativity, common sense, beauty, compassion and understanding inscribed in women's genes.

Crowned with awards

Ece Şirin received many awards with her brand and designs. She was deemed worthy of lots of the awards including "Turkish Woman Entrepreneur of The Year" in 2011, the first "Jewelry Designer of the Year" of ELLE Style Awards in 2012, "Visionary Jewelry Designer of the Year" by Telegraph Luxury in 2015, "Fashion Visionary of the Year" by ELLE Style Awards in 2022.



On this heroic journey, I wanted to create a hive that would bring every woman together with others who add light and pleasure to the life like herself and that would unite us with the hearts by going beyond time, space, language and religion, and today I see that I have succeeded that.



iyiliğe

Bir ilmek



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EDA ŞİŞMAN

Founder of Mantiye Gıda

EDUCATION: Graduated from Business Administration at Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University

“No entrepreneurship without risk”

Bringing the traditional taste of Turkish cuisine, dumpling, to consumers at many points in the country and abroad, Eda Şişman's dream as a child has turned into a successful enterprise story that includes many women today. Eda Şişman, who continues the business she founded alone in an area of 60 square meters, with 1 million kilos of dumplings per year on an area of 10 thousand square meters, offers to entrepreneur candidates: “If you have any idea, try it! You can't become an entrepreneur without taking risk.”

Eda Şişman is one of the natural born entrepreneurs... When she was still a child, entrepreneurship pierced her heart while watching her grandmother, who was a livestock farmer. She earned her first money at the age of 9 by distributing her grandmother's milk. When she was in high school, she already began to dream of the business she would establish in the future... She used to dream of having the name of the brand on the roadside signs during inter-city trips, which she would found. And with this passion embedded in her, she chose business administration at the university. Returning to İstanbul after graduating from Abant İzzet Baysal University, Eda Şişman worked for a year as a white collar worker in a production factory. The product was non-food, but she developed herself by observing the process from raw material entry to consumer and made her final decision. Whatever it was, she would produce something.

Eda Şişman, who got married and settled in Bolu after living in İstanbul for a year, worked for a while in the family business of her husband, who was in the food and beverage sector, and soon she realized that this was not what she wanted. She was going to do what she had dreamed of since her childhood. After making observations, she finally decided what she wanted to do. She had learned how to make dumpling from her mother-in-law, so she would produce and sell dumplings while both contributing to women's employment and delivering the taste of Turkish cuisine to the consumer by packaging it without changing its traditional recipe. She had no capital when she decided to realize her dream in 2006. She took a loan of 5 thousand TL from the bank, bought the necessary

"The customer wants a happy end"

Eda Şişman advises to the young people and entrepreneur candidates who are just at the beginning of their way: "We will never know until we try. If you have an idea, just try it. There is no entrepreneurship without taking risk. Whatever you do, do your job with good practices by following and documenting quality standards. The customer wants a happy end."

tools and started to produce dumpling on her own. The story of Mantiye Gıda started with 5 kg dumpling per day in a 60 square meters workshop with many difficulties. The place expanded 4 times in square meters and has reached 1 million kilos per year in an area of 10 thousand square meters today.

All the women she set out with are now by her

Mantiye Gıda, which currently has 110 employees and 85 percent of them are women, makes production for all over Turkey and abroad. All of the women Eda Şişman worked with in the early years are still with her. Her goal is to retire them all. Stating that "I came to this point thanks to the women who worked for me and I grew up with these women", Şişman speaks as follows: "My aim is to grow more and to provide employment for more women. Women with

economic independence have more freedom and one of the main objectives of the companies should be women's employment. My goal is to be present in at least 100 countries abroad and in every city in the country at sales points where I can reach the consumers."

Saying that they produce safe food with the awareness of producing products without complaints and that they never compromise on the materials used, Şişman adds: "Since the day I established the business, I have delivered my products to the consumers through very good organizations. These organizations nei-

her approached me with the idea of 'a woman entrepreneur, let's support her', nor did they question 'I wonder if she can do it or deal with it?' They saw our work discipline and product reliability regardless of gender, and together we grew the company. I never had time to see the glass ceilings, I always looked ahead. I knew that we could achieve a lot and do more by becoming like a chain with the strong women who worked with me."

Emphasizing the importance of increasing the number of women entrepreneurs, Eda Şişman says that the quality service will also inc-





"It is a very nice feeling to work with women who have never been in business before and have brought their children to a certain age, and to include them in the link of a chain. From the starting point until today, I have realized most of my dreams. While revising some of them, I have also added new dreams. It is a long way and we still have a long way to go with the women we work with."

rease with the increase in women's entrepreneurship. Stating that "Women entrepreneurs are very meticulous about what they produce, they grow their business like their children," Şişman underlines that the rate of working with female suppliers should be added to the percentage target of women employed by companies every year.

As winner of the Golden Supplier Award, Eda Şişman is a mother of two children. Eda Şişman, who speaks English and Serbian and is a member of KAGİDER, met very valuable entrepreneurs who left a mark on her and took her as an example. Telling that she was especially inspired by the success story of Tülin Yazıcı, the founder of Dress Best Uniforms, Şişman says: "Dream of each entrepreneur is to announce one day her experience on this journey as an example to others and make the readers contribute to their own stories. I will be happy if I inspire someone on this journey."



iyiliğe Bir ilmek



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ELİF ASLI YILDIZ

Founder and CEO of Patiswiss

EDUCATION: Graduated from Electrical and Electronics Engineering at Başkent University

“Take initiative and do what you know best”

Elif Aslı Yıldız, whose main profession is engineering, started her entrepreneurial story with the unforgettable flavors and smells from her mother's kitchen. She would do something which could make a difference and fill a gap needed in the sector and everyone could tell each other about it. ... And she took this step with Patiswiss. The initiative, which started 6 years ago with 10 people in an area of 200 square meters, is today a brand that makes exports to more than 20 countries with more than 700 employees in an area of 30 thousand square meters. Stating that her passion, courage, stubbornness and courageous decisions have carried her to this day, Yıldız tells the candidate entrepreneurs: “Come on, take that initiative and do what you know best!”

Ever since her childhood, she always wanted the best and aimed for the best. Her dream was to study medicine. She even tried to convince a girlfriend who wanted to choose electrical & electronics engineering at the university, that this profession was not suitable for women. When the day came, her point was not enough for the faculty of medicine in Ankara. Then she preferred the Electrical and Electronics Engineering at Başkent University and after a time she adopted this department enough to graduate with honors degree. Elif Aslı Yıldız started her career as an electrical & electronics engineer in one of the leading companies in defense industry. She did her job with love for a long time. In her first and last job as an employee, she always took initiatives and she used to think always 'how it could be done better'. Even, one day the human resources

director asked to her: "My girl, are you the crazy person of this village?"

In fact, it was passion, not madness. Although she loved her job in corporate life, her dreams were entirely different. She wanted to start her own business. She wanted to go to do something which would make a difference, lead everyone to tell each other, and fill a needed deficiency. She had determined the area she wanted to work in... She was going to carry the work of her mother, whom she admired for the delicious and extraordinary tastes she created, from the kitchen to the factory. She would create the "new" on the shelves, different from identical products and packaging. At the end of 7 years, she left her job, which she loved so much, in order to realize her dream of opening her own business. She received training from the best chefs, took the first step



towards her dreams and started a boutique patisserie in Ankara.

Elif Aslı Yıldız wanted to produce unusual products that could be delivered to the whole world and she bought Patiswiss in 2017, again with a great initiative. The company started production in an area of 200 square meters with a team of 10 people. While offering quality and elegance together based on customer demands, Yıldız has attracted great attention of consumers with the innovative products that make a difference, different flavors that has not been tried yet and stylish packaging. Today she continues the production in an area of 30 thousand square meters.

Elif Aslı Yıldız, who recently opened her fourth factory in order to keep up with the high demand, has more than 700 employees, 70% of whom are women. She offers healthy snacks from the cream & paste group, and all kinds of chocolate from the granola & muesli group, including sugar-free, gluten-free and vegan special formulas. With more than 400 products in 12 main categories, she reaches 30 thousand points in the country. Yıldız, whose priority is to bring women into business life, was deemed worthy of two awards by the Women Entrepreneurs Board of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey last year due to being the company that increased women's employment the most in Turkey and being the fastest growing woman entrepreneur.

Patiswiss products meet the consumers in online sales of many marketplaces and on www.patiswiss.com.tr. In addition, the brand, which is offered for sale in many national stores such as Migros, Macrocen, Carrefour, BİM, File, also produces Private Label for brands such as Tarım Kredi Kooperatifleri, Beymen, Starbucks and Migros PL.

“Produce, work hard, do your best!”

I advise my fellows to be courageous in what they want to do and believe in, and to work without giving up. There are some projects supporting women entrepreneurs; they should follow them. They should not be afraid to take initiative. They must realize their own power. I'm sure they'll say "I am glad" after they do the necessary work. Produce! Work hard! It doesn't matter what you do! Do your best! Just produce! You may not be sure of the end; but if the happy endings appeared at the beginning, everyone could do it. Being a leader requires being able to make big decisions than anyone else can. Come on, take that initiative and do what you know best!

The target in 2023 is to reach a turnover of 500 million dollars

Stating that they closed the year 2022 with a financial turnover of 250 million dollars, Yıldız says that their target in 2023 is to increase the turnover to 500 million dollars. She speaks as follows: "The point that sets us apart from the others in the sector is to present the non-existent with a completely innovative style and to maintain this continuously. To sum it up in one word; I can say that we are innovative. Our products are innovative, our packaging is inno-



vative, our ideas are innovative.” Yıldız adds that she has made another dream come true and that they export to more than 20 countries now.

“I hired million dollar-heads”

Expressing that she works with a very strong team, Yıldız says: “In sum, I can say that I am very happy and proud of where I am today. I’ve hired trained minds who produce million dollar ideas and only those who want to produce the best. Together with this strong team, every day we are releasing flavors that have not yet found a place on the market shelves. These

are such products that they do their own marketing thanks to both their taste and packaging. They are recommended by being shared on social media.”

“Glass ceilings will disappear as women's initiatives increase”

Telling that it is very difficult to be already a woman in business life in Turkey, Yıldız points out that she was faced with glass ceilings when she first came up with the idea of entrepreneurship. She speaks as follows: “They were trying to impose hindering ideas about my big project just because I was a woman. I persisted on my request. Today, I pay attention to giving more space to women in business life. It is quite common to see female employees, female managers and female CEOs at Patiswiss. In addition, we have a social responsibility project that supports women: Equality. We donate all the profits we get from our Bitter Chocolate Orange Slices, which are produced entirely by the women we bring to the business life, to the women in need through Mor Çatı Women's Shelter. Glass ceilings will disappear as women's initiatives increase.”

Yıldız says that it is very important to increase the power of entrepreneur women in business life and emphasizes that the inclusion of women in business life will play a major role in the development of the country. She adds: “Everyone has a responsibility in this sense. It is important to support women's initiatives materially and morally and also the hindering discourses should be prevented. Yıldız continues her words as follows:

“I wish that we are no longer talking about the obstacles to gender equality, but about the achievements of our women. Although I still find the rate of women entrepreneurs in Turkey low, I am very happy with the recent increase. With the increase

in e-commerce, women produce without needing anyone and reach their customers. "There is a way we can walk more confidently and more accurately: to make the great Turkish woman a partner in our work." These sentences belong to our great ancestor Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. He said these aloud in the years when the gender equality was not mentioned in the world yet. Because he knew that with equal opportunities, a woman could change the world."

Expressing that Patiswiss will now produce chocolates with fair-trade certificate, Yıldız says that this will improve the living standards and quality of the producers, while providing development opportunities for the producers who are disadvantaged in world trade. According to her, this will also make women work more actively and under equal conditions based on sustainability while not letting child labor being accepted. She ends her words as follows: "Patiswiss' 2024 targets are to design new products by switching to fully recyclable packaging."



"Right now, I advise my teammates to take more initiative. Because the most important reason why I could build today and further it ahead of the day before is my courage to take initiative.

I'm sure my bold decisions have brought me here. I say "I am glad for Patiswiss", which is the biggest initiative these days".





ELİF YILDIRIM

Co-Founder of Pebble /
Zero Waste Journey

EDUCATION: Studied Biology at
Paris XI Orsay Faculty

LEYLA AKÇA ATİK

Co-Founder of Pebble /
Zero Waste Journey

EDUCATION: Completed a double
major in Business and Studio Arts at
Franklin&Marshall College in the USA,
then got her master's degree in Art
Therapy at Fordham University

They set out a zero waste journey for a sustainable life

Elif Yıldırım and Leyla Akça Atik are two entrepreneur women who migrated from the city to the countryside for a sustainable life experience in nature. While changing their consumption habits for a life respectful to nature and asking “Is another life possible?”, these two entrepreneurs are producing natural, waste-free and sustainable alternatives for many products, from market net to washable women’s pads, from washable coffee filters to tea bags, from steel straws to washable cotton, with the Pebble Zero Waste Journey brand they founded.

Elif Yildirim and Leyla Akça Atik are two women with careers, who have accomplished very successful works in business life while being friendly to nature and concerned not only for themselves but also for the world they live in. They don't shy away from taking responsibilities. Their paths crossed during the forest fires in Marmaris. The forest fires, which deeply saddened our country and lasted for days, became a reason to start their friendship and entrepreneurial journey.

Born in France, Elif Yildirim moved to Turkey at the age of 10 and continued her education at Pierre Loti High School. She went back to France for university after high school and studied Biology at Paris XI Orsay Faculty. But she had to return to Turkey at the end of her third year due to health reasons. Yildirim, who started her professional life in tourism

sector, moved to the organization field and incentive departments in a short time. Then she started to work at a very intense pace in event and brand management projects.

Back to nature

Her dream was to live in a house with a garden, close to the forest and nature. In the city, the fast life with consumption, the endless hustle and bustle of business life started to rush up the desire to live close to the nature. The year 2008 was a breaking point for Yildirim, she lost her mother because of cancer. It was a very difficult period. She began a new process in which she tried to review her whole life, her lifestyle and try to change her habits. She conducted research on the effects of external factors on the human body and the effect of humans on the environ-



ment and asked "What can I do?". She took the first step by removing chemicals from her life as much as possible. She began to look at the world and life with a different view and consciousness. And the next big step was when she found out she was pregnant in 2014. It was time to take action, she and her husband made a quick decision and moved to a village of Muğla towards the end of 2014.

Born and raised in İstanbul, Leyla Akça Atik graduated from St-Michel High School and studied at Franklin&Marshall College for a double major in Business and Studio Arts in the United States. Like everyone grown up in the city and well educated, she quickly became a person of corporate life and worked in agencies. But as she learned to listen to herself, she realized that the branch that really excited her was psychology and she turned to Art Therapy. She completed her master's degree at the School of Visual Arts and took her specialization and gave direction to her life as a Mental Health Specialist. As a woman who has lived alone since the age of 18 and made her own decisions, Akça Atik's perception of life completely changed after she turned to psychology and she understood that: "If you can really hear your inner voice, it is inevitable to build your life on the basis with respect to nature, justice, people and all living things."

Togetherness after natural disaster

Leyla Akça Atik, who worked with disadvantaged populations in the field for a long time after she started giving art therapy, took action to support the field with a team she founded in the USA for the Van earthquake that occurred in 2011 while she was still a student. She worked with women and children there and she was aware of that she was doing the right thing. After graduation, she was always on the field. Communities affected by disasters, disad-

Doğa'ya saygılı yaşamak mümkün

Girişimimiz standart ürün/ tüketici ilişkisinin çok ötesinde yer alıyor. Kaynakları kısıtlı olan bu dünyada küçük adımlar ile bireysel anlamda da birçok şeyi değiştirebileceğimizi anlatmaya çalışıyoruz. Bizi farklı kılan şey bakış açımız, yaşam biçimimiz ve yarattığımız farkındalık. Doğaya saygılı yaşamak mümkün. Şehirde veya kırsalda olmamızın bir önemi yok. İş fikrimizi başarıya taşıyan en büyük unsur ise samimiyetimiz, biz gerçekten bu şekilde yaşıyoruz, 'mış' gibi yapıp ürün satmaya çalışmıyoruz. Tamamen atıksız yaşamak mümkün olmasa da hayatımızda çok basit ve minik değişiklikler yaparak, çok büyük etkiler yaratabileceğimizi göstererek, anlatarak, aktarmaya özen gösteriyoruz. O sebeple hangi sektör olursa olsun attığımız tüm adımların sürdürülebilir olmasına özen göstermeliyiz. Kısıtlı olan doğal kaynakları gözeterek hareket etmeliyiz. Gelecek nesillere bırakacağımız bu dünyanın yaşanabilir olması için doğru adımlar atmalıyız.

vantaged populations, individuals who experienced war trauma all became a part of her job scope. She worked during the natural disasters in America, the Soma Mine Disaster, the Syrian War, and with refugees, and actively participated in the field with Maya Foundation, which she worked for. Akça Atik met her husband in 2014 and became a mother in 2018. A few years after she started a life with her family on Istanbul-Atlanta line, she came to Marmaris to be on the field as a supervisor in a project of the foundation during the forest fires that occurred in Marmaris. This journey Akça Atik took with her family for 2 months was the beginning of their settlement in a village in Muğla. At the same time, this great disaster that occurred in Marmaris started the friendship and then the business partnership of the two people who saw that they looked at life from the same window and had the same values.

Sewed fabric pouch alternative to plastic bag

After Elif Yıldırım settled in the village and became a mother, she began to look for solutions while thinking "How can I reduce my impact on the environment?" When she went to the market, it was very upsetting to return home with a plastic bag. She sought permanent and sustainable solutions and discovered the "zero waste" trend in Europe. They were using alternative pouches to the plastic bag. She took out the household sewing machine and sewed pouches from the fabrics she had at home. When she was with these bags on the market, the reaction of women was unbelievable, "Can you sew me a bag too?" some of them asked. When she started to receive similar requests from her own circle of friends, she started to produce and sell pouches, and this is how the Pebble brand was born. Later she made sales via social media. In February 2020, she

founded the Zero Waste Journey company.

However, the Covid 19 pandemic started when the company was not established for a month yet. The whole world was wrapped in plastics due to fear of the virus, while images were shared, witnessing that nature breathes without human production, noise and pollution. This gave Elif Yıldırım hope that she was doing the right thing. During her stay at home, she searched for a place to set up a production workshop and found a farm consisting of old village houses and buildings. In the spring of 2021, the workshop began operating.

Friendship and partnership that came with disaster

The natural disaster that occurred in Marmaris in the summer of 2021 once again showed how dependent people were on nature. Her path crossed with that of Leyla Akça Atik while she was working in the field during the fire that occurred half an hour away from her home. Elif Yıldırım and Leyla Akça Atik realized in a very short time that they had the same vision and shared the same feelings and joined their paths in Pebble / Zero Waste Journey. Developing their product range after the start of the partnership, Yıldırım and Akça Atik produce and sell not only fabric pouches, but also many disposable products. They have a wide product range from washable sponges to washable coffee filters, from washable fabric make-up removal cotton to washable pads.

"We continue to learn, change and transform"

The two partners are also working to raise awareness about sustainable and zero-waste life. In addition to sharing their own experiences on social media, they also organize various trainings and workshops to raise awareness of employees at the corporate le-



vel. Elif Yıldırım tells about their partnership adventure: "We are two women on the journey of life as two mothers, and we are small producers. We are two dear friends who have met in the dream of a holistic, waste-free and sustainable life that respects ourselves, our family, nature and living creatures. We discover a new natural life alternative every day on our personal zero-waste journey, which we set out while asking "Is another life possible?" in order to change living habits that were far from nature and contrary to our essence in the chaos of daily life, and we continue to learn, change and transform. We believe that we should take a look at our consumption habits for a life respectful to nature. We know that it is possible to produce and consume natural, waste-free and sustainable alternatives for many of the products we buy and use without thinking too much, and we are working towards this."

"We develop products for a non-toxic life"

Leyla Akça Atik, who says that she is very happy to

have joined forces with Elif Yıldırım at Pebble, which was founded with a zero waste life and a sustainable life philosophy, adds: "It is difficult to talk about career steps when a person leaves herself to nature and personal development. But the milestones in my life are quite obvious. First of all, I have a lot of dreams and goals, but I am very happy where I am right now. Today, I have established a life where I can apply both trauma therapy and art therapy, see my clients and be in nature. And I work with a partner I love very much in a workshop where I can develop products for a non-toxic life and share them with people. We are working hard to ensure that living in a way that respects nature and human health, contributes to cyclicity, and minimizes damage is a lifestyle that can be adopted by more people."

Stating that a different life and a different future is possible, Elif Yıldırım underlines that they are working to do better every day and tells: "Ours is actually a love story. Pebble / Zero Waste Journey is a reflection of our love for this land, nature, air and water. Alt-

though our goal is to grow and reach more people, as in many companies, the main purpose of this comes from a more heartfelt place, not for financial reasons. We are progressing slowly but surely. We currently have a team of 5 women in total. We all work wholeheartedly for the same, more livable world."

"We should support each other, taking each other under our wings"

Expressing that they are different from a standard initiative, Leyla Akça Atik points out that they are a brand with a mission and says that they have touched many people on many platforms in the fields of sustainability, circular economy, climate change and waste-free life. Telling about the importance of supporting women entrepreneurs, Akça Atik speaks as follows:

"We think that it is necessary to work on the proliferation and accessibility of platforms where women entrepreneurs can express themselves and make their voices heard, create networks where they can share their experiences and establish networks

where they can make productive collaborations. The role of women is very big not only in Turkey but also in the whole world. 80% of followers and customers of sustainable and environmentally friendly brands are women. The reason for this is the future generations. In order to offer them a better life, we, women, change our consumption habits and attach importance to the contents of the products we use and consume. By increasing our awareness, we identify the deficiencies and take action. The number of women who are interested and curious about these issues is increasing day by day, so the needs are changing accordingly. More women entrepreneurs are taking a step in this way and making efforts to make this world we live in a more livable place. That's why we should support each other, taking each other under our wings."

Both of them fluent in English and French, Leyla Akça Atik won the "The People Who Leave Their Mark On the Future" award by ÇABA Association and the Social Entrepreneur award by Blossom Hill Foundation in 2017. Elif Yıldırım won the 'My Sister Project' award in 2022.



Başka bir dünya mümkün, buna gönülden inanıyoruz. Birbirimize ilham olup imkan sağladığımız zaman başaramayacağımız şey yok. Yenilikçi olmaktan, alışlagelmiş sistemi alt üst etmekten korkmayın. Geleceğin temelini doğru atmak için elimizden geleni yapıp birbirimize ışık olursak, güven verir ve ellerimizden tutarsak birlikte başaramayacağımız şey yok.



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ELİS YILMAZ AYKAN

Youthall Co-Founder

EDUCATION: Graduated from Bilkent University, Department of Tourism and Hotel Management

Formed the career platform “youthall” reaching 1 million youth

Elis Yılmaz Aykan, when she was still a university student, could not receive feedback on the internship postings she applied for, and then she founded internim.net with her school friend Emre Aykan. Attracting the attention of investors in a short time and after receiving investment from Melek Investment Network for Stajim.net, Elis and Emre Aykan founded Youthall as a career platform for young people, serving in three languages, Turkish, English and French. Reaching 1.500 companies and 1.1 million young users in a short time, Youthall has turned into a giant platform that has created internship or job opportunities for 100 thousand young people since 2015.

Although there was no entrepreneurship among her career goals, Elis Yılmaz Aykan is a name made by the circumstances as an entrepreneur. Born in Eskişehir, Yılmaz Aykan attended high school in Antalya, where her family moved to due to their business. After achieving various successes in Mathematics Olympics in high school, she chose the Department of Mathematics with a full scholarship at Bilkent University. But when she started school, she decided that her interest in mathematics should remain as a hobby. Yılmaz Aykan, who transferred to the Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, dreamed of starting her career in a global and corporate company. When she couldn't get any feedback on the internship postings she applied through various channels while she was studying at the university in 2014, with her school friend at that time, but now her husband and business partner Emre Aykan, they founded Stajim.net. As they focused on the problem, they realized that it was a problem not only for them but also for millions of young people and companies. The website attracted a great deal of attention since the first day it was set up.

Elis Yılmaz Aykan and Emre Aykan set up their first offices in Bilkent Cyberpark. In 2015, they received investment from Melek Investment Network for Stajim.net, which also attracted the attention of investors. Three years later, with a global step, they established Youthall, the career platform for young people, which provides services in three languages, namely Turkish, English and French. Elis Yılmaz Aykan, who has been working as Managing Partner in charge of sales and marketing at Youthall since 2018, attended the accelerated Executive MBA programs at Koç

University and Sabancı University while also getting awards for her success in various competitions during her entrepreneurial journey, and also followed trainings in different fields.

Today actively used by more than 1.1 million young people, Youthall operates about human resources technologies and consultancy, and it focuses only on young people. It also designs end-to-end recruitment and training programs for companies, and provides Human Resources Consultancy to more than 1000 companies in their projects aiming to reach Y- and Z-generations to attract talent. On the online platform, many companies from SMEs to large-scale companies can post their advertisements and manage the candidate applications and interview processes. In addition, they can realize the own activities of the students all over Turkey.

"Our way is long and exciting"

Expressing that she did not set out with ambitious dreams and that the circumstances led her to become an entrepreneur, Yılmaz Aykan says: "Life is what happens to you while you are making plans. We have become a platform used by young people and hundreds of companies in this adventure, which we started with our own problem about searching for internship as two university students. I think that starting from our own problem and working with great devotion to solve it has led us to this success. I am very happy at where I am now, but the way is long and exciting. I believe that there are various things I can do, especially for the youth in Turkey."

Stating that they are a platform used by young people between the ages of 18-35, Yılmaz Aykan says that they go beyond classical methods with



Advices from Elis Yılmaz Aykan to young people who are at the beginning of their career:

My advice to young people; “Whatever you do, do your best”. Especially in Turkey, the number of people who do their job well, started to decrease rapidly in recent years. People who are good at their job, make a difference and succeed in their careers sooner or later. Have a productive time, especially during your university period. Decide at an early stage what you want to and don't want to do while doing internships in different fields. Social skills are also extremely important. Therefore, work in student clubs, social responsibility projects, associations or part-time jobs depending on your area of interest in order to gain experience simultaneously while you are studying at the university. Knowledge of English is very important now. Make sure to take advantage of opportunities such as Erasmus, Work&Travel. It is also very important to get experience abroad in order to learn about new cultures, gain new point of views and improve the language.”

the technological solutions they have developed in line with the needs they have determined by focusing deeply on this target audience, which is a niche. Elis Yılmaz Aykan adds: “We provide solutions which address the needs of young people and companies from different angles besides posting job advertisements and providing opportunities to apply them. For example; we attach great

importance to sustainability and social responsibility projects, and we hold Turkey's only career-oriented summit in this field. Together with our business partners, we design events & trainings to support gender equality and contribute to the increase of young women's employment. At Youthall, we have a product called “Opportunities” where young people can access needs such as



When you innovate, be prepared for people to look at you as crazy and tell you that your idea is not viable. If you believe in your opinion, don't let bad comments affect your motivation. If you're really passionate about something, find a way to do it."

transportation, clothing, housing and education at a discount. We make advance in this field entirely with the awareness of social responsibility on being beneficial to young people".

Noting that they work with a staff of approximately 35 people and volunteer campus representatives of 75 people from different cities of Turkey, and also online content writers, Yılmaz Aykan underlines that they have mediated more than 100 thousand young people to step into their careers through Youthall by work, internship and training programs.

Yılmaz Aykan states that being a woman entrepreneur in Turkey is even more advantageous than men in some cases, and speaks as follows:

"For example, you can never see entrepreneurship competitions, programs and additional incentives specific to men. They invite you first for talks or summits. They give priority to you because you are a woman. That's why I honestly believe that sometimes discourses about "women" bring us women down. I am a gender-neutral business person."

"Strong woman means strong future"

Yilmaz Aykan underlines that even though there are moments she encounters prejudice in the society from time to time, she handles them with the professionalism and perspective of the business world regardless of gender, and continues so: "According to the 2019 data of KAGİDER, the number of women entrepreneurs in Turkey is 8.8 percent. This rate is quite low. A strong woman means a strong future. I think that women's participation in business life is extremely important for the development of a society. It will be very meaningful to inform young women about entrepreneurship and to encourage them for entrepreneurship, to take mass action among women who will join the new workforce through university-industry-association collaborations, especially in order to make projects which could encourage entrepreneurship among students who would start their business life."

Elis Yilmaz Aykan, who was selected as "The Most Successful Entrepreneur Under 30 Who Established Her Own Business" and "Promising Female Entrepreneur Who Established Her Own Business in Turkey" by Capital in 2016, was shown among the "40 Leaders Under 40" by Fortune Turkey in 2022. Yilmaz Aykan believes that entrepreneurship cannot be done without



passion. Aykan says: "There were people who wrote "this business will fail" under the news when we first came out; we have been going on for more than 8 years. "You should be prepared for people who look at you as crazy and say that your idea cannot be implemented when you make an innovation. If you believe in your idea don't let bad comments affect your motivation. If you are really passionate about something, find a way to do it." Stating that she was very impressed with the book "Zero to One Notes On Start Ups Or How To Build A Future" written by Paypal co-founder Peter Thiel, Yilmaz Aykan is a member of TurkishWIN (Turkish Women International Network), and speaks English at good level, Spanish and Russian at beginner levels. Being married and having one daughter, she swims and plays table tennis in her spare time.



ESRA CEVAHİR

Chairwoman of the Board at Procompo

EDUCATION: Graduated from İstanbul University with a degree in Economics and from Mimar Sinan University with a degree in Mathematics.

Organic waste being transformed into both animal feed and compost

Every year, globally, 1.3 trillion dollars are wasted on food, while in Turkey, an average of 300 billion Turkish liras worth of food is wasted. In Turkey, it is expected that the waste rate, which was 17 million tons in 1995, will reach 38 million tons by 2025. Erska Caviar, a successful entrepreneur who took action to prevent the global problem of food loss and waste, has developed a machine through her company Procompo Environmental Technologies that can convert non-recyclable organic waste into both animal feed and compost within 24 hours, as a first in the world.

The story of entrepreneur Esra Cevahir is the kind that can serve as an inspiration for many women. She is a woman who faces challenges, never gives up, overcomes obstacles, stays focused on her goals, and never stops learning and advancing. Esra Cevahir was born as the daughter of architect parents in İstanbul, who valued the worth of girls and instilled the importance of education in their children. She completed her middle and high school education at Saint-Benoit French College and then she got married at an early age.

Even though she got married, she still had dreams; she wanted to continue her education and go to university. She had an infinite excitement for learning. However, she faced great difficulties in the early years of her married life because her husband's family was against women receiving education and working. Despite the risk of being labeled as a rebellious daughter-in-law in that family, she fought hard and overcame all the opposing voices to pursue her dreams. She successfully completed two bachelor's degrees simultaneously (in Mathematics and Economics). During this time, she also became the mother of three daughters. Cevahir raised her daughters with the awareness that women are always valuable, educated and strong. When she wanted to enter the workforce after school, she encountered obstacles once again, but she didn't give up. Initially, she worked in various sectors (as a mathematics teacher, in the tourism industry) without the knowledge of her family. Later, when she gained acceptance in the business world, she began her long career. She opened a training center where she provided education to students. Then, with the growing food and beverage industry, she opened a restaurant,

and subsequently, due to her husband's business, she entered the tourism sector.

While holding a senior executive position at Cevahir Group, she also started getting involved in NGOs. As the Founding President of the DEIK Business Council, she worked in Zambia for three terms and also in Djibouti, Rwanda, Guinea Conakry, Ivory Coast, Central African Republic, and Cameroon. Exploring Africa opened up a whole new window for Cevahir. While showing what Turkish businesspeople could accomplish in Africa, she herself began to see the existing business opportunities more clearly. With the onset of the pandemic, after experimenting with and showing interest in organic fertilizers in Africa, she said "Why shouldn't I exist in this sector?" Her family had raised her with the awareness of utilizing food waste and not wasting anything. She liked this business idea. Turkey was the country with the highest food waste in the world, and she embraced the idea of recycling these foods and utilizing them as compost. Cevahir quickly matured her business idea and developed a machine through her company, Procompo Environmental Technologies, that could convert food waste into both animal feed and compost within 24 hours, a first in the world.

Non-recyclable organic waste is reclaimed within 24 hours

Through the companies she established, the non-recyclable organic waste is able to being recovered within just 24 hours by Procompo machines. The non-recyclable organic waste is transformed into compost or animal feed in just 24 hours. The obtained compost is used for agricultural fields, greenhouses, gardens and vermicompost production. The animal feed eliminates the annual expen-

**“Just believe in yourself!”
Advice from Esra Cevahir to
aspiring entrepreneurs...**

Unfortunately, young people lack perseverance. However, the path to success lies in hard work and determination. No matter how intelligent or well-educated one may be, without focusing on work, achieving true success becomes very difficult. Additionally, it is important to manage your time well. Stay away from negative statements such as “You can’t do it,” “Do you have the finances?” or “It’s too late to pursue that career.” Simply believe in yourself. In today’s world, we have technology like the internet that brings the whole world to our fingertips. Seize the opportunities it offers. There are numerous institutions such as banks, NGOs, and KOSGEB that provide significant support for investment. You can benefit from these supports.



ses for animal feed paid by municipalities and the costs of feed in animal shelters. In addition to compost/feed machines, Cevahir’s company also produces Mobile Waste Collection Centers equipped with a solar-powered press system. Esra Cevahir describes the system she has created as follows: “What sets Procompo compost machines apart from all other compost machines is their ability to dispose of and convert various types of raw vegetable and fruit waste, cooked food waste, liquid

food waste, oily food waste, tea and coffee waste, bone and fishbone waste, seafood waste, wood and landscaping waste, tissue and paper waste, by about 60-70% into compost within just 24 hours.”

Cevahir emphasizes that the compost produced by Procompo machines also has market value, and feasibility studies have shown that the machines have the ability to recoup their costs in a very short period of time. She states: “For the first time, the waste can be obtained simultaneously as both



animal feed and compost. Compost machines also open up opportunities for organic farming. I would like to point out that compost is seven times more efficient than vermicompost for increasing productivity in the agricultural fields, which have been widely discussed during the pandemic."

Cevahir says that a new process began for Turkey with the approval of the Paris Climate Agreement in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in 2021, and emphasizes that the importance of the sector has increased. She reminds that the Paris Agreement, which aims to reduce global emissions by at least 50% by 2030 and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, requires countries to update their nationally determined contributions every five years to reduce their emissions. Cevahir adds that: "Under the agreements made for Turkey's use in this field, significant budget income will be generated from future funds, but it is also

true that there will be penalties if we fail to reduce emissions by 2030. Similarly, in the same context, it is crucial for all establishments (workplaces, restaurants, hotels, shopping malls, residential complexes, airports, universities, hospitals, etc.) to have compost machines, which are the only way to convert biodegradable household waste that is not already recycled, in order to eliminate carbon footprint and dispose of waste. Therefore, the mission undertaken by Procompo Environmental Technologies is of great importance."

"We are establishing systems in homes that can produce animal feed and compost"

While stating that "We are currently expanding our factory areas for new investments. We are also preparing to enter residential projects in the near future", Cevahir adds the following:

"We aim to install our smaller capacity machines, such as 5 liters or 10 liters, in ready-made kitchens. In this way, the households waste can also be recycled. If the homeowner wishes, the obtained food can be used for the animals or the obtained compost can be used for the care of the flowers. We are currently in talks with a kitchen company regarding this matter. Our goal is to launch this project in the first quarter of 2023. We have positive discussions with both public and private sectors within the country. In Ataşehir district, Procompo has implemented Atacompo, produced specifically for Atabel, and it is already in use now. Similarly, the machine we have specially produced for Beyoğlu Municipality converts food waste into animal feed, which is then used in animal shelters. We are also collaborating with hotels and restaurants in the private sector. After the normalization following the pandemic, our orders have gained

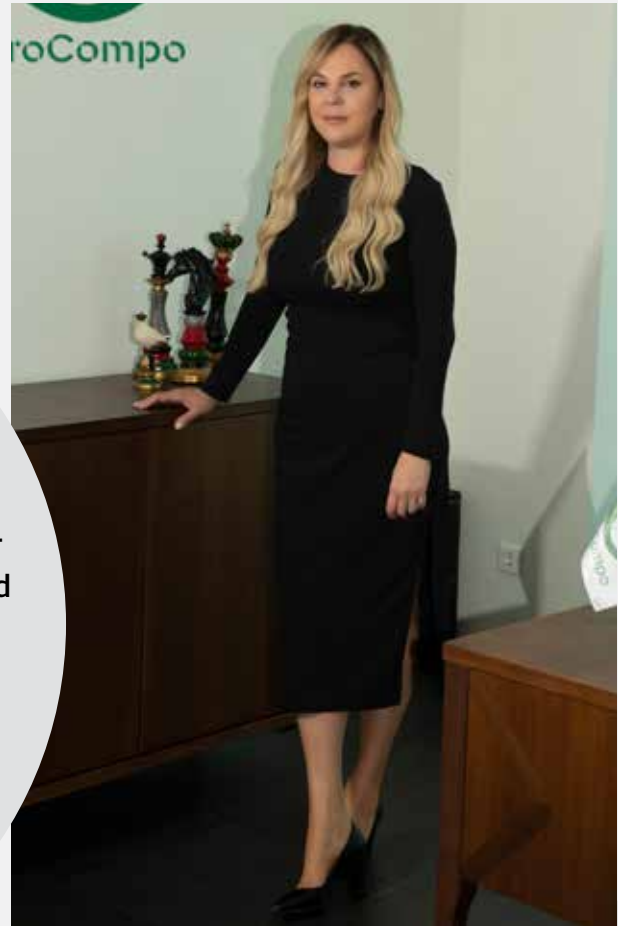
momentum, and so far, we have received offers from the United States, Greece, Australia, and Qatar. Our aim is to start exporting in a short period of time. The reason for both domestic and international interest is the quality of Procompo machines, their affordability according to their quality, the continuous R&D work we carry out resulting in new products that are not yet available in the world, the 10-year warranty we provide, and the continuous after-sales service support we offer."

Cevahir emphasizes that as the number of female entrepreneurs increases in Turkey, the economic growth will also accelerate. She highlights the importance of raising children with the awareness that women have equal rights to men, rather than perpetuating gender discrimination. Cevahir mentions that reinforcing this mindset can be achieved through subjects such as financial literacy in schools and it is crucial to support it through government policies and NGOs. She points out that



I have always believed in the importance of women standing on their own feet, following the values instilled in me by my family. That's why I never took a break in my education or career. I have always wanted to be actively involved in the business world. I have an entrepreneurial spirit and I wanted to seize the opportunities I came across. While I can say that I am at the desired point in my career, I am always open to evaluating the opportunities that come my way. Rather than staying in a stable position, I am inclined towards trying new things.

"The female participation rate in the workforce is very low in Turkey. Unfortunately, even in the most developed countries, we observe that women are underrepresented in top-level management positions and earn less than male actors on screens, as we hear. This applies to other sectors as well, where women, regardless of their position, are forced to earn less than men. However, the research shows that economic growth can only be achieved through the participation of women in employment. The recent İzmir Economic Congress also mentioned support for women's advancement in the business world. Hopefully, we can see more women in the workforce in the mentioned timeframes."





FİKRİYE ASLAN

Founder of Pusula Consulting and Forensic Accounting Expertise

EDUCATION: Graduated from Marmara University, department of Business Administration. She got her master's degree in Accounting Auditing at Marmara University.

Became the first and only female fraud audit expert in Turkey

Fikriye Aslan, who devoted 35 years to the profession of Financial Advisor, tried the untried in Turkey despite the objections of many people and became Turkey's first and only female Fraud Audit Expert. Fikriye Aslan detects abuses and corruptions occurring within the company and produces precautionary policies to prevent it. In addition, Aslan reveals those who abuse/steal/hide the assets of the companies for their own benefit as a result of the audit they carry out, and makes reports to the management on this matter and informs the judicial authorities.

Fikriye Aslan is an entrepreneur who loves to work, produce, learn new things, and be organized and planned. At a very early age, she started her business life by working with her father who was a contractor. She was constantly in business, as soon as she finished high school, she started her professional career in the accounting department of a company in 1988. Meanwhile, Aslan passed the exams and became a student of the department of Business Administration at Marmara University. She studied and worked throughout her student life. After working in accounting, human resources, purchasing, import/export departments for many years, she left the company, where she last worked as Financial Affairs Coordinator, in 2011 and founded her own company Pusula Consulting and Forensic Accounting Expertise.

Fikriye Aslan is one of those who believe in life-long learning. The love of learning and the love of teaching never end for her. She continues to receive training in order to find measures and alternative solutions to the problems she encounters in her business life and to improve herself. While working, Aslan graduated from Accounting and Finance department at Anadolu University, and then got her master's degree in Accounting Auditing at Marmara University. While having also desire to improve herself in field of law, Aslan graduated from the Vocational Academy of Justice and is currently a 3rd year student at the Faculty of Law at another university. Aslan, who transferred her professional knowledge and experience to the students and taught accounting / finance / micro business / insurance / banking as a lecturer in Department of Business Administration at Kadir Has University between 2015-2020, took a break

from her classes during the pandemic period.

Aslan completed the Independent Forensic Accounting Training organized by Istanbul Chamber of Financial Advisors in 2011, which lasted for about 1.5 years, and passed the tough exams and received her certificate. After receiving the training, she established her company that monitors fraud, abuse and corruption. Fikriye Aslan was going to try something that had not been done in Turkey before. While establishing her business, many people around her told her that forensic accounting / fraud auditing service would not be accepted, and that she should not tire herself in vain. Instead of doing this, she should continue her good and valuable job according to them; because it would be more profitable and less risky. They said this over and over again.

She had a hard time to describe her job

But Aslan had already found her own path... And she put her decisions into practice. When she started to talk about forensic accounting in Turkey in 2012, many people could not understand what she was doing. They asked her: "What is the need for this inspection? I already have a lawyer, I have a financial advisor, why do I need you? The doors were opened hardly, she tried very hard, she was very tired, but she never gave up.

Forensic accounting; it is defined as the use of expert knowledge in areas such as accounting, auditing, finance, numerical methods, law, behavioral sciences, research and inquiry, to collect evidence, analyze, evaluate and report the results. As a Forensic Accounting Expert, Fikriye Aslan detects abuse and corruption that occurs within the company and produces precautionary policies to prevent it. As a result of the audit, she



reveals the people who abuse/steal/hide the assets of the companies for their own benefit and reports to the management on this matter. Stating that this is a very risky and dangerous work, Aslan says: "We find all the documents and information that will prove the crime of the criminal and find the documents that prove that this person committed this crime. This report also assists justice when the matter is brought before the judicial authorities."

I'm glad I didn't listen to those who said "Don't take risks"

Fikriye Aslan speaks as follows: "When I look at people who said to me 'This job cannot be done, and don't force yourself, don't take risks' when I

Advice from Fikriye Aslan to entrepreneur candidates

Always be open to all kinds of science to improve yourself. Trust yourself. Appreciate family and human relations, always look ahead without losing your hope. If you are determined and stable, there is nothing you cannot accomplish. If you believe in what you do, it won't be difficult to convince others.

was starting my business; I'm glad I didn't listen to them. Those who said 'it is impossible' are still busy trying to prevent entrepreneurial people at the point they are. They behave in a way that stems from not being able to accept that someone else can do things which they cannot do. There is absolutely nothing that cannot be achieved after being determined and stable. When I look back today, I see that we have come a long way in 10 years and my dreams have come true. We are at the point where we wanted to be, but we must not stay here. We should constantly serve further and in other areas as well."

Received training on forged documents and signatures

For Fikriye Aslan; Prof. Dr. Nejat Bozkurt and Prof. Dr. Nuran Cömert from Marmara University, and Prof. Dr. Faruk Aşıcıoğlu from Forensic Medicine Institute of İstanbul University have been the na-

mes who influenced her and inspired her in her journey. Aslan points out that she received training from Prof. Dr. Faruk Aşıcıoğlu, as Bloodstain Expert, on forged documents, forged signatures and body language as a special student at the Institute of Forensic Medicine and her teacher contributed a lot to her.

Expressing that the number of women entrepreneurs in Turkey is far below what it should be, Aslan adds: "Although more than half of our population is women, the number of women in employment remains quite low. Women in Turkey are very determined and stable. I believe that we women, who have a history as a women's community that has always struggled to exist and be accepted, will be much more successful and also at the top in the future with this aspect."



"While the work we were doing was very risky and hard, it was also much harder for a woman to do it. I am still the first and only woman working in this field in Turkey. I was determined, I convinced the people around me by working hard and showing that I loved this job very much. I always had the hardest and most complex tasks, it was my job to solve them and it still is..."



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GİZEM ORAL KUTMAN

Co-Founder of GastroClub & GastroPay

EDUCATION: Graduated from Department of International Relations at Boğaziçi University

Established Turkey's largest food and beverage club

Having decided to adapt the loyalty practices in the food and beverage sector, which is very common abroad, to Turkey, Gizem Oral Kutman established GastoClub, Turkey's largest food and beverage platform, together with her business partner. The GastoClub, founded by Oral Kutman and her business partner, which started out as an angel investor 8 years ago, became a giant enterprise that brought together 1500 restaurants under its roof and exceeded 300 thousand users in a short time, while in 2022 the shares of all investors were bought back. Oral Kutman also transformed her company into fintech with GastoPay, the first and only digital wallet application used for face-to-face payments, where it offered a new payment solution to users and restaurants.

Her biggest dream was to establish her own brand one day and see the name of her brand on giant billboards in the streets. And the day came, she succeeded... Now she became a happy, proud entrepreneur who took firm steps towards her dreams, whose brand was written on the billboards. After being graduated from Department of International Relations at Boğaziçi University, Gizem Oral Kutman started her career as Product Manager at Barilla. Later she joined PepsiCo as Doritos Brand Manager and from there served in the marketing team at PepsiCo UK office.

Gizem Oral Kutman, whose biggest dream was to own a brand she built self, always thought "What can I do when I return to Turkey" throughout the years she was operating in FMCG sector and marketing fields in London. While in London with her business partner Çağlar Karataş, they witnessed the frequent use of loyalty practices in the food and beverage sector. They adapted this idea to Turkey with their experience and then established GastroClub, Turkey's largest food and beverage club, in 2015.

Oral Kutman and her business partner, who started out as an angel investor 8 years ago, made a strategic partnership with a meal card company 3 years ago and bought back the shares of all its investors at the beginning of 2022. With the B2B business model on the GastroClub side, the company, which reached profitability at the end of the first year of its establishment, is currently working with almost all banks. GastroClub and GastroPay, founded by Oral Kutman and her partner who transformed their company into fintech with GastroPay after launching it a year ago, have more than 300 thousand users

registered in GastroPay and 1500 restaurants with which they cooperate. Being under the roof of GastroClub and offering a new payment solution to users and restaurants after being launched in June 2021, GastroPay has become the first and the only digital wallet application used for face-to-face payments in restaurant sector.

"I'm on my dreamed-path"

When founding her company, people asked her

Her father and husband are her biggest supporters

"Entrepreneurs who have grown their companies have a great responsibility. In particular, it is necessary to support the young people and give mentorship to young women entrepreneurs. Although the periods and sectors change, people and the barriers we encounter do not change; everyone goes through the similar paths. It is very important for the entrepreneurs that the people passed by these roads support the people at the beginning of the road. My biggest supporters have been my father and husband. At this point, feeling their trust encouraged me much more. When I was leaving the corporate life, they said: "What can I do for you?" instead of "Why do you leave such a good job?" This was a huge chance for me. Spreading this point of view to the society would be the most important start."



"What is your dream?" and Oral Kutman's answer to this question was: "I want to see the advertisement of my own product, my own brand on the giant billboards in central places." She adds now: "Alright, we are on the billboards now. But I will never be able to say that I am exactly where I dreamed of. There is always a way to go, a dream to be built and the dreams grow and change with you. Well, I am on the path I dreamed of."

The largest loyalty platform of Turkey

Having dreamed of becoming an entrepreneur since an early age, Oral Kutman says that it had also an effect on this dream to be from Denizli. She speaks as follows: "Because most of the people around me were doing their own business. I grew up with this culture too. While I was in London, I always looked around with these glasses thinking that there is potential in Turkey on the loyalty side, and then I decided to adapt this idea to our country. So, we launched our GastroClub product, as Turkey's largest food and beverage club and also loyalty platform. Last year, we started working to complete GastroClub with the

Advice from Kutman to young entrepreneur candidates:

My most important advice is to have courage. Don't be afraid to try. And I want to say the words of Samuel Beckett: "You always tried, you always lost. Never mind. Try again, fail again. This time fail better." It is very important to be courageous and not give up.

payment infrastructure. We added GastroPay, as our new fintech product, to the GastroClub, realizing the lack of contactless secure payment methods and affordable spending advantages, which became more important with the pandemic. The best thing we've done for years has been to build and run a profitable company. We provided this on the side of GastroClub, and we made our scale larger with GastroPay and we still continue to grow."

Expressing that they are the largest loyalty club in the food and beverage industry with thousands of contracted restaurants and hundreds of thousands of users, Oral Kutman underlines that their corporate partners are the banks and the companies in telecommunication and insurance sectors.

Oral Kutman, who says that they got contact with more than 400 thousand people both with the restaurants which are their members and with their members, also mentions that there are difficulties for women in the start-up world, like in all fields of professional life in Turkey.

Oral Kutman says that the food and bevera-

ge sector was a male-dominated field and it was difficult at first and it took a while for restaurant owners to take herself seriously, but she did not give up. Arguing that although the rate of women entrepreneurs is low in Turkey, their impact is huge, Oral Kutman continues as follows:

"The success rate of start-ups founded by women entrepreneurs is higher than that of men. I think the main reason for this is that women are more rational and stable than men. As long as we are courageous, we realize more grounded, profitable and sustainable businesses. Now, all the countries have realized that they need to invest in technology in order to develop and catch up with the era. Now it's time to create space



for young people and leaders who can successfully establish and manage it. Statistics show that they can produce much more successful services when women are given a chance. But in order to do this, everyone has a great responsibility."

Received many awards in a short time

Gizem Oral Kutman and her team were deemed worthy of many awards as GastroClub. These awards are as follows: IDC Turkey Finance Technology Awards 2021 "Digital Channels 2nd Place" award, T.C. Ministry of Commerce and Exporters Assembly 2018 "Turkey's Most Successful Initiative Award", Business Punk Germany 2016 "Turkey's Top 10 Startups To Watch" award, Digital Age 2015 "Most Notable Application" award and BNP Paribas & Wired United Kingdom 2014 "Top 10 Inspiring Startups of Turkey" award.



Gizem Oral Kutman, who is married and has a daughter, spends her spare time doing sports. Having played basketball in school teams and clubs during her school life, Oral Kutman enjoys socializing by trying new dishes/restaurants. Saying "The most enjoyable part of my job is working by eating and drinking", Oral Kutman was very impressed by Guy Kawasaki's "Handbook for an Entrepreneur Who Wants to Start His Own Business", which she read when she decided to establish her own brand.



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GÖZDE BENZET

Founder of Bohemtolia

EDUCATION: Graduated from Political Science and International Relations at Boğaziçi University

Combined her interest in Anatolian culture with her spirit of design

Gözde Benzet, who started her own entrepreneurial story after 10 years in corporate life, combined her interest in handcraft and Anatolian culture with her passion for design, and established the Bohemtolia brand, which she defines as “the bohemian spirit from Anatolia”.

Combining Anatolian manual labor with modern design while designing original home decoration products, Benzet makes women and craftsperson produce these products. Stating that she set out to protect the art and manual labor of Anatolian land and to transfer these values from generation to generation, Benzet adds that “I want to introduce all kinds of handicrafts and Anatolian culture that emerge from the strength, patience and creativity of Turkish women to the world by Bohemtolia brand.”

Born in İstanbul as the only child of a retired bank employee mother and financial advisor father, Gözde Benzet graduated from Boğaziçi University, Department of Political Science and International Relations after studying at İstanbul Boys High School. Gözde Benzet, who started her career in corporate companies after school, had made this choice because of her dream to become a diplomat while choosing the university department. But when she realized the difficulties of the profession during the school years, she turned to the private sector. In corporate life, Benzet worked in marketing and communication positions in companies such as Henkel, Pınar Süt and Ecza-cıbaşı Yapı Gereçleri. Meanwhile she completed the Adschool Marketing Communications Master's program at Bilgi University. A person who believes in lifelong learning, Benzet is now studying Tourism and Cultural Heritage after completing the Coding and Web Design program at Anadolu University Open Education Faculty.

Gözde Benzet, who worked in the corporate field for 10 years, felt that her corporate career would not last so long. She realized that as she rose up in position at work, her sphere of influence decreased. The fact that the control area was very

narrow, even in the highest positions, made her lose the thought of the attractiveness about the corporate career, and then she began to construct the idea of becoming an entrepreneur in her mind. She had already dreamed of establishing her own brand since high school years. She was a person who was interested in handicraft since her childhood, and she was always interested in art and design. Taking this interest beyond a hobby, she attended long-term workshops on subjects such as painting, pattern, weaving and jewelry design throughout her working life. Because she was interested in handicrafts, she founded the Atelierkuzu brand with her mother, where they exhibited their handicraft products and produced for special demands from their environment. But this formation did not progress as expected. Instead of producing by herself, she decided to leave production to competent people and focus on her marketing knowledge.

Gözde Benzet wanted to create a brand that would reflect her design pleasure. What motivated her was the desire to make a small contribution to the preservation of Anatolia's handicrafts and to increase women's employment. Her dream was not just to do a business, but to create also social value. And this is how the Bohemtolia brand came out. Making a profit of her 10 years of corporate life experience, Benzet determined which sector she wanted to take place in by analyzing her own interests and competencies and started to research about the market/production. After these processes, she established her own company with the support of KOSGEB.

The main product categories of Benzet's initiative Bohemtolia consist of rugs, woven carpets and loom-woven Kutnu pillows of Gaziantep. In addition to producing hand-woven products combining



Advice from Gözde Benzet to entrepreneur candidates:

- Be courageous about starting the business venture you believe in.
- Participate in free trainings provided by women's initiatives and associations.
- Be present in different networks.
- Be active on social media accounts such as Meta, Instagram, which will improve your vision and take you abroad.
- There may be hard- and tough times from time to time; don't be discouraged, don't give up.



traditional techniques with modern design, the vintage products Benzet collected from Anatolian villages also attracts great attention. Benzet has made Bohemtolia a unique brand with pillows that carry the silent language of women to the present day while using the embroidery of Anatolian symbols, as well as a jewelry collection that diversifies from time to time, copper handicraft products and macrame works. Stating that they make domestic and international sales through their website and different online channels, Benzet says that they are celebrating the 5th anniversary of Bohemtolia's establishment this year, and that her dream is to celebrate its 50th anniversary too.

Her mission is to transfer the handicraft of Anatolia to the next generations

Expressing that learning new production techniques is one of her biggest curiosities, Gözde Benzet

speaks as follows: "While planning to establish my own brand, I combined this curiosity with my experience in corporate brand communication and turned my passion into a business and set up the Bohemtolia brand. I can also say that I combined a need I had seen and one of my missions in life with my brand. We have skilled craftspersons who produce works of art, also production regions and a unique design language; but because marketing is a separate specialization, they cannot become a brand. I take it as a kind of mission to have a small share in the transfer of these crafts, handicraft and design language of Anatolia to other generations. As a person who also attended a weaving course, I am aware of the value of this labor and I want to transfer this to people. I think I still have a long way to go. My dream is to make sales in our own stores in important centers abroad with the products of Bohemtolia brand."



Noting that they increase their targets every year with an average annual growth of 20 percent, Benzet says that they inspire small producers, handicrafts and brands, and adds: "One of the biggest elements of our success is our insistence on protecting our local mission." Benzet underlines that instead of reaching very different and high volumes as a business model, they attach importance to the brand and continue to maintain their production quality. Expressing that she decided to leave the production to expert handicrafts in different workshops and to focus on the marketing phase of the product, Benzet says that they work with different workshops in İstanbul, Uşak and Van, and they supply products from small workshops in places such as Gaziantep and Bursa.

Emphasizing that despite the rapid increase in the number of women entrepreneurs in Turkey, Benzet points out the importance of women's real employment in regards to work ethic and in order to have a more qualified workforce. Benzet finds



I believe that if given the opportunity, our women will leave their mark on Turkey's future. Women-owned businesses are growing rapidly - with the help of support - and are predicted to double in number in the next 10 years, currently accounting for approximately 14% of women entrepreneurs. However, scale is as important as quantity. Generally, the number of employees in women-owned businesses falls below the average. I wish for this number to increase significantly as well.

that women entrepreneurs in Turkey are decent business people and do their work much more systematically compared to the male entrepreneurs. She observes a lack of courage in women to start a business and says:

"I also have friends whom I try to encourage to make a start. Sometimes I can make an impact on them and sometimes not. When we look at it socially, men are more courageous in this regard, and we see this. I read a study; even the women think that male entrepreneurs are more daring and fiery. In other words, because they position themselves as abstainer, they are already abstainer. There is such a problem. When they get over their lack of courage, women entrepreneurs become very successful. That's why I think they should always be courageous. I think that women are much more skilled than men and that they can do their work more orderly and systematically. KAGIDER had a research report.

When they examined male and female company owners, they found that the companies of females had a higher level of taxation. It is very important to support women entrepreneurs because of doing their business more properly. I think there are glass ceilings in corporate life, rather than in entrepreneurship life. I have always received support in entrepreneurship. It is very important that you explain yourself well and express your wishes. Although the state and different organizations have serious support, the responsibility falls upon the entrepreneurs who have become more successful and branded. It is very valuable that these successful entrepreneurs make women entrepreneurs benefit from their own experiences in order to bring them into the economy with the vision of mentoring."

"The entrepreneur is often alone"

Benzet advises young entrepreneur candidates, who are at the beginning of their way, to be brave, and recommends that they should learn English, and if possible a second language too. Gözde Benzet gives the following speech: "First of all, they should be courageous. They should take place in different networks. The networks provided the greatest benefit in making my work easier, in taking my steps further and paving my way. These were especially women's networks. The entrepreneur candidates should follow the free training programs of different associations. I would definitely recommend them to participate there in and continue to be in the networks formed after these trainings. They don't need to create a brand or company for the moment, but places like that give inspiration and also encouragement. When I still need something - a simple production or something difficult - I reach it out through these networks. Entrepreneurship is a

difficult thing, most of the time you are alone. If you do not have a large capital, you cannot start with a team, you start with one or a maximum of two or three people, and your knowledge pool is limited. In this sense, personal relationships and networks are very important. So the most important thing I would recommend to women entrepreneurs is: Be present in different networks and promote your business in this way! Thus by getting support, by getting along with each other... Such networks are also beneficial in terms of improving the business. I do a kind of traditional business, I sell actively on the digital world. My channel is digital, online. And I have to follow the trends and developments there. For this, they can read different trend reports, follow them, and look at Instagram."

Her inspiration: anonymous women weaving rugs in Anatolia

Influenced by many names on her career journey, Gözde Benzet follows the famous designers Firat Neziroğlu and Belkıs Balpınar fondly for the vision they brought to the art of weaving. Benzet, who admires Faruk Malhan's influence in design world and finds Gönül Paksoy's unique style inspiring, says that anonymous women weaving rugs in Anatolia are anonymous designers whom she admires for their imagination and what they produce. Stating that they were inspired by the books of Reşad Ekrem Koçu and the catalogs of Turkish museums while developing their products, Benzet made benefits from James Clear's book "Atomic Habits" in terms of professional and personal development, and all of Seth Godin's books in terms of marketing. Speaking English, German and Italian, Benzet has been running in İstanbul Marathon since 2 years, collecting support for different associations.



HALE OLAK TURA

Founder of Biorootzo

EDUCATION: Graduated from Agricultural Engineering at Adnan Menderes University

Gluten-Free, vegan and organic production with ancestor seed

After resigning from her corporate job, Agricultural Engineer Hale Çolak Tura established the Biorootzo brand on her father's land in Muğla, using local agricultural inputs and ancestral seeds to produce value-added, gluten-free, organic and vegan food. Çolak Tura says: "We have adopted the zero waste approach as a principle from the production of the seed to the final product. With the goal of a fair and sustainable production, we have turned to initiatives that will reduce our carbon footprint."

Born in İzmir as one of the two daughters of an earth-loving father, Hale Çolak Tura was a lover of nature and soil like her father. She graduated from Adnan Menderes University, Department of Agricultural Engineering. Çolak Tura, who took part in different projects at home and abroad at university and afterwards, worked as an Agricultural Engineer in the R&D department of domestic and foreign seed companies. Working on vegetable seeds, which have a quite high production capacity especially in Turkey, Çolak Tura realized that being in corporate life did not make her happy. Meanwhile, her father, as a retired sea captain, started to deal with agriculture on his land in Muğla. Instead of working for international seed companies, Hale Çolak Tura went back to her roots as Hale, the little daughter of a soil lover father, thinking "Why shouldn't I do this job with my family, who is trying to do local agriculture with local seeds in their small garden".

Adopted the approach of giving back to nature what taken from the nature

Çolak Tura, who left the corporate life and returned to her family home, started to work not only to sell the local products they produce, but to process them and turn them into value-added products and present them to the market. As an Agricultural Engineer, she knew very well the seed and its effect on human existence. Based on the philosophy of "We Are What We Eat", she thought that not only the outside of the food should be healthy, but also the seed should be suitable for our genetic structure. Without polluting the soil, water

resources and air; protecting the environment, plant, animal and human health; she established the Biorootzo brand with the support of her husband İsmail Tura, a Food Engineer, as a lifestyle, a product of a collective philosophy that aims to protect the environment, while giving back to nature what it takes from nature, aiming to ensure the continuity of agriculture and protect the interests of its employees.

"A good entrepreneur is one who can manage risk"

Stating that "It is said that an entrepreneur is a risk taker, but I think the real good entrepreneur is the one who can manage risk", Çolak Tura did not leave it to luck when she started, and thanks to the experience she gained, she made deep researches on business strategy, marketing, positioning and international markets. While proceeding with this business plan, on the other hand, she was selected for the KAGİDER Women Entrepreneur Development and Acceleration Program in Agriculture in 2020. In 2022, she took part in 'She Makes' project implemented in cooperation with Google Turkey and MediaCat.

Emphasizing the importance of organic and drug-free agriculture with Bio and functional and innovative products with Root, Çolak Tura produces value-added gluten-free, organic and vegan food in Muğla using local agricultural input and local ancestral seeds. Çolak Tura, who set out to create healthy, easy and accessible meals by using locally produced legumes and seeds grown in Muğla region, where the climate is compatible with its soil, does not use synthetic fertilizers, pesticides or chemicals in her field.

Do not be discouraged, never give up!

We should be like a light for our young women, illuminating their paths. We must motivate new generations and strengthen their self-confidence under all circumstances. There is always a struggle in every personal story. Therefore, it is very important to be a role model, to be visible and to make them feel that they are not alone. When I first started my business life, the agriculture sector was a male-dominated sector and unfortunately, as a result of my first job interview, I was rejected for this reason. But I didn't give up ... I reached the general manager of the company with an e-mail explaining the importance of women's employment and that we women will overcome these issues. The next day, the company called me again and said that they wanted to meet. That's why I say: Do not be discouraged, never let it go.



Adopted the motto of "One content"

Çolak Tura manages her own company as a woman entrepreneur who touches the ground. She turned to innovative products with her husband together. They started to produce pasta that is gluten-free, vegan and also free of any additives and preservatives. They set the motto of 'One Content'. Then they combined functional food and pasta with the goal of greater nutrient content than a single meal.

Çolak Tura speaks as follows: "Our next step is to adopt the zero-waste approach as a principle and combine products with high antioxidant value, which are considered as waste by-products, with pasta, to create a unique value-added product. By recognizing this innovative product, which is unique in Turkey and the world market, the way for exports will be opened and it will make a great contribution to the economy."

Adopted the zero waste approach as a principle

Pointing out that the rate of encountering autoimmune diseases and the number of people who want to eat healthy is increasing day by day, Hale Çolak Tura draws attention to the fact that gluten-free diet is recommended for celiac disease, which is very common among children. Çolak Tura adds: "It is very important that these foods are produced in a gluten-free facility and that they are rich in vitamins and minerals. At this point, we established our business in Bozarmut, a rural village of Muğla. We are producing gluten-free, vegan pasta with Biorootzo brand, which has a very high nutritional content.

Çolak Tura, who says that another thing she is proud of is her contribution to the local employment with the Biorootzo brand, tells that



We wanted to create a community which takes its power from the locality but can provide services equivalent to its international counterparts, meets the expectations of our consumers who have very selective expectations, maintains a dialogue with a curious and researcher mass of followers who want to eat plant-based and healthy, and while doing all this, they produce and have fun without losing their love and conversation. In summary, we wanted to do the job like a woman: With care and smiling...

"We have become both a business gateway for women and a role model for young new female entrepreneurs. In particular, we increased the employment of women, because we made a special effort to support local women's labor. In addition, we have created a production model that provides a purchase guarantee to our farmers who produce domestically."



Local production and innovation are two main motivations

Noting that they started exporting in 2022 and they aim to increase this with functional foods in 2023, Çolak Tura emphasizes that the increasing climate crisis, unconscious use of natural resources and environmental problems have reached unavoidable dimensions, and that they have updated their business plans with a fair and sustainable production target and reduced their carbon footprints. Çolak Tura tells the following:

"We have two motivations: The first is quality local production, the second is innovation. By combining these two motivations, we consider creating innovative foods from well-produced, high-quality products as our blue ocean. For example, lentils have been used by our ancestors since time immemorial. But transforming high quality local lentils into a pasta-like product that is cooked in a shorter time without wood fire and preserving its nutritional value at the highest level... This is our art. Preserving its nutritional value by drying is almost an ancient knowledge of humanity. But presenting the vegetables produced from local seeds in a single box after harvesting and drying them in the season is the work of a very different knowledge and experience. Thus, our customer can buy the pasta as protein source and the vegetables as fiber source together in one serving. In short, even when it is difficult to reach the right food today, we have brought together the best in a single package at the best rates. And this is not a coincidence, it requires serious knowledge, experience, energy and time. That makes our work valuable."

Strong woman, strong society

Expressing that she is an entrepreneur who adopts the motto of "Strong women, strong society", Çolak Tura says that women's participation in the workforce is extremely important for sustainable development in the economy and faster development of society. Çolak Tura continues her speech as follows: "Formations that will guide and encourage women entrepreneurs and make them feel they are not alone are important. In addition, trainings that enable and guide women to enter business life, especially vocational training, are very important too. First, women will educate and develop themselves, and then they will change the next generations and the society. Today's favorite dishes are a woman's invention in times of famine, because she is "the one who makes the forty from three". It is in the nature of women to produce. I think that multi-purpose training centers should be established for programs such as branding, sales, marketing, and female leader training that provide both production and business development opportunities."

Hale Çolak Tura was very impressed by the books about branding, sales and marketing during her entrepreneurial journey. Çolak Tura, who recommends everyone who is an entrepreneur to read the Pricing Secrets-William Poundstone, 22 Rules of Brand Creation- Al Ries, Laura Ries and Outliers- Malcolm Gladwell, also works in NGOs. Çolak Tura, who is a volunteer of Community Volunteers Foundation and founder member of Women's Cooperative in Agriculture, knows English well. She is a professional swimmer and swims in her spare time.



HÜLYA YORULMAZ

Founded her own school called Microblading Academy New York

EDUCATION: Graduated from Department of English Translation and Interpretation at Yeni Yüzyıl University

A dareful entrepreneur who fights against difficulties and never gives up

Hülya Yorulmaz is a courageous entrepreneur who never gives up, who falls down and gets up again and again. During her childhood she faced many difficulties and she got married at an early age. She graduated from secondary and high schools with her inner love of study. And as a young mother of two, she passed the university entrance exam at the age of 29. After the college, she made a radical decision to go to America with her two children, and then she worked tirelessly and without giving up. She worked as a waitress, dishwasher, service worker during the day, and went to school at night. She received trainings and certificates in the field of beauty expertise, which she had started in Turkey, and established her own school in New York under the name of Microblading Academy New York where she gave permanent make-up trainings.

Hülya Yorulmaz was born in a family of 5 children in Adana. She had a difficult and troubled childhood. She was one of the children of such families living in difficult conditions who had to grow up at an early age. Then she got married at an early age and moved to Istanbul. She couldn't go to school after primary school, but she had a deep passion for studying. Although she postponed her passion for studying because of her marriage, she did not stand idle in the meantime. She followed training in 2002-2003 in Istanbul to become beautician and had the opportunity to work at High Care Institute, which is still operating today. This was Yorulmaz's first job, later she had to leave there due to familial reasons.

Yorulmaz could not postpone her passion for studying any longer; so she graduated from secondary and then high school from outside. Her dream was to take part in university entrance exams. She ignored the deterrent words of the people around her and

bought preparatory books for the exams from the Booksellers' Bazaar. At the moment she was a woman with two children. While she was taking care of her children and doing housework, she was also preparing for the university exam. Actually she prepared herself for the college without any support. And she felt very happy when she passed the threshold score of the first exam. However, because of being married and having two children, she did not have the chance to go to the city she wanted to study in. That is why she chose for English-Turkish translation department at a private university in Istanbul with a 50% scholarship. Entering the university was a turning point for Hülya Yorulmaz. She cried a lot when she got the news first. She couldn't believe her success and the fact that she had done it alone. She didn't care about the cliché reactions of her close circle like "Why do the women go to study?", "Where did this school matter come from?" and "You have already two kids, what would be your goal with college?" She tells about those days as follows: "While everyone was having dinner parties, I was reading books and studying. I wasn't sleeping at night during the final exams. I used to bring my kids to school in the morning, then go to take part in my own exam, and then come home after the school and try to sleep. But it is a fact that; unfortunately, not everyone wants you to be successful."

Yorulmaz had won the college for English Translation Department, but there was a problem: she could not speak English. Her classmates knew English since their secondary- or high school years, while she was starting from scratch. The way was very long, as a 29-year-old mother of 2 children, she went to school actively for 3 years, which included one year preparatory class. Then she took the DGS exam and transferred to the Translation and Interpretation Department. In the meantime, she was taking classes from the



Advice from Yorulmaz to entrepreneur candidates:

"Don't be afraid, if you believe in something you can do; definitely go after it. Don't give up when it doesn't happen. Take risks, small risks don't hurt, on the contrary they help you decide what to do. Therefore, consider not only one job, but many jobs together. The world has become such a place that two jobs should always be in the pocket. If one does not happen, the other must be implemented. Don't be discouraged because of being failed in a project,

try again and again until it comes to life. That's how I did. I remember that I worked 16-17 hours a day. Until I got somewhere like today, I did many and different kinds of jobs. You can't get a seat for free. I worked and scraped on my way with my nails. If necessary, I also worked without sleeping. I tried tirelessly and without giving up, then I succeeded. Despite everyone and everything, I am here! You can be too. Instead of making huge investments, it doesn't hurt to always try and take a little risk. Because the success does not come any other way."

American Culture and English Literature departments, and she was qualifying her empty classes in this way. She worked at various schools after learning that she had the right to work as a paid English teacher in public schools in İstanbul while she was still studying. Thus began her teaching career. In addition to the university, she continued to take permanent make-up trainings from different trainers. She never shied away from getting education on any subject which she was interested in and which she felt lacking in herself.

A new beginning full of challenges

After university, Hülya Yorulmaz took a decision that was the turning point of her life. She wanted to further her language. Therefore she decided to go to America together with her two children. She also experienced the difficulties experienced by other people who went to America for the first time, but hers was a little more difficult. She was starting a new life with two children

on a completely different continent, but she had no money in her pocket. She wanted to work, but couldn't find a job for a while. She had a very difficult time with her children. She slept in a small room, in a single bed, hugging her daughter and son. After a while, a Turkish restaurant owner, who is now very famous, gave Yorulmaz a job even though he did not believe in her. Yorulmaz worked so hard that the turnover of the restaurant at that time increased considerably and her boss did not want to leave her. Now she was starting from scratch again. She delivered pizzas to homes in Harlem, a dangerous area. She also took care of everything, including the cleaning of the workplace. She also went to school during the day. She had to go home to the children late at night. Of course, the children were going to school too. Then she improved herself and did different jobs. She started making pizza, but after a while she realized that this job would not get her anywhere and she started looking for different jobs. She

worked in the positions of cashier, customer service, office worker and human resources specialist, which was her last job before starting her own business. She was also doing the company's accounting.

Started again from scratch

In the end, she had legal rights in America. While she was an accounting and human resources specialist, she decided to become a beautician at the same time and received more than 10 permanent make-up trainings from 3 different schools. She worked hard. She needed financial support and her resources were limited. But she didn't like to give up, and she was used to starting from scratch. Firstly she started by renting space in small places. Then she gradually expanded her business. When she did her job well, the rapidly increasing customer mass made her speed up establish her own brand. In 2012, she founded her own school called Microblading Academy New York. Hülya



Yorulmaz is currently giving permanent make-up trainings in New York State, USA, without age limit. She makes those, who want to learn and have a profession, possess a profession in a short time. The training is considered as a certificate program, and depending on this program, she can provide training all over the world and provide certificates for people who are related to this business and those who want to learn. Yorulmaz demonstrates microblading and all permanent make-up techniques during the 6-day course. In this 6-day school, she sometimes gives one-on-one and sometimes group lessons, and then she provides support for 6 months. The participants are entitled to receive a 100-hour training certificate valid worldwide.

Her opposer was always herself

"I make efforts to transfer this work to the new generation and to ensure that it could be done better. Unfortunately, as in every job, there are not many per-



As someone who entered university at the age of 29, I wish for every young person to experience those feelings. Because they will definitely witness the expansion of their horizons. It will be an important experience for them to feel their existence as individuals on their own. Our future is precious, and I personally started to live it very late, according to my opportunities. Please, always seize the opportunities that come your way when you already have some opportunities in your hands.

sons in our profession who do the job as it should be. That's why the customer already prefers you when they know that you are good. Becoming a brand is in your hands..." says Yorulmaz. She got influenced or inspired by no one, because she always competed with herself. "How far can I push my capacity? The harder I work, the more I can achieve" she thought. She constantly followed the sector she was in and applied innovations and different techniques. "How will you do it? How will you find customers?" she faced the questions like this. And she got reactions such as "This is hard work, don't damage the appearance of the people." Despite going through very depressed periods, she always continued to invest in herself. Yorulmaz still thinks "What more can I put on it". She is constantly improving herself.

"As a 29-year-old university student, I want every young person to experience those feelings. Because they will definitely see the expansion in their horizon. It will be a very important experience for them to feel that they exist actually as individuals on their own."

Hülya Yorulmaz tries to do her job meticulously and flawlessly. She states: "The details we receive in the lessons and practices applied in our school are very important. When everything is done properly and in line with customer requests, the problems disappear. We decide how the eyebrows should be done by talking for about an hour with the customer. In addition, the most important part is that our customers can always reach us. They can reach us with an SMS message directly from their mobile phones and we get back to them immediately. While doing these, we achieve the result or make the decision by not just talking but also practicing. For example, our works are shown to them, and then we create a model or drawing and symmetry as closer as possible to whichever they want. There is an application for this.

We even use an application for color. Sometimes we simulate the result before it actually starts, which makes the customer trust us directly. Because we work face to face, we have to be very careful."

Saying that the economically rich situation of women would change everything and increase even the domestic freedom, Yorulmaz adds that economically strong women will think more properly and will consider everything more comprehensively and will not let people oppress themselves. Yorulmaz tells that "The business owners in the beauty sector are mostly the women. This is the actual case both in Turkey and in the world, and it makes us even happier. Because we produce and raise children for future generations. These children are taking what we give them. More opportunities, more job opportunities for women... Since I am 40 years old, I know the near past very well. Now most of our girls and women want to work and produce. If the opportunity is given to them, they can show their abilities. Maybe it would be better to organize more events and seminars for them. If the news is at the forefront about it, this can make these people more courageous."

A woman can do whatever she wants!

Arguing that the number of women entrepreneurs in the sector will increase in the next 10 years and this situation will be much better, Yorulmaz says: "Women can do whatever they want! Abroad, a woman can work as sales person even at the age of 85. At this age, women still work and are happy... We should give them the opportunity and also support them. I make this right now by providing a profession for them. But I wish I could do more. Many women living at home come to me and want to get training. This is also very pleasing for me... The more opportunities these women are given, the more they can be encouraged to make a start."



ILGIN ÖZDEMİR YAZGAN

Founder of Accouchée

EDUCATION: After Civil Engineering at METU, she got her MBA at Bilkent University and master's degree in Industrial Engineering at K.U.Leuven

Her purpose is to sell philosophy not a product

Accouchée, the brand of Ilgin Özdemir Yazgan, who could not find both stylish and functional clothes during her pregnancy and breastfeeding, soon turned into a social entrepreneurship movement that reached thousands of women in country and abroad. Özdemir Yazgan's brand, which she established to sell philosophy not a product, attracted attention with her rhetoric and became one of the 50 initiatives included in the scope of support by the US Department of State just in its second year. It was presented as a case at the 2020 World Economic Summit in Davos at the invitation of Cherie Blair and was launched as a means of gender equality by UN Women.

Ilgın Özdemir Yazgan is a true dreamer who believes in her dreams... Ilgın Özdemir Yazgan, whose mother and father are two physicians with a humanist worldview, was brought up with the perception of "Why not?..". This perspective was the reason why she never stopped trying and dreaming. She describes herself as "The one who has a lot of support has a lot of trust too. I guess that's why I've become self-confident and reckless. I was a person who was very foresighted about risk, but was willing to take calculated risks." As a person from Ankara, Özdemir Yazgan studied at TED Ankara College, then got her bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering at METU, an MBA at Bilkent University with a scholarship and her master's degree in Industrial Engineering at K.U.Leuven. She was an active student, taking part in student clubs throughout her entire education life. She was interested in art branches such as dancing, painting, theater and also traveled and read a lot.

Özdemir Yazgan, who did an internship for 6 months in Delegation of EU Commission of Turkey after METU, started to work in the Scott Wilson Turkey office while she was not even looking for a job yet. This was followed by the European Investment Bank in Luxembourg. Then she decided to return to Turkey and had the opportunity to get to know almost every function of the energy sector by working with the giants of the sector such as Gama Energy, Accenture Management Consultancy and Petrol Ofisi respectively.

"Where do Princess Kate and Hollywood stars dress from?"

Özdemir Yazgan has high observation ability and always had a dream of creating a brand and carrying this brand to a global scale, even though she worked in corporate life. She decided to become a mother during this period and took her son in her arms, then she faced a problem

like many pregnant mothers and mothers with babies do. She could not find clothes that were both stylish and functional. Five years ago, there were only two brands in the postpartum clothing category in Turkey, but these brands did not meet her needs. At that time, Princess Kate had also given birth to her second child. She was always elegant and well-groomed. While doing research with the thought "I wonder where princesses and Hollywood stars dress from during their pregnancy and breastfeeding?", she discovered that there were well-known brands in the field of the 'maternity' period. Many celebrities were wearing almost one brand. The most important feature of the products was that they had not only function but also style. And she ordered immediately several items. But what happened next was a complete disappointment. Most of the items were of polyester and the cotton ones deteriorated in a few washes. The designs were not as modern as she had imagined.

She wanted to be the voice of all women

She had given birth, she wanted to breastfeed her baby for a long time, but at the same time she wanted to continue her professional and social life. But she couldn't find the clothes that would make it possible. It was necessary to wear functional clothes to go and breastfeed during lunch breaks or to milk between meetings during the day. It was during this period that the entrepreneurial spirit within her awoke and said: "Why not?". While on maternity leave, she started working on this idea every time she put her son to sleep. Realizing the gap in the market, she decided to establish Accouchée in 2017. At least she should have tried. She had to do this not just to build a brand, but to change a situation she saw and didn't like. She wanted to be a voice for all women. Her goal was to sell philosophy, not a product.

Of course, leaving her 15-year career behind and

Suggestions from Ilgın Özdemir Yazgan to candidate entrepreneurs...

Entrepreneurship is not about owning your own business, own time or being able to work flexibly. On the contrary, it is a state of mind to be at work 24/7. I would like to emphasize the importance of those who will choose this way to do it consciously. On the other hand, I saw that there was a serious difference between working happily/peacefully and working with passion in this life. Find the job that makes your heart beat passionately every day, not the one you feel comfortable with. That's when you can make a difference. And what you need most on this bumpy way is the friendship of other entrepreneurs like you. Otherwise, the hands that extend when you fall may not be enough for you to get up.



stepping out of her comfort zone was not an easy decision. But being a big believer in signs, she picked up a huge sign at that point. While leaving the institution where she worked so fondly, she said goodbye to everyone one by one, the marketing director and manager said to her: "Women are always tempted to start a business like this after giving birth, and there is no success. If only you had talked to us before you made your final decision, we would have dissuaded you. You will lose your career of all these years for nothing!". That was the point, hearing this bold generalization, she once again observed how great the prejudice against postpartum women was. She felt how important it was to be a voice, not a brand.

"I wanted to make women feel that they are not alone"

Throughout her career, she had an idea about all the roles to be assumed in the case of starting a company, with her MBA and also experience gained in almost all functions such as the energy sector, finance, marketing, consultancy, business development, strategy, operations etc. Özdemir Yazgan describes those days as follows: "There is a prejudice that a woman leaves her career aside when she chooses to be a mother. Not only in our country but also in many countries around the world it is so. As I myself saw concrete examples of gender inequality between men and women in the last institution I worked for and as I observed the ne-

gativities/injustices experienced by the woman in her career after she became pregnant, my motivation to be this voice increased. I set out not just to start a business and sell products, but to set up a community to remind women in similar situations that they are not alone and that they don't have to choose between motherhood and career if they want to. Accouchée was founded with this motivation. Dressing women with timeless, high-quality, mother-friendly designs gave them the opportunity to do so if they wanted to return to work or continue their social life. But more importantly, vocalize these taboos that were not spoken in society strengthened these women. We always say: "Everything starts with a happy and strong woman. Because a happy child of those women could change the world."

Özdemir Yazgan does not have a textile background and is still at the stage of getting to know the fabrics. Her knowledge deficiency about these issues has been completed by the manufacturer companies. In 2017, when she started her business, she changed from the manufacturers 5 times. Because the big manufacturers who were large enough to make production at desired quality did not want to produce a model in a low quantity. For those who accepted, none of the samples were as she wanted, there was always an error. Just as she was about to quit this job, she met her current manufacturer and started selling in June 2018.

Presented as a case in Davos

The rhetoric and philosophy of the brand founded by Özdemir Yazgan attracted a lot of attention. In its second year, it became one of the 50 initiatives included in the support of the US Department of State. It was presented as a case at the 2020 World Economic Summit in Davos at the invitation of Cherie Blair. Soon after, it was launched by UN Women as a gender equality means. Accouchée, which started out as a high-qu-

ality product group that was designed entirely for the 'maternity' period (before and after pregnancy), and accessible in a price band, is available in stores such as Beymen, Harvey Nichols, Galleries Lafayette in Turkey and on high-volume digital channels such as Morhipo and Trendyol. Despite the pandemic, Accouchée, which has reached 23 different sales points abroad, 17 of which are in America, aims to make its name even more popular with its new category consisting of products developed to bring textile and technology together.

Telling that her initiative can be considered in the social enterprise category, Özdemir Yazgan adds that they are a brand that aims to create a collective power, especially in the period of motherhood, the period when they need each other the most, by bringing together the women who make advance with the principles of empowering women, raising awareness on gender roles and adopting these values.

Ilgin Özdemir Yazgan points out that although it was founded only five years ago and two years passed with the pandemic, the company has sales at 23 points abroad, and expresses her feelings as follows: "My dream and vision for the brand is so big and diverse that I find it more accurate to say I am under way to the place I dreamed of rather than saying I am where I dreamed of. There is so much to do, so many norms/prejudices to break and so many lives to touch. When we achieve all of these, I will be able to say that we are at the point I dreamed of."

Noting that they have received very good feedback and 94 percent recommendation rate since the first day, Özdemir Yazgan tells that entrepreneurship is a very bumpy way and believes that the person should provide her own motivation. Emphasizing the importance of supporting women entrepreneurs, Özdemir Yazgan speaks as follows:

"Especially with regard to Industry 4.0, many com-



I have always listened to my inner voice. If he tells me the only truth, I will believe him a lot. If necessary, I ask forty people, but in the end, I always leave the final decision to my inner voice. On the Accouchée journey, my inner voice never told me to give up, even when I got into a panic. I never even had a plan B because I didn't even see failure as an option.

petencies can now be done by robots. Therefore, the competencies that cannot be done by robots will be much more valuable in the future. Three of them are empathy, creativity and multi-thinking. In particular, due to the fertile nature of women, their ability to understand a non-speaking creature (empathy), to entertain a living creature that is only lying for 6 months (creativity) and to continue life simultaneously in different areas after becoming a mother (multiple thinking) will gain more and more importance. Considering that 50 percent of the world's talent pool is women, it would be a very negative blow for the talent pool that women do not return to work, especially when these competencies will develop after giving birth. For this reason, the importance of women's employment should be well understood and their contribution to the economy should be supported."

"My only book for life is The Alchemist"

İlgin Özdemir Yazgan, who made Atatürk's statement "Those who set out to never stop never get tired" illuminate her path, was inspired and supported by some pe-



ople for whom she is grateful. She always kept in mind the words of Feride Tansuğ, whom she was introduced to at the very beginning of the way telling her: "It takes time to become a brand. If you can give your years, I can see the brand that will come out of here. But if you manage to not break your line by panicking..." Özdemir Yazgan always remembered these words when she got into a panic in her ups and downs during her entrepreneurial journey.

The bedside book of Özdemir Yazgan, who is very interested in reading and research, is The Alchemist. The Alchemist, which she describes as "My only book for life", had a great influence on her philosophy of life and the formation of her perspective. However, in particular with Accouchée, she was very impressed with Start Something That Matters and this led her to think "If I start a business one day, it must aim at solving or improving a problem". Özdemir Yazgan, who is also very active in social life and speaks both English and French, is a member of College students, METU students, Bilkent, K.U.Leuven alumni associations and also Payda Platform.



İLKEY DEMİRDAĞ

Founder and Influence & Investment Strategist of Positive Impact

EDUCATION: After completing the undergraduate and graduate studies of Faculty of Architecture at İstanbul Technical University, she got her second master's degree in Economics at University College London in England

Building the right investment strategy for sustainable economic development

İlkay Demirdağ is an Investment and Influence Strategist who got many awards and has been working for multinational companies, holdings, banks and business venture capital funds for more than 20 years in Turkey, England and Bahrain with her endless curiosity for learning and her ability to connect people, events and trends. Having led important initiatives to ensure sustainable economic development, Demirdağ also guides many important institutions and organizations to create the right investment strategy by Positive Impact, of which she is the founder.

Ilkay Demirdağ completed her undergraduate and graduate education at Istanbul Technical University, Faculty of Architecture, and she got her second master's degree in Economics at University College London in London. During her career, she worked in multinational companies, holdings, banks, private equity and venture capital funds in Turkey, England and Bahrain. She gained extensive experience in fund setup, structuring, fundraising, mergers & acquisitions, public offerings, borrowing and bond issues, strategic planning, investor relations and sustainability. Working mainly in regulated sectors such as energy and infrastructure in developing and emerging markets, Demirdağ was always an executive with her entrepreneurial persona, although she got involved in corporate life for 24 years. Besides her work, she created many social entrepreneurship projects in order to find solutions to social and environmental issues. Afterwards, she left her corporate identity and established her own investment and consultancy company. She is currently working with global venture and venture capital firms, institutions and start-ups. She provides consultancy and also invests in strategy development, fundraising, sustainability and impact-oriented value creation so that capital meets meaningful and impact-oriented investments.

Stating that "No matter in which stage they are in their development journey, access to capital is critical for all the companies. On the other hand, the private equity funds that provide resources for these also want to increase their fund sizes and to access the right investment opportunities in order to make more investments. But the meeting of ideas, companies and capital is not fully realized", Demirdağ is passionate about revealing the capi-

tal value for good and effective works. She brings together the ideas, people and capital to increase the sustainability performance and to create a positive, measurable social and environmental impact as well as profitability.

Follows sectoral trends and developments closely

Ilkay Demirdağ is recognized as a global opinion leader and activist on sustainable economic development and impact investments. The most important keys of Demirdağ's success are the fact that



Demirdağ has worked in global markets on many different positions within the investment cycle, she has a very effective international network, and also follows the sectoral trends and developments very closely. The result of all these is the meeting of ideas and capital, and the emergence of works that make an impact.

Her philosophy of life: Contributing to nature and people

Demirdağ's curiosity for learning never ends. As a professional who is on different sides of the table in the investment cycle as buyer, seller, financier and

investor, she tries to deal with concepts such as "value and return" as far as possible out of the traditional perspectives. As her philosophy of life, she aims to increase the sphere of influence of works that make positive and meaningful contributions to nature and people. In this context, she leads important initiatives to maximize value creation for all stakeholders, transform responsible and impact investments into the mainstream, and ensure sustainable economic development. She is currently developing the influence and investment strategies for global private and venture capital funds, startups and institutions.

"The balance of soul, body and mind is very important"

Having an active lifestyle, İlkay Demirdağ enjoys spending time with her friends, traveling, doing sports and reading books. It is very important for her to maintain the balance of soul, body and mind. For this reason, she includes meditation and mindfulness practices in her life. Demirdağ, who received the titles of Mindfulness Trainer and Professional Coach during her personal development journey that she started with the need to understand life and existence when searching for meaning, had also a very active role in non-governmental organizations since her university years. Taking part in the working groups as a member of the Executive Board and Board of Directors of many NGOs, Demirdağ is still the Founder and Board Member of

the Foundation of Influence Circles, the Mentee and Member of the Sustainability Committee in the Board of Directors, Board Member of the Association of İstanbul Technical University Alumni and Member of TÜSİAD Gender Equality Working Group. Being deemed worthy of many awards for her work, İlkay Demirdağ received these awards: "Role Model Female Manager Award", Ekonomize Magazine, 2017; "48 Women Inspiring Turkey", Dünya Newspaper, 2018; "Social Entrepreneur of the Year Award", Ekonomize Magazine, 2019; "Social Responsibility Project of the Year", Ace of Mice, 2019; "Executive Award in Developing Markets", third place in Europe, Middle East and Africa, Institutional Investor Research, 2020; "Best Energy Company Investor Relations Award", International Finance Awards, 2021; "Best Corporate Governance in Turkey", World Finance 2021 Awards.



"I am on the journey I want to be"

İlkay Demirdağ, who has never done her job as a master architect, has shaped her career with her interests, trends, needs of the time, events and passions that developed beyond her control. Demirdağ tells her story as follows: "As my awareness increased and I got to know myself better in my personal journey, the place I wanted to see myself changed a lot over the years. Throughout my career, I never had a single absolute dream. My curiosity for learning the new has led me always to research and learn more, and with this awareness, I can say that my dream is to realize my own performance. It can be thought of as being able to live a life in accordance with my purpose in life and making meaningful contributions to myself and my environment while doing this, rather than being a form, shape or having a defined success. In this sense, instead of saying that I am where I wanted to be in my career today, I prefer to say that I am on the journey I want to be. The human lifespan and the pace of change in the world are now too narrow regarding a single

Advice from İlkay Demirdağ to entrepreneur candidates:

First of all, we must start with trying to discover our life purpose in order to find our way in the life and to stay on our route and to live in accordance with our values. Success comes naturally when we dedicate ourselves to asking, questioning and producing for this purpose. Setting out on a road for success or wealth will not get you to the destination.

career goal. From now on, I aim to direct my career with a flexible, dynamic and creative attitude."

Expressing that she has been exposed to glass ceilings as a woman working in male-dominated sectors and business lines throughout her career, Demirdağ emphasizes that women have to make more efforts and cope with social judgments in order to exist as entrepreneurs in professional life. She says: "Because this situation really bothered me, I wanted to create a systemic change. In 2018, I initiated the Equality Movement to empower women in business life and to take part in decision-makers. I am working in many NGOs on the issues of gender equality and inclusion. It is very important for women to take part in business life in order to ensure sustainable economic and social development, to activate their potential, to use resources correctly and to create new business fields."

"Inclusivity and collective leadership skills are needed"

Demirdağ tells that different perspectives, inclu-

siveness and collective leadership skills are needed to solve the complex problems of today. She advises that women entrepreneurs should listen to every idea, include different perspectives and communities in the decision-making process, be open to restructuring, be inclined to involve young people and women in the process. She points out that they made the key skills activated in the process which leads to success, such as giving women leadership roles, delegating them, not shying away from using the life experience and skills of others, being able to empathize and including men in the solution process to ensure the social balance.

"By giving priority to the policies and projects which will enable women to take their place alongside men in economic life, it will be possible to make them a potential power that makes significant contributions to economic and social development. For this, policy makers, institutions and financial organizations have an important role to play" says Demir-

dağ. She underlines that women play a major role in helping a fragile economy like Turkey to reach a healthier and more stable balance in the coming periods. Demirdağ also mentions that there is an increase in the number of women entrepreneurs in Turkey since the beginning of the 2000s, and she adds: "I think women are the driving force that will transform the society with their bright face, their sensitivities and awareness on social, environmental and social issues. But the social pressure and women's fears about taking action can sometimes prevent them from putting their potential into practice. It is very important for women to see their leadership potential and show their will to develop it. That is why it is very valuable to strive for continuous education and development, to produce and contribute when guided by science."



Being an entrepreneur is an attitude, and entrepreneurship is the ability to come up with innovative solutions in the face of problems or situations. While some have become entrepreneurs by starting their own companies, there are also individuals who, even without their own ventures, create value with an entrepreneurial spirit in any environment they exist in. Personally, I have spent 24 years in the corporate world, working as a manager with an entrepreneurial mindset. I have initiated several social entrepreneurship projects to find solutions for societal and environmental issues.





KÜBRA YURTSEVER KARGI

NATUVA Founder & Director

EDUCATION: Graduated from Business Administration at Karadeniz Technical University

Her Goal: To introduce the Black Sea's scented grape to the world

The dream of young and successful entrepreneur Kübra Yurtsever Kargı was to establish an initiative that would both create social benefit and contribute to nature and humanity with healthy and clean products in order to create a sustainable world. Yurtsever Kargı established the Natuva brand in order to process the scented grape of the endemic fruit of the Black Sea in a different way from jam to pickle with traditional methods. She aims to introduce this value of the Black Sea, which is about to disappear, to the whole world.

Kübra Yurtsever Kargı, who was born in Ankara in 1990 as one of the three children of a housewife mother and an aviator officer father, completed her undergraduate education at Karadeniz Technical University, department of Business Administration, after completing her primary, secondary and high school education in Ankara. Having a social and active student life, Kargı Yurtsever received a job offer during the "KTU 3rd Media Awards Ceremony", which she held with her KTU IEK teammates in her senior year. Then she started her professional life at Forum Trabzon Mall under the management of Multi Mall Turkey in 2012, before the university ended. She started as "Marketing Assistant". Yurtsever Kargı understood the importance of being a team with her first work experience and tasted the pleasure of success, and these experiences which she had during her student years had a great influence on her development.

After graduating from school, Yurtsever Kargı worked in Journey as a corporate communication officer in the retail sector, respectively as a Marketing Specialist and Marketing Manager, in the management of 4 different malls within the body of JLL Turkey, which deals with international mall management and leasing. She wanted to make use of her experience of 8 years' corporate life in different fields. While she was working, she became acquainted with the "Social Entrepreneurship" ecosystem and started doing research on this subject. The entrepreneurial spirit in her was activated. She attended to entrepreneurship training in June 2020. She wanted to create an enterprise in which she would use the experience she had

gained in corporate life, but at the same time provide social benefits. She had left her post in March 2020. As a result of her market research and studies, she decided to realize her initiative in the field of agriculture. She would make this healthy product accessible by increasing the production of the scented grape, an endemic species with almost no economic value in the Black Sea.

She brought a forgotten product to light

She returned to Trabzon in 2021, which she boldly called "my second hometown". She was going to process the scented grape of Black Sea, which was hidden in the Black Sea geography and also called Isabella, Black Grape, Medicine Grape, and Strawberry Grape in the region, to turn it into a value-added product and bring it to light. This grape species, which had 1200 vineyards in Trabzon in the past, had lost its value and its mass production had become impossible because of the arrival of tea, hazelnut, tobacco and corn in the region. This grape remained only as 1 root in the gardens of the households, on the vines or on the roots of the trees, and it often dried up in places that were difficult to collect and access. And it was often used as food for the birds. In order to be aware of this value, which is extremely beneficial for human health, Yurtsever Kargı rolled up her sleeves and established the Natuva brand in May 2021.

Buys raw material from the local people

Yurtsever Kargı works to continuously improve her business and products with her research, education and training, collaborations and R&D studies, and shares information about current



products and their production with experts and universities, and also makes analyzes to improve their quality and to produce new products, while using raw materials and collecting them from local people and local markets. This grape can be kept in cold storage for a maximum of 1 week, so it is processed within 3 days. Since the production process of each product is different, one does not start before the other is finished. They work very hard to collect the raw materials of products made from the scented grapes (vine leaves, berry, scented grapes) at harvest time.

8 kinds of products, 40 thousand pieces of production

Kübra Yurtsever Kargı prepares vine leaves, un-ripened grapes and ripe grapes of scented grapes between June-October (only in season) in her workshop in Maçka, using all her recipes, including fruit juice, marmalade, pepeçura dessert, vinegar, pickled unripened grapes, unripened grape juice and pickled leaves with 6 women together. She makes them tested and analyzed, and

Look at the world not hopelessly, but optimistically Kübra Yurtsever Kargı gives the following advice to young people:

“Be an extrovert, not an introvert. Instead of being inside four walls, be on the field. Do not be afraid to enter new environments and to make mistakes. Trust yourself. Follow people, books, stories to inspire. İlber Ortaylı's unforgettable note from the book *How to Live a Life* is always in my mind: “No one is in the mood to find or discover you. You will find good trainings and teachers. You will go and knock on their door. This is the only way you will develop and make progress.” Struggle by realizing that what is hard and requires effort is permanent, not what is easily achieved. Look at the world with optimism, not hopelessly. Don't be disappointed by waiting for your dreams to come true immediately, open a lot of doors and know that you will definitely get the reward of your efforts. Your dreams will heal the Earth, just be on the move and seek support for it.”

delivers them to all over Turkey with modern and stylish presentations from www.natuva.com.tr and on various online marketplaces. Yurtsever Kargı, who creates a new income source for the people of the region with her value-added production, bought scented grapes from nearly 50 families from the region, processed 7 tons of the grapes and produced 20 thousand pieces of 7 kinds of products in the first year. In the new harvest period of 2022, Yurtsever Kargı bought scented grapes from nearly 100 families in total from Trabzon, Rize, Ordu, Giresun and Samsun. She increased the number of varieties to 8 and reached 40 thousands of pieces. The long-term goal of Yurtsever Kargı, whose aim in 2023 is to deliver these products to the whole of Turkey until the new harvest period, is to introduce the scented grape of the Black Sea to the whole world.

"Our aim is to provide a new income for the region"

Yurtsever Kargı says: "It has a very beneficial product for human and nature health. We are working to bring benefits to the soil and ecosystem, together with the economy of the region and the country, with a value branded from Anatolia. This is the most important factor that drives us to success. We are telling about the taste and benefits of a different and very healthy product grown in its own geography."

"I am glad I had the courage to set out on this journey"

Yurtsever Kargı expresses her feelings as follows: "I never thought that my career plan would lead me to start my own business. When

I think of the people I met until today, I am glad that I took action with the determination of wanting to do something new and to be a bigger family and dared to start this journey." She adds that their main aim is to deliver food that can be grown efficiently and with durability in the climatic conditions of its own geography against problems such as drought and climate crisis, without additives, with the traditional methods learned from the elders.

"The number of women entrepreneurs is still very low"

Pointing out that the number of successful women in Turkey is still very low, and stating that as a woman entrepreneur she has the ability to struggle with glass ceilings, Yurtsever Kargı continues her words as follow:

"In order to increase the power of entrepreneur women, first we need our determination and courage as women. Today, there are many training, grant and support programs given to women entrepreneurs. I think we should follow them, be a participant, and be on the field with our innovative and dynamic perspective for the development of the work we want to do, ourselves and others. As women, we have so many responsibilities that when our family is our supporter and they believe in us, there is no obstacle we cannot overcome. It is very important to find business ideas in line with our life goals and put them into action, and to team up with the right people in this field."

Strong and successful women inspired her

In her career journey, Kübra Yurtsever Kargı was inspired by successful women like Ece Çift-



çi, Şahika Ercüman, Gamze Cizreli, Leyla Alaton, Elvan Odabaşı, Sümeyye Boyacı, Ebru Baybarademir. On the other hand, Ufuk Tarhan's T-Human and Don't Leave Tomorrow's Work for Tomorrow, Catherine Kaputa's Branding Women, Tony Hsieh's Distributing Happiness (an E-COMMERCE Success Story), İlber Ortaylı's How to Live a Life, Ali Ekber Yıldırım's Don't Produce Consume and Prof. Dr. Mustafa Sarı's Social Entrepreneurship books were the books which she was greatly influenced by and left a mark on her.

Some of the trainings, supports and awards received by Yurtsever Kargı are as follows: She won the right to participate in the jury presentation in the category of Sustainable Female Entrepreneurs Making a Difference in Their Region at the Garanti Bank Woman Entrepreneur Competition. She won the 25 thousand TL Grant award of TOBB-United Nations Develop-



We will deliver the healthy food products, which we produce with the excitement and love of creating a sustainable world, first in Turkey with our brand, and to the whole world after the increase in production. Our aim is to provide a new income to more households, producers and farmers in the region with our increasing production every year and to increase employment by including more women and young people in our organization.

ment Program-Habitat-Türk Telekom Digital, Life is Easy Mentoring and Grant Program. The program won a 25 thousand TL Grant award. She became one of the women entrepreneurs who were entitled to participate in KAGİDER Women Entrepreneurship Development, Acceleration and Mentoring Program in Agriculture. In addition, she became one of the women entrepreneurs who won to participate in the SMEs Crossing Borders Mentoring Program. Within the scope of KOSGEB Advanced Entrepreneurship Training, Women Entrepreneurship and Manufacturing Grant Support, she received 110 thousand TL support. Yurtsever Kargı is also a volunteer, member and donor of many different associations such as Tema Foundation, LÖSEV, Sosyal Ben Foundation, Ecording, Yuvam Dünya, KEDV, İyilik Kazansın, Joon Crafts, Givin, Buğday Association, Satış ve İş Geliştirme Association.



MEHTAP ŞENİZ ÇAHAN

Board Member of Nazar A.Ş. and President of
TOBB Muğla Women Entrepreneurs Board

EDUCATION: Graduated from Muğla Turgut Reis High School

“Our country needs productive entrepreneur women”

As board member of Nazar A.Ş. and one of successful women entrepreneurs in Muğla now, Mehtap Şeniz Çahan started her entrepreneurial journey when she was just 17 years old. She is a hard worker with the mentality of honesty and reputation which she had received from her father, who died at an early age. At present, she continues also successfully her mission as President of TOBB Muğla Women Entrepreneurs Board. Çahan says: “Women need to be more active in business life. Our country needs more women as entrepreneur and as producer.”

As a determined, settled and courageous entrepreneur Mehtap Şeniz Çahan is one of those who embarked on an entrepreneurial journey at a very young age... Born in Muğla, Mehtap Şeniz Çahan's dream was to become a banker or an academic. Although she passed the university entrance exam, her family didn't give her the permission. The Manager of Ticaret Bank in Muğla, who was a close friend of her family at that time, offered her to work at the bank. Her father said to her: "Come, take care of my money, get involved in this business instead of taking care of other people's money" and in 1985 he opened the first grocery store of his family company, enabling his daughter to start her business life as a marketer. She was only 17 years old. With the help of her father's vision and experience, she mas-

tered the business in a short time. A year and a half after starting the business, her father passed away. It was a very difficult period. She worked with all her might by adopting the principles of honesty, hard work and reputation which she received from her father. After working as a marketer and wholesaler for 8 years, they established Nazar Unlu Mamülleri, a groundbreaking pastry business in the region, with the support of her family, where they had opened the first grocery store with great synergy and a different breakthrough in 1993.

Çahan worked hard at a very young age and together with her family, she made Nazar one of the most preferred brands in the region. Nazar Unlu Mamülleri, which set out with eight people when it was first established, became a place preferred by university



"Woman can do if she wants!"

I advise the entrepreneur candidates to love working and producing, but above all to dream. Let them not stop believing in themselves. If they have dreams, if they develop themselves in this sense, there is no end to their production. We need; our Turkey needs the production of women very much. For our female entrepreneur candidates, I recommend that they should follow a path that takes risks, while training themselves to adapt to today's conditions and keeping this aspect alive, also making a difference by following and developing technology and life, and setting goals for themselves. Because if a woman wants, she can do it!

students and its awareness began to increase, and its adventure of rapid growth began. Nazar returned to the cafe first. In 2004, a serious investment was made and it took its place on the campus of Muğla University. Continuing its service in the region where the dormitories are located in Kötekli, Nazar A.Ş. continued its progress with a wedding hall for 2.000 people and a rural wedding garden under the name of Nazar Park Garden 4 years ago. In the meantime, they opened a new place called Nazar Ogga, which served students both as a patisserie and a cafe. Nazar Bodrum affiliate was opened last year, and these days they also took their place in the new 5M Migros.

Stating that they started the journey with eight people, Mehtap Şeniz Çahan tells that they provided employment for 350 people, 50 percent of whom were women, and that she is currently working with her uncle and niece in the management of the company. Pointing out that as a company open to innovations, they train the masters in the workshop from time to time and take them to fairs, Çahan expresses that they closely follow the developments in the sector.

"There is no work without being tired"

Emphasizing that she learned from her father that trade was an important and prestigious business and it should be continuous, Çahan speaks as follows: "My father also taught me that I had to keep my promise, and that people should be clear in the trade environment and stand behind their decisions. It is good that my father directed me to such a job. I've been in this business for 35 years. I don't say that I'm tired. I know you can't do anything without getting tired. You will definitely achieve success and happiness in the work you do with love. As a daughter, I tried to do these things and brought our business to this point."

Growing by blending modernization and nostalgia

Çahan says that they are a group that has achieved great success in Muğla and provided a serious employment for Muğla since the day it was founded, and adds that they are growing every day by developing and blending modernization with nostalgia. Çahan gives the following information: "Our company, which is the representative of prestige, pleasure, quality and tradition, has become a real flavor brand that prepares the highest quality raw materials in all its products with the most original recipes and offers it to its customers in the best way. We prioritize quality and taste in what we do, and we continue to work in a structure that is open to innovation without ignoring this. Our detailed and meticulous works enable us to make a difference in our province, especially for the companies in the same sector."

Open to innovations, following developments closely, sensitive for social issues and believing that women should be more active in business life, Çahan took charge in various NGOs with the enthusiasm of producing for Muğla, while making advance in her own sector over time. Continuing her work as President of TOBB Muğla Women Entrepreneurs Board, Çahan tries to participate in many social activities as time permits, with the belief that a woman should take place wherever she can.

Muğla is the city with the lowest rate of encountering glass ceilings

Arguing that the increase in the number of women entrepreneurs in Turkey is very important for the country's economy and for the name of Turkish women to be heard in every field, Çahan says that they continue to work on this issue as TOBB Muğla Women Entrepreneurs Board. Reminding that Muğla was

selected as the first city in the Gender Equality Scorecard prepared in cooperation with TEPAV in 2020 under the leadership of TOBB and the Industrial Development Bank of Turkey and was declared the most egalitarian province, Çahan adds: "In this direction, we can say that Muğla is the city with the lowest rate of encountering glass ceilings. Setting off from this success, our board has aimed to set an example by identifying fathers and their daughters, who handed over their business to their daughters and run them together. In this context, we created a project by preparing books, video films and web pages about the stories of 63 women. This work, titled Fathers and Daughters, tells the story of 63 women who did their father's business, developed and transformed the business inherited from her father, in the province of Muğla. As the entrepreneur women of this country, we wanted the success to be visible when fathers in particular and families in general support their children without making any sexist discrimination. We aimed for this project, by which we wanted to set an example throughout Turkey, to be a compass for many fathers and daughters as a source of light and hope."

Follows Atatürk and her father Doğan Çahan as the guide

According to Çahan, the most effective factors for her success are her disciplined work while being a researcher and not giving up on what she believes in. Çahan took the greatest inspiration from her father Doğan Çahan, after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who shed light on the fact that Turkish women should always be upright and ahead. Also, following Güler Sabancı and Betül Mardin with admiration for their vision and successful stance in the business world, Çahan is the President of TOBB Muğla Women Entrepreneurs Board. At the same time, she takes place as a member of TOBB KGK - Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University (MSKU) sub-committee of Entrepreneurship Clubs Student Community Presidency and Muğla Turkish Police Force Strengthening Foundation, Muğla Vocational School Advisory Board, Muğla Sports Club, Provincial Employment and Vocational Education Board. She was awarded with the "Successful Business Women of the Year" prize in 2001 by Muğla Dünya Newspaper and the "Business Person of the Year" prize in 2020 by Muğla Hamle Newspaper. Çahan is married and has two children.



I think that working hard and producing is the first locomotive for success. Our country desperately needs entrepreneurial and producing women. I have fulfilled many dreams to date, but dreams of people are limitless. Thus, I have many more dreams that I want to realize.



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MİLKA KARAAĞAÇLI İNCE

Founder of Kismet By Milka

EDUCATION: Graduated from Business Administration at Marmara University, then studied Communication at UCLA in the USA

“We are a brand against social patterns”

Milka Karaağaçlı İnce is a creative, courageous, innovative entrepreneur who makes difference with her designs. Kısmet By Milka, the design jewelry brand founded by Karaağaçlı İnce, has become a trademark preferred by famous stars in many countries today. Karaağaçlı İnce says: “Rather than just designing pieces that appeal to the eye, we include meaningful designs that make people think and also have stories behind them. We make a difference with a gender-neutral perspective. We do not separate any product for men or women. We are a brand that opposes social patterns, which is one of the most important defining features of our line.”

Inspiring many entrepreneurs with her story, Milka Karaağaçlı İnce was born in İstanbul. She graduated from Saint Benoit French High School and then studied at Business Administration of Marmara University. After that she followed the education of Communication at UCLA in the USA. She started working in the field of communications when she was in her second year of the university and worked for two major international advertising agencies for 13.5 years. At the age of 30s, she began to question: "Am I in the right place, am I going to the right place?" She was in love with her job and she had worked without a break until then. But one day she stopped and asked herself: "Do I want to be here?", then she gave an answer that scared her too when she thought about it. No, this was not the right place she wanted to be. But she didn't want to move to another agency or start her own, because she had reached the point of saturation. Karaağaçlı İnce felt like she was standing still when she didn't learn anything new and was extremely uncomfortable with this. In such a mood, she opened the door of opportunity. She was traveling to London every week. Every time she went, she used to bring Turkish-style gifts for her close friends there. Once she bought a necklace with an evil-eye talisman as a gift on her departure. Because it had a spiritual meaning and her friend liked it very much. Every time she went to London, her friend and the other friends gave an order for it.

When Karaağaçlı İnce saw that there was so much interest in the gifts she brought, she thought: "I wonder if I should do this job?" This thinking and planning process took two full years.

She didn't quit her job yet. After two years, she said: "Okay, I'll be back and get into this job!" She found an atelier for production, and instead of buying ready-made products, she made designs and special models very different than those on the market. After leaving the agency every day during 3 weeks, she worked in the atelier in the Grand Bazaar until 12 pm. Finally, 70 pieces appeared and she took them to London and all sold out. This is how the story of Kismet By Milka began 14 years ago, as a design jewelry that made a difference while continuing to grow.

Designed necklaces for Aşk-ı Memnu series became a turning point

For Milka Karaağaçlı İnce, the dream of creating and expanding a category that did not exist in Turkey during the 2009 crisis was a difficult task... The first point of sale was Harvey Nichols and it was the first Turkish brand there. However, it was not a habit to buy jewelry from a big store in Turkey, the country of jewelers. Therefore, it was necessary to teach design jewelry and position it as a 'fashion item'. It had to be challenged and desirable in some way. And this happened with the necklaces she designed for the character of Bihter in Aşk'ı Memnu, which was the most watched TV series in Turkey at that time. Bihter's jewelry, which was followed like a fashion icon, has moved Turkey, so to speak, and Karaağaçlı İnce's jewelry has started to be talked about a lot. Thus, the perception of jewelry in Turkey began to change.

The choice of celebrities like Madonna and Beyonce

The world of Kismet by Milka, which has left

Turn away for your creativity!

Believe in yourself. Now it is the time for change and transformation. There is no such thing as a border. We need to learn. Ask for help when needed, don't hesitate. I did not do this work alone. I have a great team. Don't do something that has been done. Don't go the same way. For creativity, you have to turn away. You have to break the line. And... we have to start seeing the world as a whole. We must redress the balance. The connection between us and the nature is gradually dropping away. We need to engage in events, relationships and designs that are more meaningful and expressing us. We should pursue a style that is strengthened by expression and with a story behind it, not like fast consumption.

behind 14 years, has continued to grow and expand day by day. The brand, which has 16 stores in prestigious points including America, Canada, England, France, Switzerland, Japan, Dubai, Kuwait and Mykonos in 2023 and is located in more than 100 sales points, attracts great attention from world-famous stars. Kismet by Milka, which is preferred by world-famous names like Madonna, Beyonce, Jennifer Lopez, Cameron Diaz, Julia Roberts, Rihanna, Meghan Markle, Bella Hadid, attracts the attention of all ages with its special collections.

Karaağaçlı İnce, who has attracted attention



with her innovative and different designs, made an interesting innovation with her piercing collection as the first brand to combine piercing with gold and diamonds. Kismet By Milka has piercing studios in all its stores and has become the only Turkish brand approved by the Association of Professional Piercers.

While saying that the journey of Kismet by Milka, which she started alone, has evolved in a completely different direction, Karaağaçlı İnce has a large team of approximately 150 people and offers many successful young people the opportunity to showcase their talents under the roof of the company. Karaağaçlı İnce speaks as follows: "When I decided to do this job, I did not limit myself to certain limits and targets. I always looked beyond and dreamed about big things. I always had forward-looking goals. I don't think that brands that don't have this point of view can go beyond being just 'product'. It is very important for brands to use their power

to create a correct perception in society in line with a certain goal. I attribute the globalization of my brand to this. At this point, I can easily say that Kismet by Milka is a global brand."

"I want to inspire people and give courage"

Noting that the motto of her brand is based on the idea of "Moving Forward", Karaağaçlı İnce believes that better is always possible, and this thought keeps her motivated as an entrepreneur. Karaağaçlı İnce underlines that although she is grateful for where she is, she does not agree with the idea of "be grateful for what you are", which is at the center of Turkish culture. She adds: "This thought actually keeps people at their comfort zone. I think that a person should be aware of her situation and her luck and continue the journey of development, of



I believe that development is a never ending process. Even though I have come to an unpredictable place since my start point, one should always be open to development, learning and making progress. I never thought "I am OK; I am at the peak of what I could be; I have to stop here". Maybe that's what drives people to success; always having a desire to make progress.



course, without forgetting to be thankful. At first, I only dreamed of running my business, surviving, and the success of my business. But now I see that I can touch people's lives. I feel that I can inspire people and this is a greater responsibility for me. I want to be an example for anyone to start her life over anywhere while giving her a direction. I want to give courage. I have to admit that this is a much bigger goal than where I started off and it makes me feel better."

A brand which stands up to social patterns

Drawing attention to the fact that Kismet By Milka, which also makes a difference with its genderless point of view, does not distinguish any of its products for men or women, Karaağaçlı İnce tells that Kismet by Milka is a brand that stands up to social patterns, and that this is one of the most important determinants of its lines. Stating that they cooperated with İBBS Women's Ice Hockey Team under the motto 'Let's Break the Ice' and that they became the team sponsor, Karaağaçlı İnce says: "We always rejected the roles and targets assigned to women and men. The motto 'Let's Break the Ice' was emerged with exactly this thought. We do not believe that anything in life is linked to our gender. By this sponsorship, we aim to break the prejudices while supporting sportswomen. With this cooperation, we provide more opportunities for girls who want to follow their dreams, while contributing to highlighting a sport that is not very common in Turkey, especially among girls. In addition, we donated all the income we obtained from our cooperation with one of the biggest sports brands in the world to the Association of Supporting



Contemporary Life."

For Milka Karaağaçlı İnce, who has a very busy business life, the most meaningful hours of the day are when she gets together with her daughter Mayra and her son Mateo. Returning to her home and her children, which she calls 'my shelter' after a busy day, and the peaceful time she spends with them increases her motivation. Karaağaçlı İnce, who does not see her career life as different from her own life, usually takes her inspiration from creative people. Collette, who made a difference and created her own world by stepping out of the mainstream, was an inspiration source for Karaağaçlı İnce by her life and writings. In fact, Gigi's book and movie influenced her so much that she wants to return in one of her collections and visit that movie and period. Virgin Abloh, Chanel, Tina Turner are also names those she was very impressed by.



MİNE ÖZMEN

Founder of Hışvahan Boutique Hotel and Restaurant

EDUCATION: Graduated from Home Economics at Girls' Vocational High School and İstanbul Culinary Arts Academy

A success story from Gaziantep to the world

The biggest dream of entrepreneur Mine Özmen, who has been from Gaziantep since 7 generations of ancestors, was to present to her guests the traditional flavors that her grandmothers brought out of the dowry chest and the forgotten tastes of Gaziantep cuisine. Mine Özmen restored the 550-year-old Hışvahan, one of the oldest mansions of Gaziantep, which is also mentioned in Evliya Çelebi's Travel Book. Özmen serves 450 kinds of local dishes to the guests in her restaurant, where the modern and the traditional meet. She is proud of achieving her dreams.

Born in Gaziantep as one of the three daughters of an industrialist family devoted to her country, Mine Özmen graduated from the Girls' Vocational High School, Department of Home Economics. Growing up in a positive and supportive family environment, Özmen inherited the principle of hard work and honesty from her family. Özmen, who is married and has two children, founded an organization company called Trio in 1998 and served with events such as weddings, engagements and openings for 11 years. Her biggest hobby was antiques. She was extremely curious and attentive about decoration and table presentations due to both the education she received and the work she did. The dream of Özmen, whose greatest pleasure is to host guests, was to introduce the forgotten dishes of Gaziantep and the uniquely delicious dishes that came out of the dowry chest of the both grandmothers of her. After her son Oğuz got accepted to the Robert College, Özmen moved to İstanbul from Gaziantep. Then she started the İstanbul Culinary Arts Academy and earned the title of Chef. Meanwhile, her daughter İpek also completed her education and opened a cafe in İstanbul in 2013.

Her son Oğuz, who graduated from Koç University after the Robert College, returned to Gaziantep and became the head of the family's flour factory. He asked his mother to buy an old Antep house for him. As a result of her research, Mine Özmen bought the 165-year-old Antep house İpek Hanım Mansion and had it restored for her son. Everyone around her said to Mine Özmen "You have spent so much effort and expense, but your son will go to İstanbul", but her son didn't do it so. Mine Özmen hosted the Ma-

Prefer to say 'fortunately' rather than 'I wish'

Mine Özmen gives the following advice to young entrepreneurs: "There is no reason why those who are at the very beginning of their way should not show their skills. Trust yourself. Do what you love and always keep your energy high. Your energy will also be reflected in your work, which will enable you to make a difference in your profession at any time. One of the advice I could give as a female entrepreneur is: Definitely go to courses, make practice and watch videos... It doesn't matter whether public or private. Always improve yourself as much as you can. The support of your family, friends or even a person from your circle can bring things to a very different place and encourage you. One day, when you look back, you should prefer to say "fortunately" rather than "I wish".

yor of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, Fatma Şahin, in this mansion, which she had restored for her son. Fatma Şahin was very impressed with the evaluation of historical Antep houses and the restoration of the mansion, which is one of our forgotten values, offered to work together with Mine Özmen to bring 'Hışvahan' to light in Gaziantep.



Restored to its authentic form

Hışvahan, which is mentioned as the most famous inn of Antep in Evliya Çelebi's Travel Book and also known as Pamuk Kozası, Lala Mustafa Pasha Inn, is thought to have been built between 1563 and 1577 when Lala Mustafa Pasha was the Governor of Aleppo and Damascus. The restoration of Hışvahan, one of the oldest commercial buildings of Gaziantep, was carried out in accordance with its original form and depending on the Council of Monuments. The inn has been adapted to the present with modern touches without damaging its old identity. Hışvahan, which has a impressive decoration, was handled with a design concept that has not been seen before in the region. A rich atmosphere was created with mystical and modern details. Working with a very

talented team of experienced architects and consultants, Mine Özmen made use of the manual labor of Gaziantep crafts masters, especially on the wood and metal side of the decoration. Having two separate restaurants, 10 hotel rooms and shops, at present Hışvahan welcomes hundreds of guests from inland and abroad every day.

Works with chefs from Gaziantep

Özmen, who set out to bring the local cuisine of Gaziantep to Turkey and the world 6 years ago, created the menu of Hışvahan from local dishes which were cooked in Gaziantep's homes and she learned from family elders besides kebab. The dishes that many people said "Do not sell them at all, do not add them to the menu" have become the most preferred dishes. Özmen pays



"Although this way may seem difficult and very intricate at first, it starts to become a way full of flowers after a while. If you don't give up on your path, if you don't let anyone stop you, the end of the way will be very bright."

special attention to working with the chefs from Gaziantep, and says that there is seasonal diversity in Gaziantep cuisine and only the masters of Gaziantep know this. Mine Özmen, who presents 450 kinds of dishes made with traditional recipes to her guests, strives for the survival and promotion of Gaziantep cuisine.

"Nothing you do without love is delicious"

Stating that it is both challenging and exciting

to bring a 550-year-old historical value back to life and bring it to the tourism sector, Özmen says: "Since my childhood, I admired my mother's and grandmother's cooking. I think this is a work of heart and love. Nothing you do without love is delicious. Those long tables, those smells of food were always good memories for me. I also offer dishes inherited from my family to my guests and try to relive the beautiful memories. If I hadn't taken such an initiative before, if I had only continued this business by hosting guests, this job would probably always remain in the back of my mind. But now I can say 'fortunately'. I try to host my guests who come to Hışvahan with care in my home. There's no harm in trying."

Expressing that her goal is to open up to the world and introduce the unique tastes of Gaziantep to everyone, Özmen tells that they have a structure that constantly develops and makes records of these developments while increasing

its mechanism of action, and that they continue to grow step by step every day. Stating that they currently have 60 employees at Hışvahan and more than 200 employees as the group company, Özmen adds that they have touched the lives of approximately 1000 people with their families together.

Having started this journey with the inspiration she got of her mother, grandmother and paternal grandmother and with the great support of her family, Mine Özmen states that Gamze Cizreli, whom she always supported and was proud of with her success and determination, is also one of the names she inspired from. Özmen emphasizes that they continue their journey with a positive team that works and produces, and that they serve with the priority of smiling and respect. Underlining that they achieved a very important success in a short time, Özmen proudly says that they were deemed worthy of the special award of the Historical Cities Association in the first year they were founded, and that

they were among the top three of 500 projects in the "Best Design Spaces of the World" in the Netherlands.

"There is nothing that women want and cannot do"

Noting that despite the increase in the number of women entrepreneurs, it is not yet at the desired level, Özmen speaks as follows: "If a woman's hand touches a business, it becomes a completely different thing. The awareness of the women is much higher now. Every day, their approach to self-improvement is increasing and they are more courageous. Women are taking a more active role in business life day by day. Many projects are being developed for the employment of women, and the job opportunities that women provide for each other are also increasing. There is nothing that women want and cannot do. There is no obstacle that women cannot overcome when they show perseverance and work tirelessly. They should just trust themselves."





MÜGE CERGEL

Co-Founder of Blum Coffee House

EDUCATION: Graduated from Business Administration at Bilkent University

HANDE CERGEL

Co-Founder of Blum Coffee House

EĞİTİMİ: Graduated from Economics at Bilkent University

Passion for coffee started her enterprise stories

The biggest dream of two sisters Müge and Hande Cergel was to start their own business one day. They were both career-oriented, white-collar workers; but the day came when they decided to follow their passions. Both were coffee lovers and their greatest pleasure was to start the day with a delicious coffee. And they opened the third generation coffee shop Blum Coffee House in Akaretler with the slogan “Make your day bloom”, thinking that ‘Everyone has the right to drink fresh, high quality, delicious coffee that appeals to both the soul and the eye’.

Müge and Hande Cergel are two sisters with no age difference. They always got on very well; they were each other's best friends; they studied at the same schools including the university; their circle of friends was common, even their dreams ... The dream of both was to realize their own ventures one day. They grew up in crowded family tables, with a sharing and loving environment that increased as they shared....

Müge Cergel graduated from Business Administration at Bilkent University. After graduating, she got a job as Inspector in a private bank. She continued her banking career for 12 years. Then she decided to end her career as Country Manager in a branch of the same bank abroad and resigned. Müge Cergel's older sister, Hande, also worked in insurance and consultancy companies for many years after graduating from Bilkent University, Department of Economics. And both of them realized that this was not what they wanted after their experiences in corporate life, and they put an end to corporate life and turned their route to a completely different direction.

They have long dreamed of starting their own business. Coffee was indispensable for both of them and they could not start the day without drinking coffee. And they decided to follow in the footsteps of passion. They thought that 'family comes first' and their goal was to bring together the warmth of the family with the elegance of naturalness. Of course, after gaining experience in different sectors for many years, it was not easy to decide to start a business in a completely different sector. When establishing their own business, they thought that it was very important to get the job training and to have a good command of the work done from A to Z. For this, they successfully completed the training

Müge Cergel: "Listen to your inner voice!"

"My advice to all women who want to start their own business is to listen to your inner voice first, do what you love and dream about. Be brave and don't let other people's prejudices or negative thoughts avert the way of your dreams. Before stepping into business, research examples both in the world and in Turkey, get the job training, prepare and evaluate a business plan, analyze the opportunities and obstacles in the market and set up your business accordingly. No matter which sector you work in, it should be among your priorities to constantly improve yourself and to make education continuous. In addition, it is very important to calculate the return on investment correctly, to follow the innovations in your sector closely, and to establish a good team of people who share the same passion as you. Generate authentic and creative business ideas and don't be afraid to realize what is not there. Especially those who have a career in corporate life and want to start their own business should not expect support from their environment. No one will support them to leave their safe havens. They need to make their own decisions, take determined steps and work hard."



for brewing, barista, taste analysis etc. organized by the European Quality Coffee Association-SCAE and received their certificates. Continuously improving themselves and making use of continuous education were among their priorities. It was very difficult to find good coffee, and it was not possible to find quality flavors in many shops where they drank good coffee. While sipping a tasty coffee, they dreamed of a place which could emphasize naturalness with its design and architecture, where you could taste both healthy and delicious snacks. They determined the project and the concept in detail in this way and implemented their business ideas and started the third generation coffee shop Blum House in Akaretler 6 years ago.

While appealing to the eye, the palate and the soul with their products, the two sisters set out with the goal of becoming the favorite of those who expect more than a coffee. The two sisters offer coffees grown in various countries around the world, especially in Guatemala, Ethiopia, El Salvador, Cuba, Honduras, Mexico and Colombia, which grow the best coffee beans in the world according to their type. In addition to coffee, the teas offered at Blum consist of qualified teas from the



rarest farms of the world.

While developing new products, Cergel sisters prepared special contents consisting of healthy and additive-free foods for their guests. They buy their products in season and from reliable farmers. They offer alternative products for sugar-free, gluten-free and vegan diets. Including healthy and innovative options like Blum Carob Latte in their menu, which they make from carob extract, they do not use harmful additives such as ready-made syrup. They serve coffee to sweet lovers with their homemade dulce de leche and pistachio cream sauce alternatives.

They dreamed of a place which had a philosophy

Müge Cergel says that they aim to create a unique place with its creative design, gourmet flavors and different philosophy by offering qualified coffees and natural, additive-free and organic flavors toget-

her at Blum Coffee House. She states that after working in different sectors for many years, it is very exciting to do a job where they can use their creativity and create a brand. Cergel tells the following: "Tasting the quality coffee beans from the world's precious farms, discovering different aromas, using different brewing techniques is both very enjoyable and also tempting for us. This is a sector that is suitable for developing different products. When making healthy products, it has been among our priorities to add the sincerity of home to every drink and food we serve, while never compromising the taste of the palate and the naturalness of home-made products besides our healthy snacks. It's been 6 years since we started this business. In addition to our Turkish guests, many foreign guests visit our shop too, and meanwhile they show great interest in our brand and products."

Make your day bloom!

Cergel explains below how they gave the name of the business: "While brewing coffee, coffee blooms

during the first contact of water and coffee. This process is called 'blooming'. This stage, where bubbles form on the water, is one of the most important processes in the brewing, during which the aroma of the coffee emerges. Based on this, we chose the name of our shop as 'Blum Coffee House' and our slogan as "Make your day bloom!"

Women's handicraft products are sold

One of the most important issues for Cergel sisters is social responsibility projects. The two sisters, who send books to the village schools in need every month with a part of the revenue of Blum, establish libraries for the children in the villages in this way. Müge Cergel says: "We believe that our passion for coffee will grow with the society together and produce excellent results. We aim to deliver this social responsibility project to a much wider mass through collaborations and new partnerships. Through the business concept we created in our shop, we produce new projects with hundreds of people, while not only mediating the contribution of women to



"It is a great pleasure to realize the brand we have dreamed of and to reap the fruits of it. In the next period, we aim to grow our brand with a small but qualified expansion plan at points that will bring our brand to the right customer mass."



the economy and their household budget, but also touching the lives of these people. We encourage our women to produce by offering handmade designs, handmade products and rag dolls, specially designed textile products, healthy food products, farm products, handmade glass souvenirs to our guests."

Does not use plastic products

In terms of sustainability, Blum Coffee House is among the 'No Plastic Cutlery' and 'Plastic Straw Free' venues that support the Plastic-Free Seas Movement, in which Greenpeace is a part as well. In addition, at Blum Coffee House, wheat straw is preferred instead of plastic straws, and spoons, forks and knives made of birch wood are preferred instead of plastic cutlery. Beside these, kraft cake boxes, coffee bags and paper bags are used. Also it is one of the businesses that support 'My coffee is in the thermos' application, which encourages discounts for those who buy coffee in a thermos instead of disposable cups, which is also a sustainable life action.

"Women should be supported more"

Cergel, who states that successful women entrepreneurs are increasing day by day and this is pleasing, underlines that it is still difficult to be a woman entrepreneur. Expressing that it is necessary to create social awareness in order to change the cultural codes of women, which are defined with responsibilities such as childcare and housekeeping, Cergel adds:

"Women should be encouraged especially for the professions that are called male-specific. In order to eliminate glass ceilings, it is necessary to adopt an equal pay policy, increase women's access

to education and work on career development. The increase in women entrepreneurs is very important for the near and long-term future of the country's economy. It can be very beneficial to introduce and announce the entrepreneurial women who are successful in business life to large masses as role models, and to establish a voluntary mentoring system that includes these experienced entrepreneurs. In particular, studies can be carried out to ensure that women who produce handmade products at home receive support in digital marketing and online sales. In order to encourage the support of women entrepreneurs, the application mechanisms where business ideas can be submitted to angel investors can be popularized. The motivation of women to become entrepreneurs should be increased by extending the structures that will support women not only during the course they establish their business but also after they have established it."

Takes her inspiration from Atatürk

Müge Cergel's biggest passion after coffee is reading. Müge Cergel, who reads books every chance she gets, has been influenced by many names in her career journey, but she takes her inspiration especially from Atatürk. When faced with a challenging problem, both in her career and in her life, Atatürk's struggle for liberation and his belief in it, despite all the impossibilities, come to her mind, and she focuses on solving problems with this motivation. She is also very influenced by compilations and life stories, and takes notes for herself in the sense of life lessons. Nowadays, she is reading the compilation of Vehbi Koç's career journey. Speaking English at an advanced level, Cergel is a member of Tema Foundation, Wheat Association for Supporting Ecological Life and Greenpeace.



NARDANE KUŞÇU

Founder of Nar Eğitim ve Danışmanlık and Narköy

EDUCATION: Graduated from the School of Mersin Primary School Teachers

“The person who has no dreams doesn't have a job”

She grew up on a female-dominated farm in a male-dominated geography. In the long winter nights, fairy tales used to be told and children used to be encouraged to dream. She learned about agriculture, soil, seeds and livestock farming with her paternal grandmother in winter, and in the summer she used to sleep with her maternal grandmother in the highlands by looking at the stars at night, while discovering wild fruits and fishing in the lake. Her paternal grandmother's scattering of the seeds she took from the previous crop every year on the ground while saying “For wolf, bird, food” and her grandmother's advice “Don't be the person who makes the grass not grow” formed the basis of her philosophy of life. And years later, she wrote the most important advice of her childhood at the entrance of Narköy, where ecological farming is practiced entirely with 1200 kinds of ancestor seeds: “The Person Who Has No Dreams Doesn't Have a Job”

Born in Ceyhan district of Adana, Nardane Kuşçu was the daughter of a Yoruk family that settled down in the late Ottoman period. It was the years when the feudal structure continued and the aghas ruled the fertile Çukurova lands. However, the rulers of the farm where Nardane Kuşçu was born were women. She spent her childhood on the farm managed by her grandmother. Long family tables were set where guests were not missing. In the evenings, it was a kind of habit to tell fairy tales and to look at the stars and the moon. Also the children were included in the conversations, asked about their dreams and encouraged to dream. In these evenings, she learned how valuable it was to tell and listen...

Her paternal grandmother was very strong; she could understand the language of the soil. They had thousands of acres of land and cotton was cultivated intensively. Every year, her grandmother used to throw the seed she had taken from the previous crop into the ground, while saying "Let it be for the wolf, for the bird, for the food". They were mixing the seeds of watermelon, cowpea and okra into the cotton, and continuity was essential.

In the summer, they used to go to the highlands. Her paternal grandmother could not come together because she had a lot of work. This time the task would be taken over by her maternal grandmother. The grandmother taught them the language of nature. They were wandering in the forest and fishing in the lake. They were discovering the wild fruits and learning how to find water. They used to carry water from the spring, collect cranberries from the highland and make winter marmalades. There were built compost toilets. The next year, if the grass wasn't growing where they had gone the year before, they would realize that something was wrong with their behavior. Then her grandmother used to say: "Don't be the person who makes the grass not grow where she steps on; this is disrespect to nature".

She completed her primary and secondary education in Ceyhan. Her life passed between the school, the village,

the shop where her father sold tractors and their parts, the city library and the highlands. Sakıp Sabancı and Yaşar Kemal were close family friends. Nardane Kuşçu and her family moved to Mersin after secondary school. Here she got the right to study at the School of Mersin Primary School Teachers and graduated in 1972. Her greatest chance was to be trained by teachers who graduated from the Village Institute. After the school, she worked as a teacher in a mountain village in the Taurus Mountains, of which the road was blocked for 6 months in winter time, and once again she learned how valuable it is to live in harmony with the nature.

The dream she wrote in the notebook her daughter gave her as a gift...

Nardane Kuşçu moved to İstanbul in 1974 due to the marriage. Her son Ozan was born in 1975 and her daughter Beste was born in 1984. She has always tried to create opportunities for her children and students to live in harmony with the nature. But there was something in the city life that bothered her. She thought that living disconnected from the nature caused a kind of loss of self-confidence and self-esteem, and that wrong urbanization and the fact that even school gardens began to become concrete made people distance themselves from the mother earth. Near her retirement, she wrote a dream in the notebook that her daughter Beste gave her on her birthday: "I will establish a plantation of education and organic farming."

After retiring, she first founded NAR NLP in 2002. This was a sole proprietorship. The subject of the company was training and consultancy. In 2005, they became the Limited Company of Nar Eğitim ve Danışmanlık Merkezi, including her son Ozan, her daughter-in-law Ebru, her daughter Beste and her husband Ahmet. And one day she shared her dream of establishing an education and organic farm with her family... Everyone was very excited about it... Now this dream belonged to all of them.

It took more than a year for Kuşçu to find the right land for the facility she dreamed of. She was looking for a place 'close enough to be reached, far enough to be natural' and her goal was to be 'a bridge'. In 2007, she finally found the land she looked for in Kocaeli-Kandıra. As first work, she restored the derelict farmhouse in 100-acre estate. She started to work by planting the ancestral seeds she had accumulated with the organic farming method she had seen from her paternal grandmother, in a small field. Then she laid the foundations for the project. She estab-

lished a farm with an ecologically sustainable hotel with a minimum carbon footprint and where 80 percent of the products offered to guests were grown in Narköy.

Kuşçu, who grew up in a family where it was encouraged to dream, wrote at the entrance of Narköy that she founded: "The person who has no dreams doesn't have a job." Currently, with over 1.200 ancestral seeds and organic agriculture made from these seeds, horses, cattle and small cattle, bees and countless kinds of plants, the greatest deal of Narköy has completely natural heating and cooling, while serving as an organic agricultural farm and ecological hotel. In the system they constructed buildings by a team in which her daughter Beste also took part as an architect. These buildings were not constructed on concrete foundations and even if removed, the buildings would allow the nature to be restored after 6 months. Also most of the waste is re-evaluated within the boundaries of the farm with the principles of 'permaculture'. The water footprint is very important in Narköy. Rain water is collected. No chemicals are used and the garbage is not removed. This is converted into compost. And this

Seed bank of 1200 ancestral seeds of Nar Anne

Nardane Kuşçu, also known by her nickname 'Nar Anne', was so impressed by the words "Americans will confiscate our seeds and take our food", which she heard from her surroundings in the years when America launched the Marshall Aid Plan after the Second World War, that she started to collect and save her grandmother's seeds when she was only 6 years old. And these very precious seeds, which have been accumulated and transformed over the years, are now preserved in the seed bank in Narköy. Some of the approximately 1200 kinds of ancestral seeds meet the soil and their seeds are collected again. The collected seeds are stored in a room with a temperature of 14 degrees and a humidity of 50 percent. Nardane Kuşçu says: "Access to food is the right of every living thing, there should be a seed bank in every home."



compost is used for planting. As the education-oriented sustainable tourism center and organic agriculture farm of the Nar Eğitim ve Danışmanlık Merkezi, Narköy lives and serves with the logic of a modern farm and hotel. Offering 14 rooms, family and group accommodation units, a restaurant where organic farm meals are cooked, indoor and outdoor classrooms, an organic farm, forest and the surprises of nature, in Narköy are also held various trainings, lots of activities and workshops.

"We are in the valley mentioned in Anabasis Return of the Tens of Thousands"

Nardane Kuşçu does not believe that a life disconnected from nature is possible. She says that they paid attention to the communication with the ecosystem when establishing Narköy, and tells the following: "We are in the valley mentioned in Xenophon's Anabasis Return of the Tens of Thousands book, which I read when I was 16 and still look back on. Our aim was to create a bridge between the right brain and the left brain, like the pineal gland. Kandıra, where we are now, is a complete bridge geographically. Our differences are that we preserve the natural vegetation, the children of the nature called wild plants. We deci-

de what to plant here by looking at them. For example, if we see wild mustard and radish, we plant cruciferous and cabbage varieties."

"In Narköy, the lights look down to see the stars"

Pointing out that providing learning by modeling the nature is one of the most important sustainable education methods, Kuşçu speaks as follows: "Yes, we are at the place we dreamed of, and brand new dreams are formed from every place we come from. Each new generation is creating new dreams by adding their own light and mission. Intergenerational communication and learning are the basis of sustainability. I myself learn a lot from young people and also children. When I am confused, I consult the children. If we want to establish a sustainable and ecological system today, it is very important to understand the system in nature and even to observe it by living. For example, in Narköy, the lights look down. You ask why? To see the stars!"

"Justice, love, freedom are indispensable!"

Arguing that some indispensable values lie at the heart of entrepreneurship, Kuşçu emphasizes that her indispen-



"My grandmother taught me the strategies of insanity, I used it. At the age of 13, I liked to try different things, and whenever I wanted to try something like this, they would say "No". When I told this situation to my grandmother, she said to me: "Oh my daughter, give your name to the madman, give your back to the bush and go on your way!" I have always followed this strategy."



sable values are justice, love and freedom. Noting that they are an institution that exports education abroad and implements the social and circular economy like Narköy, which makes a difference in the logistics of education, Kuşçu states that they do their business by protecting the rights of future generations and they work with institutions, families, schools and universities together. Adding that they are also a TATUTA farm and they host many volunteers from Turkey and the world, Kuşçu says: "The young people of our villages mostly went to university and returned to their villages and started to work. Women's labor began to become more visible. Our friends who worked with us made their own dreams and became entrepreneurs by using what they learned here."

"Female entrepreneurs are a lot, but few of them are visible"

Arguing that there are more women entrepreneurs in Turkey than the visible ones, Nardane Kuşçu says: "If I give an example from my close circle; farming in Kandira is mostly done by women. They sell the products they produce, the tomato paste, jam, pickle, bread, handicrafts etc. at the roadside market. However, you can't see any female farmers other than me at the meetings of the Chamber of Agriculture. I make a serious effort to make the value of women's labor visible. Female farming and small family farming feeds 78% of the world. Ancestral seeds are also collected and reproduced by women in the world. There are a lot of women entrepreneurs, but few of them are visible. Women cannot do monoculture farming because they have different priorities. First, they want to feed their families, their villages, and in time of war, their children at the front. They take seeds from what they plant and make their paste, jam etc."

Expressing that the institutions such as KAGİDER are doing very meaningful works in order to support women's entrepreneurship in Turkey, Kuşçu advises the young ent-

repreneur candidates: "Young people refresh my hope. My recommendation; they should dream, increase their curiosity, exploration and trial courage. Atatürk meant these when he said "The future is in the skies". Female entrepreneur candidates should follow KAGİDER, they do a lot of training there in this sense. In addition, they should get to know other women entrepreneurs."

Yaşar Kemal and Sakıp Sabancı inspired me

Nardane Kuşçu, who is very fond of reading and learning, has witnessed long conversations with her paternal and maternal grandmothers, her first teacher Mualla Erdem, who shaped her philosophy of life and her teachings, and her first teacher Mualla Erdem, as well as 'Sakıp Emmi' Sakıp Sabancı, whom she witnessed during long conversations at her father's shop and at family dinners and the master Yaşar Kemal became the names she was most influenced by in her career journey. Xenophon's Anabasis Return of Tens of Thousands, which she read when she was only 16 years old and then read it over and over again, and Hikmet Birand's Conversations with Hawthorn Tree, Prof. Esat Muhlis Oksal's Our Forests and Park Trees, The First Women in Our Press in Events and Professions in the Republican Era compiled by Orhan Topçuoğlu and Tülin Topçuoğlu and the Speech were the books she inspired by in her personal journey.

Some of the prizes received by Nardane Kuşçu, who has been awarded many awards for her works, are as follows: Contribution award of TEDx Youth organization, Kocaeli Journalism and Broadcasting Inc. Climax 2020 Special Jury Award, Gülnar 100th Year Scientific Activities Mother Earth Award, KAGİDER Turkey's Woman Social Entrepreneur award, Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality Education Projects support plaque, Özkan Mert Environment Honor award, İstanbul Kültür University Entrepreneurship award, İstanbul-Etiler Rotary Club Support award, TEV Award, Yves Rocher Woman of the Land award.



NESLİHAN KILIÇ HACIALIOĞLU

Founder of BloominBag

EDUCATION: Business Administration at Bilkent University

Story of an enterprise that brings spirit to business bags

Neslihan Kılıç Hacıoğlu, who thought that the black and masculine bags carried by stylish women working in the plazas did not suit them at all, put the idea of producing stylish, colorful and feminine laptop bags in her mind when she was still a white-collar employee. The breaking point for Neslihan Kılıç Hacıoğlu was the unfortunate illness that her mother got caught. She did not return to the corporate life which she left suddenly on a Wednesday. After the loss of her mother, she first retreated into her shell, then broke out of it as freed from her ambitions, and started her own entrepreneurial story.

Neslihan Kılıç Hacıoğlu was born in Ankara as the second child of a modest family. Her father was a bureaucrat, a politician and a businessman, and her mother was a housewife. Kılıç Hacıoğlu, who studied Business Administration at Bilkent University, was very idealistic due to both her education and her character. As soon as she graduated, she wanted to start business life in a large corporate company in Istanbul, in order to be very successful and to get higher positions in a short time.

When she graduated from the university, she began to work in a corporate company in Istanbul in line with her goal. She worked for corporate companies in the fields of banking, sales-marketing, finance and brand management for about 10 years. Although the corporate life experience contributed a lot to Kılıç Hacıoğlu, she realized that this was not the world she dreamed of and wanted to advance in. But she didn't know what to do, how to leave this world and what to do after leaving. On the one hand, she did not want to betray her dreams, but on the other hand, she had to find the courage in herself to carry her dreams even further. She stuck between these two thoughts.

Caught between the excitement of the business idea and the emotionlessness of the plaza world

Something caught attention of Neslihan Kılıç Hacıoğlu. She thought that the women working in the plazas take great care of their elegance, but the black and masculine laptop bags they carry with them when they go out of the office to the meeting did not suit them at all. She searched a lot for a feminine laptop bag for herself, but she couldn't find it. Then she had it brought from abroad. In Turkey, where



there are so many textiles, fashion and stylish working women, she saw this deficiency and started to think that it would be a great business idea. In this way, she made up her mind, but did not yet bring it to the business model level. The excitement of this business idea and the emotionlessness of the plaza world had already gripped her and she was waiting for a breaking point to take action.

That breaking point came on a Wednesday when Kılıç Hacıoğlu was in the office after receiving a phone call. It was the family doctor who called. The doctor said that she came across some symptoms during her mother's routine check-up about which more detailed examinations should be done. Right that day, she took 2 days off for Thursday and Friday, went to Ankara to her mother and could not return to work anymore. The bad illness that her mother got caught, its treatment, the surgery and the recovery processes after; it seemed to

become better but then everything turned back to the beginning. So, she lived 2 years of difficult times which changed her life, and unfortunately she lost her mother after this process.

The journey of entrepreneurship started with blogging

After this tiring, abrasive period in which she questioned life many times, she was freed from her ambitions and retreated into her shell. She wanted to do something, without going out in public, which would be useful for people. She started blogging as a hobby, and the blog quickly turned from e-commerce into a business where she described and sold organic, natural products. Thus she began

the journey of entrepreneurship. After a period, the e-commerce site where she sold organic products seemed to be insufficient for Kılıç Hacıoğlu. She wanted to do the production of a product which she sold and vouched for everything. And so it was time to put the idea of producing happy, stylish and eco-friendly bags into the practice as a business idea in the plaza world to turn it into a business model.

It attracted a lot of attention in a short time

Neslihan Kılıç Hacıoğlu founded BloominBag in 2016. At first step, she wanted to start the business by producing only few products due to both

Recommendations from Neslihan Kılıç Hacıoğlu to entrepreneur candidates:

I would like to say to the young people who are at the beginning of their way: Entrepreneurship is as difficult as creating an oasis in a desert, but it is also a sublime service that adds added-value to the person, the environment and the whole. Good achievements require effort, patience and hard work. Let them not take the job lightly by taking the easy way out, or even think of becoming an entrepreneur to work less, earn more money and lead an easier life. However, they should start this way, if they work harder than anyone else, take more risks than anyone else, do stress management at the highest level when necessary,

and always follow a determined path with high motivation. And they should have the viewpoint to find a solution to each problem without giving up. When I have to explain entrepreneurship in one sentence; I always say that it is the ability to find solutions to problems. Thus, there will be always problems. As the business owner, it is your responsibility to solve the problem. Therefore, you don't have the luxury of saying things like I don't know/I don't understand it; even if you don't know, you will learn or at least have enough ideas to do with those who know it. The second issue after knowledge is motivation. It is very difficult to stay motivated all the time, but the result is very simple: Those who can be motivated continue their work; those who cannot do it have to terminate it. The choice is yours...



the lack of capital and lack of knowledge about the sector. However, finding out that it is not possible to produce high quality with a small number of products, the business suddenly turned into a mass business with multiple pieces. When her first collection of 1000 pieces was produced, she had no point to sell them except the e-commerce site. But shortly after the launch, the products were highly appreciated. It started to be in demand from many large retail stores and online sales marketplaces in Turkey. The brand currently has a sales volume of thousands of pieces every year at many large and small sales places of brands and markets.

BloominBag became a game changer in the sector

Telling the story of the birth of the brand, Kılıç Hacıoğlu says: "BloominBag has become a game changer in the sector that produces only black and masculine bags, ignoring the needs of women who are actively digitalizing in business and now in school, social life and all areas of life. Especially with Covid period, the digitalization increased rapidly all

over the world and will never go back. Working life in this world has turned into a hybrid model that we had never heard of before, the dress codes changed, and we have entered a more free and digital era by stretching many strict rules with the Z generation. The success of BloominBag stems from being the first brand to see this need and come onto the market."

There are tens of women she got inspired

Kılıç Hacıoğlu, who says that they have touched about 45-50 people in the structure she established today, states that they work at a very intense pace, because a meticulous operation is required in many areas of the business such as design, production, logistics, finance and human resources, social media, online- and offline sales channel management. Kılıç Hacıoğlu adds that she met and talked to many people due to work, and that there are tens of women among these people whose success, discipline and determination she was inspired by. Saying that "Being present in organizations such as KAGİDER, Arya, İTO, TurkishWin, and YenidenBiz, where these women come together, opens our horizons and vision and allows our work to reach larger masses", Kılıç Hacıoğlu tells that she got inspired by the biography of the successful opera singer Leyla Gencer, in the book "I am Leyla Gencer- La Diva Turca". Kılıç Hacıoğlu listens also to the inspiring entrepreneurship podcasts whenever she gets the chance.

Emphasizing that it is very difficult to be an entrepreneur in Turkey, Kılıç Hacıoğlu speaks as follows: "The economic crisis of the whole world and of Turkey, the recession created by a terrible and long-lasting pandemic like Covid, and the high costs and expenses before are big barriers for an

entrepreneur. The rate of women entrepreneurs in Turkey is around 13 percent. Despite the extensive efforts of KAGIDER, which was established 20 years ago to increase the power of women entrepreneurs, this rate is not at a sufficient or good level unfortunately. Many women, who had to take a break from their business life, especially due to childbirth, cannot continue their business life from where they left off. Bringing these women, who have a certain experience and knowledge, into the economy is very valuable in terms of gaining their own economic freedom, first of all for themselves and then for many other women. For this reason, special incentives and advantages should be provided, women should be encouraged on the path



of entrepreneurship and new opportunities should be offered in cases such as trainings, venture capital, collective sales etc."

Advising women not to choose entrepreneurship if they think that they would lead an easier life, Kiliç Hacıoğlu says: "They should not choose it when they think that they would be able to spend more time with their children or family, to earn higher incomes in a short term, or for other advantageous aspects. Because the entrepreneurship can be done with a lot of effort, working day and night, with a great motivation to overcome big difficulties without familial life. And that's exactly why it's a way women can be so successful by persevering."

Kiliç Hacıoğlu speaks advanced English and intermediate German. She won many awards about entrepreneurship from the organizations that support entrepreneurial women such as KAGIDER and Arya Women.



Our generation witnessed the emergence of entrepreneurship, which bridged the gap between small businesses and the corporate world. We discovered the rules of entrepreneurship through trial and error. The current generation, on the other hand, has access to the user manuals we created, and with the ease of accessing information and rapid global integration, they are constantly building upon these manuals day by day. I am confident that they will achieve great success at a rapid pace, thanks to their exponential development.



PINAR AYHAN

Co-Founder at Phase Interiors
& Development

EĞİTİMİ: Department of French Language
Teaching at Hasan Ali Yücel Faculty of Education
of Istanbul University. Then she studied Design at
Los Angeles Valley College.

FEYZA ÖNAY

Co-Founder at Phase Interiors
& Development

EĞİTİMİ: Sports Academy at Kocaeli
University and Business Administration
at Anadolu University. Then she studied
Sustainability and Design at Santa Monica
College in Los Angeles.

Her goal: To be one of the most famous architecture firms in Los Angeles

Pınar Ayhan and Feyza Önay are two Turkish women entrepreneurs whose paths crossed in Los Angeles, thousands of kilometers away from Turkey. At a very young age, they adopted the principle of overcoming the difficulties, struggling and not giving up and then created their own luck in America, so to say in the land of opportunities. Both of them received training in the field of architecture and design and gained experience. Then they started their own architecture firm in Los Angeles, where the world's most expensive houses are located. The goal of Ayhan and Önay, who took on big projects in a short time, is to be one of the most famous architecture firms in Los Angeles.

While staying in the same room during the preparatory camp of Curling National Team, Pinar Ayhan and Feyza Öney began to build first their friendship and then their common story of the entrepreneurship. They had a lot in common; they were both diagnosed with dyslexia, a type of learning disability. For this reason, they adopted the principle of working by writing. They had been trained in different fields, but they liked to try new things and to row against the tide. Both had a fighting spirit and had unlimited dreams. They combined their dreams and decided to fly together.

Pinar Ayhan, who has been living in Los Angeles for 12 years, graduated from Istanbul University, Department of French Language Teaching. Being the daughter of a civil servant father, Ayhan was always a very social student throughout her school life. She participated in folklore groups in primary school, took part in dance group, marching band and table tennis team in secondary school. She played guitar and cross flute in high school, sang in the school group. She was always interested in sports, played volleyball, and joined the paragliding club in the college. She played ice hockey and curling. She founded women's and men's teams of ice hockey and curling at Istanbul University and managed these teams for a while. Despite being so versatile, she never sought financial support from her family. She either chose the clubs she was in for free or earned her own money by giving private lessons. She was a child diagnosed with dyslexia, a type of learning disability, despite her social strength. But she never gave up. After the college, she turned her route to America. She studied Design at Los Angeles Valley College and worked in many kinds of jobs during her 12 years of life in America, from babysitting to

weekend teacher, from food delivery to tour guide. Finding reasons to love everything she did and the environment she is in, Ayhan entered the architectural sales sector 7 years ago when she started working for a Turkish natural stone company. Connected with love to her job, Ayhan made use of better offers and worked in 4 different companies during this time.

Feyza Öney, who graduated from Kocaeli University Sports Academy and Anadolu University Business Administration Department, had a very important heart disease in the summer when she had just finished the first class of the primary school. She went through an intensive treatment process. After this time, her family tried to make her move as little as possible to follow her heart rhythms. Being away from sports and movement at a very young age made Öney very sad, and on the contrary, she became passionate about sports in her later years. She played volleyball and basketball against all the prohibitions. Her illness relapsed when she was in secondary school. Her passion for sports was growing. Just like her business partner Pinar Ayhan, she also had a diagnosis of dyslexia. But she never gave up. After fully recovered, she prepared for the sports academy exams and won the academy. In this period, she took part in the curling and ice hockey teams of Kocaeli University and participated in the inter-university winter games in Erzurum. She also took part in the folklore team of Kocaeli University and participated in the competitions in European cities. She acted as a referee in important rallies of Turkish Automobile Sports Federation, including the World Rally Championship. After graduating from the school, she attended many courses in Europe, America and also in online platforms in the fields of fitness, pilates,

Advice from Ayhan and Önay to young entrepreneurs

As two partners, we have had to struggle our whole lives with one of the learning difficulties, dyslexia. This trouble, which affected all our education and business life, was like an effort to swim in a constantly rough sea. We can say to anyone who has a desire for success: "Never lose your self-confidence." If productive and creative generations can be raised who know themselves, have a strong inner voice, know what they want, create ways to be happy with what they do, and can turn the ways what they are happy with into their hobbies and work, these people will have no excuses for failure. Failure is an illusion built on excuses. If you are constantly failing, if you cannot achieve the success you want, you may be in the wrong place. Before using external factors as

an excuse, you should ask yourself, 'Do I enjoy doing what I am doing now?' The things we enjoy learning about are the aspects that make us who we are and that we can improve. Development and learning continue until our last breath. By identifying internal motivations, you should focus on the areas you enjoy doing. Do not listen to any voice other than your inner voice. Do not miss the chance when you have the opportunity to do research and observe and experience the areas you want to go on. There will always be some difficulties, there will be those who want to discourage you, those who do not believe you, those who do not hear you, those who want to influence your decisions, and those who believe that they know you better than you and want to change your decision. It is very important that you can distinguish between your own voice and these voices.

yoga, leadership and personal development and received international trainings. After working as a sports trainer and coach in Turkey for a while, she turned her route to America in 2015. Taking courses of Sustainability and Design at Santa Monica College in Los Angeles, Önay's passion for personal development and wellness pushed her to learn new things. Önay, who has initiatives in finance, real estate and home design, has her own housing company that offers short-term accommodation services since 6 years. Önay, who also designs the

interiors of the places where she provides these services, has two other companies she manages together in sister sectors, one of which is Pinar Ayhan, and two other partners.

The acquaintance of Pinar Ayhan and Feyza Önay began in 2010 when they stayed in the same room during the National Team Curling camp. As one of these two women both successful curling players, Feyza Önay was living in Turkey at that time. Over the years, their friendship evolved into a companionship. With Önay's moving to America,



they decided to bring together the education and knowledge they had gained in the field of design, which they had a common interest in, under one roof and they established Phase Interiors & Development company.

Although they established the company in January 2022, they had a rigorous preparation process beforehand. At the moment, there are 3 big projects they are working on. Ayhan and Önay, on their way as Interior Architects, while making use of the opportunities and needs which they came across, expanded their business in a wider area by taking steps in the issues about the regional and overseas procurement of materials needed by a construction, including furniture, and about obtaining the construction permits and forming contacts with practitioners. Ayhan and Önay cooperate with A+ quality manufacturers who can export overseas from Turkey as well as local manufacturers, and collect the manufacturers they may need in every field of construction within a system. For the development part of the company, they included another friend of theirs whom they trust for the experience. Phase Interiors & Development is



now growing with its own capital and the company, with a team of 17 people in Turkey, has many stakeholders with whom it works on a project basis.

Ayhan and Önay, who supplied the natural stone for businessperson Adnan Şen's project in Beverly Hills, are currently working on a mansion project of 3 thousand square meters. The project is planned to be put up for sale for \$80 million at the beginning of 2023. Their work sites are on the Beverly Hills, Bel Air and Hollywood Hills areas. Throughout the state of California, Ayhan and Önay have nearly 300 residential projects they follow in the region and nearly 400 architecture and construction companies they work with. Ayhan and Önay have traveled from street to street in 7 years, expressing their desire to be involved in any project they found. They regularly collected the information of the projects in Google Map system they created and laid the foundations of the company they own today. They are currently working with Turkey's leading glass producers, stone quarries, kitchen, bathroom furniture and building materials manufacturers. Being also in talks with big Turkish companies, they say: "Our aim is to bring the A++ construction

products imported from Europe to America, from Turkey and to ensure that Turkey takes place in the market. Most of our team is in Turkey and we want to work with Turkish companies."

Their goal is to become one of the most famous architecture firms in Los Angeles

Stating that she never thought she would do her own business in the construction sector during the first 6 years of her career, Ayhan tells that this field was a male-dominated sector in the USA, so the processes of being accepted and proving herself were difficult. Ayhan speaks as follows: "I can explain the story of turning the idea into my own business as 'the right time, the right place and the right people'. I was included in the interior architects whatsapp group in Turkey, from there I met the architects who would later form our team in Turkey. I shared my idea of starting a business in the architecture and construction sector with Feyza. Based on the management and organizational success, stress management, determination and stability of the companies that Feyza had already established and managed, I offered to set out on this way with her together. It was great to see her excited about the idea. If we ask 'Are we at the point we wanted to be?', we are far ahead of what we had imagined, considering our founding date. Where we want to be is to become the most famous, best architecture and construction firm in the city of Los Angeles. Reminding that the world's well-known architectural firms are our competitors, we certainly have a long way to go."

Saying that she decided to become an entrepreneur after meeting with the marketing vision of America, Feyza Öney tells: "The idea of working in a single field for a lifetime seems unfair to me and

for my potential. That's why I've always been tempted to do research on new areas of interest which I was not a professional in. Pinar's realization of the architectural needs of Los Angeles houses, which I already know about its real estate market, and our work on this matter created the PHASE."

"Doing your job well is an indicator of the personality"

Pinar Ayhan, who has a 3-year-old daughter and spends all the time outside of her work with her family, is grateful to everyone who crossed paths with her on her career journey. Ayhan expresses "Everyone, including my likes and dislikes, has left instructive traces in my life. Everything and everyone I came across made me who I am. My family, my teachers, my colleagues, my principals, my business partners, my clients, they are all the architects of my life. I hope everyone realizes the architects of their own life." Years ago, while still sitting at school desks, the advice one of her teachers to her friend, who was ashamed because his father was a cleaner, formed the basis of Ayhan's philosophy of life. Ayhan tells the following: "Our teacher told my friend: 'Every profession is born out of necessity. Never stop dreaming. Your dreams evolve. When the life takes you where you need to be, not where you want to be; enjoying where you are and what you are doing, doing the best in what you do, doing it with love will make you special and strong, it will make you shine. Whatever you do in your life, do your best. This is not a necessity of your job, this is an indicator of your personality.' And since that day, I carried this saying in the deepest part of my heart. And my perspective on life changed." In addition, the advices given to her by her teachers Dr. Bülent Bayraktar, Dr. Resa Aydın and Dr. Adnan Kamar

were effective in determining Ayhan's route and finding the light within her by herself.

Who knows more; a person who reads a lot or travels a lot?

Feyza Öney's parents are at the forefront of the names that left a mark on her career. On the debate "Who knows more, a person who reads a lot or travels a lot?", her mother gave the answer "Who reads a lot" and her father gave the answer "Who travels a lot". And their answers created today; Öney read a lot and travelled a lot. Robert Kiyosaki's Rich Dad Poor Dad; Michael A. Singer's Four Agreements, Free Spirit; Daniel Kahneman's Thinking Fast and Slow; Tony Robbins' all books; the authors and the books such as Dr. Joe Dispenza, Azra Kohen, Sinan Canan, Lewis Homes changed Öney's perspective about the life.



The two partners draw attention to the fact that the world order goes under a rapid change and transformation and it has reached a point that cannot be ignored with regard to the need for women and they speak as follows: "Although freedom could not be fully achieved in the next 10 years, we believe that the gap between the genders will decrease worldwide due to the increase of awareness in the countries where access to the information is free. Women entrepreneurs like to work with women, we know this from ourselves. We are aware of the power and abilities of women. We think of a company as a tree. Every woman who is appreciated will become stronger and touch other women, empower them, support them, and make them grow. While our branches and roots are growing, we think that at some point male-dominated communities, governments and male-dominated world will give up this war and this unnecessary effort."



"Although the equality maybe cannot fully achieved in the next 10 years, we believe that the gap between them will decrease with the increase of awareness in the world and in countries where access to information is free. Women entrepreneurs love to work with women and we know this from ourselves. We are aware of the power and abilities of women. We consider a company as a tree. Every woman who is appreciated will become stronger and touch other women, empower them, support them, and make them grow as they grow too. As our branches and roots grow, we are of the opinion that at some point, male-dominated communities, administrations and male-dominated world will give up this unnecessary effort and war."



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REYHAN MİRAY REYHAN

Founder of Peddon

EDUCATION: Graduated from Banking and Finance at Başkent University

“All I wish for woman is to heal first her own, then the nature”

Reyhan Miray Reyhan, who thought that the underwear she developed while looking for a solution to the bed sores caused by her father's illness would be a sustainable solution for the menstrual period that women regularly experience every month, produced Turkey's first washable menstrual panties with the Peddon brand. Telling that a sanitary pad is destroyed in 25 years in nature, Reyhan Miray Reyhan adds: “I hope we can improve some things with Peddon. All I want is for a woman to heal first her own and then the nature.”

Born in İzmir as one of the two daughters of a family, Reyhan Miray Reyhan studied Banking and Finance at Başkent University, despite the objections of her elder sister Şenay Reyhan, who was a banker at that time and is now a philosophy teacher and children's book author. She admired her elder sister and wanted to follow in her footsteps, while her elder sister thought that it would be more appropriate for Reyhan Miray Reyhan to deal with more creative jobs instead of banking, and actually she was right at this thought. After the college, Reyhan started her first career as a tax consultant at a PwC auditing and consulting firm. She worked in the fields of finance and sales-marketing in corporate companies in the following periods. Each of these provided her a very good competence and experience in establishing her own brand and she was always proud of herself for being able to benefit from what life offered her.

Reyhan Miray Reyhan's family was living in İzmir while she was in İstanbul. Her father Hayri Reyhan and mother Nurcan Reyhan always told her how important it was to live alone as a woman and cope with difficulties and they were always supportive during her lonely life in İstanbul. While raising her and her elder sister, their parents taught them to distinguish between right and wrong, to be at peace and side by side with the truth, to be conscientious, loving and respectful individuals. And these teachings from her family made Reyhan a woman who always created free decisions in life, who could stand firmly behind her decisions and made her family feel this pride.

In 2017, the course of Reyhan's life completely changed. Her father had been diagnosed with dementia. Despite all the opposition of her mother and sister saying "You should follow your ideals", she returned to İzmir. Her father's illness was getting

worse... And during this period, she tried on the underwear she developed while looking for a solution to the bed sores occurred on her father's body and developed Peddon products as a sustainable solution to the menstrual period that women experience regularly every month. At the very beginning of the way, when everything was still in the idea stage, she applied for a patent. She wanted to share her idea with everyone, but was afraid that it might be stolen. She thought it would protect her until she had enough money to manufacture the product. Finally, she would say: "I'm glad I did it that way."

Sold her car, made capital

She developed the product during the period of lockdown with the pandemic and took the support of several factories to put it into the final form. There was an occasion of taking investment, but she could not agree. She had no capital except her car, which she bought with her compensation when she left the last workplace. There was no choice, she got out of the house, went to the car dealership on the main street, sold her car and called on her current manufacturer to say: "Now, we start!"

Producing Turkey's first washable menstrual panties, Reyhan set up the website on March 13, 2021 and sold the products on the website for about a year. But she always knew that wouldn't be enough. Later, the sales went on at online marketplaces such as Trendyol, Hepsiburada, Rossmann, Watsons, Macro Center and Gratis, and she made exports to 6 countries, including the USA and Canada, despite the short period of 2 years since its establishment.

Stating that "I owe being an entrepreneur to my father's life, that's why I dedicate all my achievements to him; now he must be watching and feeling it from somewhere", Reyhan Miray Reyhan says that both

Listen to your inner voice!

My advice to entrepreneur candidates who are just at the beginning of their way is as follows: First of all, they should not forget that everything good or bad in life is a 'Truth' that wants to tell them something and they should definitely pay attention to these words of life; a wonderful story will emerge from there. If their inner voice is telling something, let them deepen with that voice; it is very valuable to be able to hear that voice! And they should never forget that they always have a lot of time to succeed, but it is necessary to make good use of that time. If we want something, the universe will work hard to make it happen. It would be enough, when we know how to accept whatever we encounter on the way with love and give up at the right place and time and continue on the way. If we want, we will definitely reach it, otherwise the universe would never show us that way.



the users and the company and also the production capacity are growing day by day. Telling that they did not receive any investment in this period and that the company is its own investor, Reyhan adds: "We continue to be a pioneer in the market with new product development and new ideas every day."

1 sanitary pad disappears in nature in 25 years

Noting that they have developed an eco-friendly, sustainable product, Reyhan points out that 1 sanitary

pad disappears in nature in 25 years and that this extinction process causes serious damage to the digestive systems of living creatures. Reyhan speaks as follows: "We reduced the waste of 1.600 sanitary pads by each Peddon. In the coming period, we will come to the forefront with this aspect. We women, almost every month, bring plastic-containing hygienic products containing many chemicals into contact with our skin, and we hardly talk about the harm of these. It is thought whether all these have an effect on gynecological diseases, which have increased in the last 100 years, when a process as natural as menstruation goes through like this. I hope we can manage to improve things with Peddon. All I want is for a woman to be able to heal herself first and then the nature."

Emphasizes the matters of equality and individuality

Expressing that as Peddon, they are trying to draw attention to the issue of equality and being an individual, especially in this era when violence against women is widely spoken about, Reyhan continues her words as follows: "As a woman entrepreneur, finding solutions to our own problems and the existence of

a man's life story behind it is one of the biggest differences today. At a time when women are so exposed to discrimination, I see it as a goal for the future every step we take to become an entrepreneur individual, to be able to benefit people and our world as a role model instead of dividing ourselves, and to make this sustainable. If you protect your core self, your comfort zone enough and work with people who appreciate and respect you first, there is no difficulty that cannot be overcome if you protect this respect. I see that women are becoming more conscious now and this gives me hope. Being present in all areas of life is the most important indicator of this. For this reason, we will meet many successful women who can take a more active role in eliminating that discrimination and break their chains in coming years. We can still observe the rates of participation in the economy today that many global company managers are already composed of women..."

Inspired by her father

Reyhan Miray Reyhan got her career inspiration by



My dreams are growing and renewing every day. I include a new one instead of every new dream I could have achieved. I have a story that I hold tight and we have users who are growing every day, with whom I can live this story together. This is my biggest motivation. In fact, sometimes there was something I couldn't even imagine. I believed and set out on this path and the rest of the universe stood by me with all its might.

her father Hayri Reyhan whose unfortunate illness was a reason for starting her venture, her mother Nurcan and elder sister Şenay Reyhan, and her 11-year-old son Demir. As a person very fond of reading, Paulo Coelho's book 'The Alchemist' was the book that influenced Reyhan Miray Reyhan the most in her career journey. Reyhan buys 3-5 copies of the Alchemist and gives them as gifts to her acquaintances. Her idol is Sara Blakely, the founder of the Spanx brand. She is a close follower of Blakely, whom she sees as a role model of female entrepreneurs.

Saying that "As long as you are yourself, there will be no difference between being a male or female entrepreneur; let's appreciate the value of being an individual and a human and see this as equality at every opportunity and continue our lives like this; because we are the only one!", Reyhan has been entitled to receive TexhXtile 2021 Women Entrepreneur Special Award and Scale Up First Prize, KAGIDER and YuvamDünya 'Green Business Mention Award' 2022 and Startup Centrum Pitch Challenge İzmir 1st Place 2022 award.



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SEDEF BUDAK

Founder of Secret Power and Project Development Director at Smart Holding

EDUCATION: Graduated from Tourism and Hotel Management at Bilkent University

Realized the firsts in renewable energy

While she had a brilliant career in textile industry, when everyone was watching the sunset in Bozcaada she went for a holiday, she was impressed by the wind turbines she saw up close for the first time and knocked on the door of the power plant. Sedef Budak, who came out of the door of the power plant with a new business idea in her mind, became the woman who broke new ground in the renewable energy sector with the brand she founded after long research. Also carrying out important works with her expertise in gender equality and women's employment in the sector, Sedef Budak continues to contribute to the development of the holding and the sector as the Project Development Director at Smart Holding.

Born in İzmir as the first child of a family sensitive to nature and animals, Sedef Budak immigrated to İstanbul from İzmir when she was still a baby due to her family's job. Her mother, who is a business administration graduate, and her father, who is a textile engineering graduate, were a couple who always worked, supported each other and set an example for their children in this sense. Having a younger sister, Sedef Budak had a happy childhood. She was a curious and interested child and her biggest dream at that time was to become an orchestra conductor. There were only 3 female conductors in those years. She started primary school at the age of 6 and university at the age of 17. She started the education in Tourism and Hotel Management at Bilkent University and enjoyed studying at the university due to her interest in world history and geography. She wanted to be a tour guide and travel around the world, but after taking English, German, business and economics classes at school, she started to lean towards the idea that she could deal with business like her father or become a manager like her mother too.

She was a young girl who loved art, music, nature, animals, adventure and adrenaline. Throughout her university life, she took part in the school radio and at the clubs of poetry, theatre, cinema, aviation and mountaineering. She did paragliding and she learned how to ride a motorcycle. She experienced both standing on her own feet and making friends with people from different geographies and cultures in another city far from her family. Ankara was frozen in her memory as an orderly and decent city where she left with pretty memories.

Although returning from Ankara to İstanbul was a bit sad, she filled this gap with Rotaract

membership, the young branch of Rotary International. In İstanbul, she made friends from different cities who lived there for college education. She experienced the beauty of the civil society movement and the satisfaction of being 'us', not me, and was actively involved in this club for 7 years.

After graduation, she started looking for a job. At first she wanted to work as a tour guide. But she realized that the famous tour guides were older men. Realizing that job and salary offers from tourism agencies would not satisfy her emotionally and financially, she found a job with her foreign language in the textile/fashion industry, which was the brightest sector of the 2000s. In her business life, which she started at the age of 21, she worked in 5 different companies with upward momentum until 2007, while gradually experiencing textiles, international trade and global purchasing management. She was ambitious but not aggressive, always seeking her right.

Then she went to England. She worked in a textile office in London for 1 year during the day, and attended the business English courses at night and the purchasing-specialization courses of a good university. She experienced the dynamics of the fashion industry on-site. At the end of a year, she returned to İstanbul to continue her career with the thought "everyone is a 'king' in his own country".

After returning to Turkey, she worked for 3 years in İstanbul office of the world's largest retail chain and managed the acquisitions in Egypt at that time. There, she had the opportunity to learn business from role model managers in a female-dominated working environment. She saw how to work with foreign culture.



Advice from Budak to entrepreneur candidates...

My advice to young women and men; they should internalize that everyone is an equal individual for the transition to a just and equal order necessary for our country and our world, while detaching themselves from familial and social compulsions and norms. Let them seek their rights, share their problems, tell the mistakes of male bosses, not compromise their values, and become members of women's associations and NGOs.

The entrepreneurial spirit in her took action

After long shifts and stressful work environment at a young age, the idea of self-employment began to blossom. It was summer 2007. When she went to watch the sunset in Bozcaada on vacation for the first time, she was very impressed by the wind turbines. While people were watching the sunset, the investigative spirit in her was led her to knock on the door of the administrative building of the wind power plant and to see SCADA for the first time in her life. She already made her decision when she returned to İstanbul. She was going to do something about "Wind Turbines" and she told this idea to her family. After that, she began with a long research and learning process ... Considering that creating a new brand under the family com-

pany, instead of starting her own business from scratch, was less risky for the moment, she took her first step into the energy sector with the Secret Power brand. In this period, the patience, support and faith of her family further shed light on her path.

She is the first to bring Chinese manufacturers of wind turbine to the Turkish market

Sedef Budak officially stepped into the renewable energy sector in 2008 by reaching Far Eastern turbine manufacturers through the connections of textile sector while obtaining sales distributorship from wind and solar equipment suppliers. In 2008-2012, she gave bids for wind turbines, solar panels, inverters, hydroelectric turbines, coal and gas turbines from China, entered machinery

and turnkey tenders and acted as an intermediary. As the first person who brought Chinese manufacturers of the wind turbines to the Turkish market, she realized that the main gap in the sector was on the "technical consultancy" side and contacted European companies during the ongoing process. She provided consultancy for foreign investors and equipment providers on investment opportunities for the manufacturers of wind turbine blades, generators and solar modules. At the beginning of 2012, she became the Turkey representative of an Italian independent technical consultancy firm. Thanks to the technical experience of the Italians and Budak's strong and reliable communication, they started to work with the banks and investors.

After 10 years of technical consultancy experience as Country Manager, the Italians decided to withdraw from Turkey in 2022 and left by shaking hands. In her 14-year entrepreneurial career, Budak had the opportunity to serve a power plant worth 3 billion USD. All this administrative and technical experience led her to a new adventure. She evaluated the job offer from Smart Holding, which has activities in Bulgaria, Romania, Greece and Switzerland, especially in Turkey, which she knows and admires from the sector, and started to work as Project Development Director. Budak says: "I think that not only being a successful and reliable business person, but also being one of the activist leaders of the sector played a big part in this offer." Budak will contribute to the development of the Holding and the sector as an entrepreneur with extensive knowledge on renewable energy investments, decarbonisation, gender equality and women's employment in the sector.

Established the industry's largest equality and women's communication network

Sedef Budak has also carried out works that will make an impact with the TWRE Renewable Energy and Women's Network in the Energy Sector movement, which is the equality and women's communication movement network in the energy sector that she started in 2018. With this platform, as an example of a social enterprise, more than 1700 women, who do not know each other in the sector and cannot benefit from their expertise, came together and formed a strong synergy. There were born first friendships and then collaborations within the group.

As a boss/entrepreneur woman in her new position, where she had the opportunity to realize the projects on fully integrated domestic production, decarbonisation, sustainable cities and their needs, quality education and inclusion in solar energy sector; she believes that women in corporate life will set an example in breaking glass ceilings. Stating that she had many managers under the glass ceiling in the first years of her business life, and that she met more ageism and sexism in the energy sector, Budak adds: "Because I started my own business at a young age, I struggled for a long time with the problems of not being taken seriously by men and questioning my education and competence. I overcame these by educating myself, embracing my work and working."

Pointing out that women are not sufficiently represented in business life in Turkey, Budak speaks as follows: "Business associations and women's NGOs are carrying out very good work on this issue. In recent years, they take place on the press with the awards given by different foun-

dations and organizations, and they are trying to reach women from east to west of Turkey. I think the biggest responsibility for increasing the power of "women" falls upon the governments. Unless women increase in politics, parliament and decision-making, Turkey's level of prosperity cannot rise. Like in Europe, I see Turkish women in ministries and government administration. As long as the gender- and patriarchal habits and prejudices from the past do not change, women's contribution to the economy will always be limited."

All the women who touched her life left a mark

All the women Budak contacted, subordinates, superiors and worked with left a mark in her life. Telling that "An experience that felt bad at the moment, came back to me as wisdom with my perceptions and the place it gained in my value scale",



No matter what she does, the woman has an understanding and constructive position that brings the parties together, produces solutions, with her inclusive, mediator and detailed attitude. Thanks to this role of women, I think that large energy investments and investor companies will move to the higher levels. We have many women working on clean energy and directing the sector, and when we look at it again, the people who are most affected by the climate crisis are women. In a matter that affects women so much, it cannot be as natural as the decision maker and practitioners being women.

Budak read personal development books such as Secret and Mirror with admiration and curiosity. Mostly reading the statements of global women politicians who make decisions about the struggle against the climate crisis nowadays, she also makes different readings on the subject while taking an active role in NGOs. Budak, who is a manager and member in associations and organizations such as TWRE, YEYKAD, TÜREB, CIGRE, DURED, was awarded the Solaristanbul Most Influential Women's Movement award in 2022. Budak speaks English on a native level.





AYŞE SERPİL BAŞAY

Co-founder of Renkhane

EDUCATION: Graduated from Business Administration at Marmara University

SEMRA ÖZALAYBEY

Co-founder of Renkhane

EDUCATION: Graduated from Psychology at İstanbul University

A colorful enterprise story: Renkhane

Renkhane, which was established by Ayşe Serpil Başay and Semra Özalaybey in order to support women's economic empowerment, to create a platform where women entrepreneurs can exhibit and sell their products, learn from each other and support each other, has become a platform for the entrepreneur women to meet, who earn their living by hand labor.

Ayşe Serpil Başay and Semra Özalaybey are two entrepreneur women who have worked in corporate life for many years and gained experience in different fields. The two partners, who set out to support women's entrepreneurial goals and to establish a platform where they can grow together, bring different products of women entrepreneurs to consumers in Renkhane.

Ayşe Serpil Başay, one of the founding partners of Renkhane, was born in Safranbolu as one of the two daughters of an idealist father and a mother whose life was just her family. She grew up in an egalitarian environment where there was no discrimination between men and women. Her father raised his daughters with the approach of being self-confident, self-reliant, productive individuals who pay back by working and producing the opportunities given to them by the country. He taught his daughters to win by merit and not be afraid to stand up for what is right. Due to her father's job, Başay spent her education life collecting memories in many cities from every region such as Balıkesir, Muş and Lüleburgaz. Başay, who studied at Marmara University- Faculty of Business Administration in İstanbul, immediately started her business life after the college. As her first job in Çukurova Dış Ticaret A.Ş., she gained serious experience in the field of export in the first period of Turkey's free economy. Later, she became the head of the export operations at Eti Group of Companies and she retired in 2008 after working for many years.

Başay could not spare enough time for her social life due to her busy work life and was very fond of art, ceramics, mosaic and painting. While working, she always thought: "If I had studied ceramics, could I have been an artist like Jale Yılmazbaşar?" After retiring in 2008, the first thing to do was to look for the answer to this question. She started to receive training on ce-

ramics and mosaics, improved herself and saw that it was possible. Especially the mosaic works gave Başay great pleasure and she took delight in decorating the walls of people she did not know.

Semra Özalaybey, the other partner of Renkhane, was born as one of the two children of a family from Malatya. She was the daughter of parents who loved to read. While Semra Özalaybey was studying in high school, her father graduated from university. After graduating from İstanbul University- Department of Psychology, Özalaybey started her own business with the support of her father and opened a kindergarten as a psychologist. This was a field where she could see children and family members together and easily examine their personality analysis. This experience provided her with great experience in corporate life in the following years. Özalaybey's first corporate experience after her own work was with Star TV, in time of the opening of private TV channels. She wanted to be involved in these works, which were the first in Turkey. Özalaybey later served as HBB General Manager and MMC Group President, and founded Medyasel, a company that provided the services about media buying and advertising to many important companies in the sector, in 2004. Özalaybey, in whose life human relations always had a very important place, decided to create their own brand with her close friend Ayşe Serpil Başay.

The common starting point of the two close friends was to understand what they could do with small capital. They realized that they were more excited to start operating in the production and e-commerce sector after Covid-19, and they established Renkhane by focusing on benefiting from the opportunities. Renkhane has two fields of activity. The first is the production of dermatological and cosmetic products. They produce dermatological and cosmetic products under the brand of ozoniferous Fixderm-Ozonblue.

Never give up!

When we look to the future, we can see women everywhere. Everything is possible once you believe in! Especially with what the technology, social media and the internet bring to our lives, women can act faster, more freely, equipped and courageously in economic fields. Trying, being curious, building the right partnerships and not giving up were the most important things we learned in the journey of starting a business. We advise other women entrepreneurs to do their work with love and curiosity and never give up. It is very important to balance work life and private life. Teamwork, trusting your colleague, sharing their knowledge with each other... Let them be curious, not afraid to try something and work hard.

Export and domestic market studies have been going on for a year. The second field of activity is Renkhane.com e-commerce site. Here, they reach out to women living all over Anatolia who want to contribute to the home economy with their manual labor at home, and mediate their products to reach the consumers.

The goal: Increasing the number of women entrepreneurs to 1000

Ayşe Serpil Başay says that as two women, they set out for a formation that would provide social responsibility and benefit, in which they both earn and also include productive women in the system, and adds:



"We are not afraid to try different ideas. We try to explain our ideas and intentions very clearly. We do not consider any person or institution as a competitor. As people who always believe in teamwork in these works we do, we enjoy working together with pleasure. Currently, we do not demand any earnings up to the first 5 thousand TL from our women who sell on the site. Among our goals is to organize trainings and to benefit their personal and commercial development. For this purpose, we support women entrepreneurs in many fields from cosmetics to textiles on the Renkhane page." Noting that there are women producers from all over Turkey and that they are collaborating with 140 women entrepreneurs on renkhane.com, Başay underlines that their goal is to increase this number to 1000.

Semra Özalaybey says that after her corporate life experience such as Star and HBB, she is very pleased to work with women while making a difference in the work they do, and to be able to grow together by le-

arning from women. Özalaybey gives the following information: "Today, we live what we imagine in the works we do based on our experiences. We aim to expand our business life with people-oriented works. Our priority in these businesses, which we have established after the corporate life, is to work without limiting our private life too much, by devoting time to our hobbies and travels. The life flows so fast. Every moment should be spent fully and productively. It is said that there are many years during young ages, but at our age it is better understood that every moment is very precious."

The name Ayşe Serpil Başay most influenced by in her career journey was Mine Ergen at Çukurova Dış Tic. A.Ş. She was who taught her every stage of export, work discipline and meticulousness, how to manage time correctly, crisis management and also problem solving. Doğan Cüceloğlu, Bilge Has and Bülent Öztürkmen had a great influence on Semra Özalaybey's business life and outlook on life. In addition, the biggest goal of the two women is to be able to get age by working and producing like Betül Mardin, whom they admire so much.

Stating that the number of women entrepreneurs in Turkey is far behind the world's countries, Ayşe Serpil Başay adds: "We all know that countries cannot progress in real terms without increasing female entrepreneurial power and adding qualifications and technological equipment to this power. For this reason, starting with ourselves, SMEs, civil society, private sector and relevant government institutions each need to fulfill their respective duties and responsibilities in the support mechanism. We are trying to contribute to this process as much as we can with our effort to create a platform where especially women learn from each other and strengthen each other."

Başay and Özalaybey guide the social responsibility and awareness projects of many companies by supporting them. In cooperation with JCI, they held the International Corporate Social Responsibility Award Competition, which was held with the ceramic works of the Association of the Disabled, in which nearly 300 companies and institutions participated. The founders of Renkhane, who also support the education of female students, each are mother of a daughter and speak English.



When we look at the women entrepreneurs we work with and produce under Renkhane, we see that our women are very strong. We are a community that is very open to learning from and supporting each other. And although the process may be difficult, this environment of support has great benefits.





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SEVİM YENİCİ ÖZ

Vice President of the Board of Directors at Lidya Group

EDUCATION: She studied at Bletchley College and then at LSE. Currently, she is busy with her master's degree in A.I. (Artificial Intelligence), Digitalization Psychology and Economics at London School of Economics and Political Science.

A success story from Turkey to the world

Sevim Yenici Öz founded Lidya Group which operates in the field of digital printing with her husband, after making a radical decision in 2001, one of the most difficult economic years in Turkey, while combining the risk and the right moves she made that day, and she turned this into an entrepreneurial story which opened up to the world. Lidya Group, after becoming the leader of the digital printing sector in Turkey and the EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa) region in a short time, established the Digital Experience and Training Base, the first and only center in its region in 2022. Continuing its rapid growth also abroad, the Group plans to invest 15 million pounds in the next 5 years in the facility established in the UK. During the next 5 years, it aims to reach a turnover of 100 million pounds by serving the UK and EU countries.

Born in İstanbul, Sevim Yenici Öz studied Economics and Politics in London. She was a child with a never-ending curiosity to learn, spending time in front of the encyclopedia while her peers were playing in the parks. Reading the thick-volume encyclopedias at home was her greatest pastime. This curiosity led to her to make progress earlier and being noticed in her schools. Yenici Öz believes that education should be lifelong and her love of learning never ends. She is busy to get a master's degree at the London School of Economics and Political Science in A.I. (Artificial Intelligence), Digitalization Psychology and Economics. Yenici Öz attaches great importance to her personal development as well as academic education. Having received trainings in presentation techniques, voice, breathing, diction education, creative writing and finance from many different universities, Yenici Öz's biggest dream is to write a book in which she would tell her memories to future generations and to give lectures at the university to share her experiences with young people.

When she graduated from the university, Sevim Yenici Öz's dream was to advance her career by working in international companies, primarily in England, America and Europe. But love changed all the plans. She decided to get married in 1998 when she was just graduated, and returned to Turkey. She started her job in an international company, being responsible for overseas customers. Her husband, Bekir Öz, was working at Xerox Turkey. With the encouragement of the Belgian general manager, they established their own company Lidya Bilişim in 2001. In the year of big crisis in 2001, they took a big risk and put their business idea in the field



of digital printing into practice.

A success story which born in crisis

Despite being founded in a year when the economic crisis was very severe, Lidya Group grew rapidly with the right strategy and today it has become the leader of the digital printing sector in Turkey and the EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa). Lidya Group represents the global brands Xerox, Epson, Efi, Kongsberg and its own brand Sutec digital printing machines. The Digital Experience and Training Base, which Lidya Group established in Başakşehir in May 2022, started to provide digital experience and training base services to the 9 billion dollar market. They invested over 50 million TL in the facility in Başakşehir, which is the first and only one in Turkey

and in the EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa) region.

Target is to reach a turnover of 100 million pounds in the UK and EU markets

After Lydia Group established it in United Kingdom, Lydia Digital Ltd opened its doors in London in June 2022. It is planned to invest 15 million pounds in the facility in the next 5 years. Lydia Group aims to reach a turnover of 100 million pounds by serving the UK and EU countries during the next 5 years. In the company of Lydia

Digital Ltd in UK, many works such as office, outdoor advertising, digital photography, business cards, brochures, vehicle dressing, building dressing, stand construction are carried out.

Expressing that the company has always prioritized human resources during the growth and development periods of the company since 22 years, Yenici Öz says: "Geographically, we are in an emotional region. No matter what you sell or serve, we Turks have a structure that protects, supports and emotionally affects each other traditionally. That's why human resources have

Advice from Sevim Yenici Öz to entrepreneur candidates:

I never gave up, I never threw in the towel. If some things discourage people, they lead to a kind of negativity. For this reason, focus on seeing the light in everything that cross your path, when evaluating it from another angle and trying to find the direction which would provide benefits. You will see that with this point of view, you will make progress very quickly. At the same time, you need to make plan for the present and the future without getting stuck in the past. Planning is the beginning of everything. In both private and business life, nothing happens without a good plan. It is necessary to use data for planning. If we turn all kinds of data we have into a plan, we can measure and evaluate ourselves, and this will bring us success in the work we do.



always been our first priority. We have friends with whom we have been working for many years and with whom we have been together since the beginning of this journey. After Covid, we further strengthened the human resources department. At the moment, we are working with over 70 high-level professional friends."

"I am happy to be a woman power in this sector"

Yenici Öz, who believes that every day is a great start to learn something new and add something new to oneself and communicates with her teams in this way, says that although she did not dream of working in digital printing sector, which is a male-dominated sector in many countries around the world including Turkey and the United States, she is very happy to be in this sector and to be a woman power in it. Sevim Yenici Öz speaks as follows: "I fictionalized and wrote my story. Of course, it cannot be exactly the same. Frankly, while I was dreaming of starting my entrepreneurial life, my story was ready. And I had a really nice partner, my dear husband Bekir Öz, Chairman of the Board of Lidya Group. Step by step, knot by knot, we achieved everything we aimed at in Turkey. Then our targets were Europe. We made a breakthrough in this area since the last 4 years and now we are in England."

Stating that the printing industry is around 800 billion dollars in the world and it is around 9 billion dollars in our country, Yenici Öz says: "As Lidya Group, we successfully manage the Xerox, Epson, Efi, Sutech and Kongsberg brands which we represent in the digital printing machinery sector. We love our job and we do it very well. By always standing by our customers, we provide

technology consultancy and project financing, and we have a solution-oriented approach in our after-sales service, where we are very strong. We are proud of growing our customers and our sector by providing project financing of more than 120 million dollars to our customers, as the first and only one in our country. As Lidya Group, we are the leading company of our country and the EMEA region with the brands we represent, and thanks to our knowledge, experience, organizational structure and financial strength, and we aim to grow by 2 times on dollar basis in 2023. Along with our additional investments, our Lydia Digital Ltd facility in the UK and our Digital Experience and Training Base located in Başakşehir will play a major role in this growth. As Lidya Group, we are successfully advancing towards our goals to become a global company in the digital printing sector, and we have declared 2023 as the year of growth also globally."

Emphasizing that they have been providing project finance to Turkey and to the sector for about 18 years, Yenici Öz adds: "We have pioneered the growth of the market in the digital printing sector by providing approximately 120 million dollars of project finance to our customers since 2004, and we continue to do this. We see our customers as our business partners and we provide project finance for them. We supported and continue to support them as much as possible. We enable our customers to access financing in easier and more favorable terms due to our more flexible criteria than their banks. When providing project financing, we evaluate the ability of the company to do business. When the customer plans an investment, we also analyze what the impact might be on his/her income,



Of course, I have encountered glass ceilings. I am someone who always tries to find the positive side of any situation, and even if I can't find it right away, I take a moment to reflect and come back to the same issue a few days later, determined to find a positive aspect. When I saw a glass ceiling, I took off my shoes, if necessary, and even cleaned the glass to turn it into a more magnificent ceiling, and I continued on my path.

productivity, turnover and profitability."

She attaches great importance to strong familial ties

Family is very important for Sevim Yenici Öz. Growing up in a loving family, Yenici Öz is raising also her 3 children in such a family environment. Outside her business, she spends the rest of her time with her family and follows some cultural and artistic activities. Yenici Öz, who also loves sports and did licensed gymnastics for 9 years in her youth, also played basketball, water polo and volleyball in her young ages, and still rides horses. Sevim Yenici Öz's deep devotion to education and sports was because of her mother and father. Having received the ability for photography with different perspectives from her father Kerim Yenici, one of the first photographers in Turkey, Yenici Öz dotes on the first camera



which her father bought in 1958 by working and saving money. Her mother Zekiye Yenici, who was a stylist, and her aunt Ms. Güler had a great influence on the development of her aesthetic pleasure. Strong family ties are very important for Yenici Öz and she raises her children with this awareness. Sevim Yenici Öz, who started to write books for the next generations of her family and continues her studies on this subject, speaks English well. She provides financial and moral support to institutions established for education, while actively contributing to children's reading especially.



SEZEN SUNGUR SARAL

Founder of Reeder

EDUCATION: Graduated from International Trade at Boğaziçi University

A real amazon who established the first domestic factory of mobile technology in Turkey

She is an amazon woman and an entrepreneur who created a technology brand from scratch in Turkey and established Turkey's first domestic factory of mobile technology. The Reeder brand, founded by Sezen Sungur Saral, who introduced the 'e-book reader' to Turkey for the first time in 2010, when there was not even a touch screen yet, has become a company with a wide range of products today from mobile phones to tablets, from wearable technology to smart home appliances. As Turkey's largest domestic smartphone manufacturer, Sungur Saral says: "We have gone beyond our dreams. Now our main goal is to create a global technology brand from Turkey."

Born and raised in İzmir, Sezen Sungur Saral graduated from International Trade Department at Boğaziçi University in 2005 with a 'High Honor' degree. Soon after, she started her business life at CNR Holding, Turkey's largest fair company. Sungur Saral worked in the international sales and marketing departments and rose to the position of Deputy General Manager from Sales Representative in 8 years. She had the opportunity to visit fairs organized around the world in every sector from cosmetics to industry, from food to textile and to meet with small and medium-sized companies that opened stands there. Sungur Saral, who did not even know about the word 'entrepreneur' when she graduated from the university, saw how small companies were fighting with the world giants in this period at CNR Holding and was encouraged by the desire of production and trade which she always had at heart.

The entrepreneurial fuse that surrounded her soul was ignited by the idea of an e-book, which she saw on a business trip and was very excited about. The e-book, which was released in the USA in 2009, got her very excited, because it was a new technology that Turkey did not have yet. Somehow she let someone bring an e-book reader from abroad. She thought that the device was a revolutionary invention and decided that this device should definitely be introduced to individuals in Turkey. Once when she went to China for business, she took an additional two days off from her workplace and went to Taiwan, where she had the e-book reader brought, and asked that company for distributorship. She made an agreement with the manufacturer, to whom she went without any connection before. She had in



“Search after the knowledge!”

Trust yourself. Search after the knowledge relentlessly without stopping, and build your own identity in the light of knowledge as the only real power, without east-west-north-south. The way to reach big dreams is paved with small developments and lots of falls day by day. Although there is no direct discrimination, women who develop technology may be subjected to prejudices. When we look at the women working in the technology sector that would realize the digital

transformation, most of them work in areas such as administrative duties or sales-marketing. All over the world, there are cultural norms that build a glass ceiling between women and business. However, once a woman surpasses them, she is distinguished by her emotional intelligence and her ability to do many things at the same time rightly. Therefore, what I can say for women entrepreneurs is: They should focus only on their goals, never paying attention to criticism.

mind to be the first person to introduce this invention in Turkey. She would do something useful to the society. The year was 2010 and there were no tablets or smartphones at that time. She had neither her own company nor money. She sold her car and took a loan. With the support of her husband, she founded the Reeder, which introduced the 'e-book reader' to Turkey for the first time. Since there was no market for this business in those years, the product was produced only in small quantities. She asked the general directorate of a large electronic chain to sell her products: "You are a strong institution. I found this and brought. Please support me" and the other party accepted this offer and placed an order for 300 units. She did this job by investing back the money she earned in a single electronic chain for about six months. Later, the devices evolved into tablets and Sungur Saral also turned to that direction.

Sungur Saral, who correctly identified the transformation from book to tablet in the world with the right move, brought the first 3G Android tablet to Turkey in 2012 and carried out her first retail campaign with Turkcell. As the first and only technology investment of the Black Sea Region, where no mobile technology investment had been made before, she founded the company in Samsun, a city with a seaport, two universities and a technology park. It was the tablet, phone and smart products factory with a production capacity of 600 units per year, thanks to the strategic partnership she made with China in 2018. Sungur Saral now aims to increase the capacity of the factory to a production capacity of 9 million units per year by increasing the capacity of the factory at least three times with the effect of the areas leased at Samsun University and the know-how to be created by the new R&D Software Center.



At Reeder, our annual production capacity is approximately 1 million units on the basis of telephones and approximately 2 million units in other technology products at the moment. As Reeder Technology, we employ 433 employees and we aim to increase this number to 500 in 2023.

In the journey that started with the e-book, Sungur Saral transformed Reeder into a rapidly growing, dynamic company that produces a wide range of products from mobile phones to tablets, from wearable technology to smart

home appliances, and became Turkey's largest domestic smartphone manufacturer. Sungur Saral tells: "In short, we have been beyond our dreams. Now our main goal is to create a global technology brand from Turkey."

Expressing that for the first time in Turkey they started to produce smart watch for children in the wearable technologies category and infrared non-contact thermometer products, of which the usage area expanded during the pandemic period, Sungur Saral adds: "We are happy to contribute to the economic development of our country with domestic production of all mobile products including tablet computers, smart phones, watches, medical technologies and smart home applications."

Stating that "Our goal is to be one of the biggest technology companies in Turkey in do-

mestic production", Sungur Saral says that in 2021 they opened their first store in Samsun, where their factory is located, and increased this number to 77 stores in 52 cities in a short time with the opportunities and approach of being a domestic manufacturer. Sungur Saral adds that they continue to open ReeDükkanlar with the target of 100 stores.

Female employee rate: 53 percent

Emphasizing that they want to be an employer where women would like to work, not only in Turkey but also in the international rankings, and that they have a female employee rate of 53 percent, Sezen Sungur Saral speaks as follows: "As Reeder, we are working with the General Directorate of Vocational and Technical Education at Ministry of National Education, in order to contribute to the development of female students in the field of software and technology and we put our 'The Girls Coding' project in cooperation with the General Directorate into practice. I believe that there is nothing women cannot achieve when they want to do. For this reason, we will be happy if we can contribute to young girls who dream, wonder, research, try, work and learn, with 'The Girls Coding' project. We have also shaped the content of the project according to their needs and demands. We have prepared a 360-degree intensive program for them, from coding, software and programming trainings they will receive with the STEAM approach, to applied workshops, from the participation documents they will need in their career journey, to the internship program and the Reeder software development and design competition. We believe that at the end of the program, thousands of Maker girls will make

us and themselves be proud, and maybe even introduce our country abroad successfully. This is one of my biggest dreams right now."

Literature lover

Reading is a passion for Sezen Sungur Saral as being an avid reader of literature. Sungur Saral read many Russian and world classics and enjoys reading the books of authors like Orhan Pamuk, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Oğuz Atay, Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath. Ayn Rand is one of the authors who influenced her most with her works. Mazars Denge CEO & Corporate Sustainability Ambassador İzel Levi Coşkun's book 'From Continuity to Sustainability-A Corporate Sustainability Journey' has been the book that influenced her the most and shed light on her work in sustainability transformation. After reading this book, she reshaped her management philosophy.

A success story crowned with awards

Sezen Sungur Saral, one of the 10 women selected for the Global Entrepreneur Women Leaders program of the American Consulting firm EY in 2016, was selected as the winner of 2018 in the Women Entrepreneur of Turkey competition organized by Garanti Bank with the support of KAGİDER and Economist Magazine, and received the grand prize. Sungur Saral was selected as the "Woman Entrepreneur of the Year" in Turkey part of the Entrepreneur of the Year competition organized by EY in 2019, and she was entitled to receive the Harvard Business School-Owner President Management (OPM) training in 2022 and received her certificate by completing the program. She is a member of the Board of Directors of KAGİDER and speaks English.



SEZİN GÜLER YÜZ

Founder of HFB (HealtyFoodBreak)

EDUCATION: Graduated from Industrial Engineering at Middle East Technical University

Revealed the superhero inside her

Sezin Güleryüz is a lucky entrepreneur who has been working in corporate life for years and has turned her hobby into a business by following her passion for cooking. Her passion for good life, which started with preparing healthy recipes on her social media account in her spare time, made her start the journey to design her own products and establish her brand. “I wanted to be the superhero of my own life” says Güleryüz, who founded the HFB brand, which consists of different product groups such as eco-friendly, recyclable and clean-filled cloth bags, cloth pouches, herbal dry brushes, tongue scrapers and tableware.

■ ■ Sezin Güleryüz's life began to change when these questions began to haunt her "What is my real self-realized interest? What am I doing while not counting the hours? What do I want to do to change more people's lives? How can I improve myself to do what I'm excited about?" While she was a successful Industrial Engineer in corporate life, she dared to follow her dreams and started her entrepreneurial story in a brand new way. Born in Ankara, Sezin Güleryüz grew up believing in the power of sea, sun, plants and nature in Marmaris, where they moved when she was two years old. She studied Molecular Biology and Genetics for 1 year and then Industrial Engineering at Middle East Technical University and came to Istanbul in 2009.

During 10 years in corporate life, she spent more than 40 thousand hours specializing in marketing in world-renowned international companies and taking on the role of "product and brand manager" for dozens of different products. Güleryüz's biggest hobby was watching cooking shows, trying new recipes, reading books on healthy eating and watching documentaries on this subject in her spare time. As soon as she came home from work, she found herself in the kitchen. As she spent time in the kitchen, her desire to share increased, and in 2016, while her corporate life continued, the social media account @HealthyFoodBreak which she opened to share easy recipes and healthy life tips that were good for her on social media, reached a large number of followers in a short time. After a while, her hobby gradually started to take up a larger area of her life, and she ended her corporate career in 2019 by "making a huge frenzy" and received Professional Cooking Training at the Culinary Arts Academy.



Established her own brand with her passion for the good life

At that time Sezin Güleryüz had her son Atlas in her arms and continued to share recipes on social media while raising her child. She worked as a professional consultant and content producer for brands. She became both the cook and the content creator of the TV show "Sezin'le Yemek Arası", and her first cookbook "Rainbow Recipes" was published in 2020. But it wasn't enough. The engineer and brand manager in her was always whispering in her ear that "You should have products which you design/you should have your own brand". And her passion for the good life finally led her to design her own products. This is how the research, development and production process of HFB (HealthyFoodBreak) branded products, whi-

Advices from Sezin Güleryüz to candidate entrepreneurs:

Discover your superpower and create brand new additional jobs around your hobbies and interests. Believe in yourself. Work hard to learn and to be different, take your time, don't give up soon. Make use of the power of digital. Improve yourself in this regard, research and follow the examples abroad very well. Have a story of your brand, service or products. Storytelling is very important. Do not start as an amateur when starting out, and make approach to the design of each step professionally as if you were a big company or a big brand. Be equipped. Get inspired, constantly improve

yourself and take your time. Start with small steps, set a regular 15 minutes for yourself every day. Do not fall into fears, question marks and hesitations to set off after the moment you feel ready. Take off now. Yes, right away! Even with just one small step. Indeed, the "Way" is visible to those who already set out. And be as sustainable as possible with your venture. Show respect both humanity and the planet we live on. The future is in such initiatives. Know every detail, be within 100 percent of each stage and have fun. Otherwise, it won't be different from any other corporate job.

ch took more than 2 years, began. With the HFB brand, she introduced her products to the consumers in 2022.

Biggest motivation: Freedom

As someone with a corporate background, the biggest motivation that pushed Sezin Güleryüz to first become a content producer and then a product designer and brand owner was the need for freedom. It was her biggest dream to manage a professional business in her own free space without the rules of the corporate world such as approval and revision. Güleryüz says: "The birth and development of HealthyFoodBreak has been a very enjoyable journey that I have learned by experience and that I wanted to enjoy and share with more people as I learned. Then it turned into my main profession. My dream was a feeling, a way

of life, a view of life and a stance. There were no numbers, no targets in the first phase. That's why, as someone who is looking only for the feeling of 'freedom', I am definitely in the place I dreamed of right now. Entirely with my own effort, I manage a business which is independent of place and time. And while doing this, I care about nature too when making consumers happy."

The goal is to become a global brand

Stating that HealthyFoodBreak, which consists of different product groups such as eco-friendly, recyclable, clean-content cloth bags, cloth pouches, herbal dry brushes, tongue scrapers and tableware, aims to further enlarge its product range, expand its operation network and turn it into a global brand, Güleryüz adds: "The most important feature of our products is that they are designed

with respect to all living things in nature and our planet. All products, natural and organic fabrics, health-friendly materials such as stainless steel, they were produced with environmentally friendly and herbal materials suitable for food contact. They were packed in biodegradable and reusable sustainable plastic bags."

Expressing that all of the products are of her own design and that she has them produced in Turkey, Güleriyüz says that they are delivered to consumers on healthyfoodbreak.com, that they entered online marketplaces for the first time in 2023 and that they have started an international operation as micro-export. Güleriyüz tells that they aim to reach larger consumers who do not know and have never heard of HFB.

Discovered the hero in herself

Reminding that 25 years ago, while she was still a little kid, she was impressed by Peter Parker's being Spider-Man when he was needed, and the way Bruce Wayne, a businessman, saved the city by transforming into Batman at nights, Sezin Güleriyüz tells the story of discovering the hero within herself as follows:

"How could it feel to make a difference and focus on their superpowers? Then I started to ask myself. What was my superpower hidden inside me? Was it just being an industrial engineer or a product manager in the marketing world that I specialized in or was it something more? Yes, I loved it a lot, but was it enough for me? No, it wasn't enough. I wanted to be the superhero of my own life and put the person I was all day on the shelf as soon as the shift was over and start a brand new job. Actually, I am not alone. If we look around, many successful women entrepreneurs have al-

ready taken this path. Especially the developing technology and online trade channels support this. I decided to become an entrepreneur when I realized that I was free in the areas I created in the subjects of cuisine and recipes, I could manage as we wanted and I could live my life around this hobby. By investing my time and energy in this field, I started to create a whole new world and business area."

"You must be in it at every stage of production"

Pointing out that the programs that support women's initiatives are insufficient in Turkey, Güleriyüz underlines that although it is changing, it is not being taken seriously, especially in male-dominated sectors. Arguing that the only way to overcome this is to research hard, to look for new alternatives, not to give up, and to be 100 percent in every stage without ever transferring the control of the business to someone else, Güleriyüz speaks as follows: "This is perhaps the biggest teaching for me





The popular story of Steve Jobs, who founded the Apple Company in the garage of his own house, with his friend together, impresses and inspires me a lot. HFB is still a growing brand that was established in the garage of the house. Therefore, it is free, light and flexible. When the time comes, it will grow step by step.

about being a woman entrepreneur. In corporate, you may have teammates that you can lean on and trust. But if you want to be a female entrepreneur, you have to be fully involved in every step you can think of, from product development to promotion. You should scrutinize the promises given to you. Also you should not manage the business without seeing samples, signing a contract, in short, within the framework of 'goodwill'. No one values your work as much as you do, so you should check every step of it with maybe 3 or 4 times, not only double times. I think I overcame the difficulties with the power of detail and research – and by paying through the nose a few times commercially – but I guess we call it experience."

Sezin Güleriyüz, who says that women have broken their shells and have started to take very good steps on the path of entrepreneurship, states that it is very valuable for women from different sectors to support each other, share their experiences and hold each other's hand in order to increase women's power. Explaining that she plans to compile content and prepare trainings for women



entrepreneurs as a roadmap, Güleriyüz adds: "It is one of my biggest dreams for the future to share my resources, tell my mistakes so that others do not do it, teach my teachings of years of experience and especially motivate young women who are currently at university. I think that if every successful female entrepreneur has this vision and allows for new futures, different sectors can be grown and developed by women in different ways."

Films such as The Devil Wears Prada, The Internship, Joy and strong initiatives by strong female characters have been very influential during Sezin Güleriyüz's career journey. Inspired by women who have grown their business starting from digital, Güleriyüz became the sixth most followed name in Turkey when spoken about 'healthy eating', according to the '2019 Healthy Eating Research' conducted by the independent research company Twentify. Güleriyüz, who speaks English well and advises every woman who wants to start her own business, to improve themselves in English, has been actively involved in the NGO called Dream Partners Association for many years.



SİNEM ÖZLER

Executive Chef, General Manager and Co-founder at Seraf Restaurant

EDUCATION: Graduated from Advertising and Desktop Publishing at İstanbul University

Her dream: To see the Anatolian Cuisine on its right place in the world

The career story of Sinem Özler, who has been in advertising for 12 years, is a little different from the usual stories... Having started her career from scratch in a very different field from the field where she studied, Özler brings the unique flavors of Anatolia and the Ottoman Empire together with her guests in the kitchen where she has taken off her high heels and entered into. The biggest dream of Özler, who travels every inch of Anatolia to discover ancient food recipes, to represent Anatolian cuisine in its purest and most authentic form and to ensure that this cuisine takes its deserved place on the world cuisine stage.

Sinem Özler is a graduate of İstanbul University, department of Advertising and Desktop Publishing, and she started working in an advertising company as soon as she graduated from the college. After being worked there at all levels and was appointed to the managerial position, she was brought to the head of the operation unit after the agency owner entered the food and beverage sector. Her relationship with the kitchen was as much as a manager in this sector should be. She was responsible for personnel recruitment and quality control. She was the manager of two restaurants, one in Bebek and one in Şişhane. They were bringing



chefs from abroad and working on world cuisine. Sinem Özler, who gave birth to her third child while her business life continued intensely, took a short break from her business life after giving birth.

During this period, her path crossed with Doğan Yıldırım as the manager of a restaurant project to be opened in Mahmutbey. The manager Doğan Yıldırım said that he wanted to start a restaurant in Mahmutbey where Anatolian cuisine would be in the leading role and that he wanted to see himself as the general manager of the restaurant. Sinem Özler, who accepted the offer, first stood at the head of the architects, and then took part in the establishment phase of the staff. The chefs of that period came and the kitchen was set up. When Seraf Restaurant started, there were two chefs and one assistant chef. While she wanted to create an innovative work in Seraf, the chefs wanted to continue in their own order. In the ninth month, the first chef she had hired quit the job. And her mentality couldn't match with that of the second chef and he left too. At that time, they were hosting about 180 guests per day. The assistant chef said that he received an offer from abroad and the kitchen was suddenly empty.

It was a difficult and grueling process. The chefs who left the kitchen on the busiest days, those who do not comply with the culinary discipline and meticulousness of their dreams... Finally, in those difficult days, Doğan Yıldırım made Sinem Özler an offer that would change her whole life: "Either you enter the kitchen, or let's give up on this job. If we can't do it according to the standards we want, let's not do it at all."

Sinem Özler was a bit surprised how she

“It doesn’t matter how many times you fall, but well matters how many times you get up” Advice from Sinem Özler to young people:

The most important thing is to work hard and not give up in coming across difficulties. Today, technology enters daily life more and more and because it makes things easier and faster, young people think that when they come up with a bright idea, they can start a start-up and become an entrepreneur easily. But this is unfortunately not the case. Not just in entrepreneurship, every area of life is full

of challenges. I think it does not matter how many times you fall on the way you choose, well it matters how many times you get up. That’s why endurance and not giving up are the keys to success in my opinion. I believe that nothing in the life is a coincidence. All you have to do is to want whatever it is and turn it into passion. After that time, there will be no reason for something not to happen.

would respond to this offer. At first, she resisted a lot. Because she had no previous culinary experience other than being a manager in the food and beverage industry and cooking in her own home kitchen. It was difficult, but she accepted it finally. She worked hard, not only to cook in a professional kitchen, but also to learn a job which the dynamics she did not know of, and to be the manager of dozens of people who worked in that environment and knew the job better (for that time) than she did. It hasn’t been easy. In this period when she worked at least 10-12 hours a day, her 3 children and husband became her biggest supporters and they made self-sacrifice together, feeling Seraf as a part of the family.

Included in Michelin Guide recommendation list for 2023

“I had to leave my social life with red nail polish and high heels and learn, manage and succeed in a new profession. This huge burden was too big

for me. I saw that if I couldn’t make this move, the business would fail. I started working too” says Özler. First, she stood next to the unit chiefs, looking at what they were doing and coordinating them in terms of time. Then she started to cook in a short time. Doğan Yıldırım, at the time her boss and at the moment her partner, paved the way with his endless support and vision when she had some difficulties. He had seen the potential in Özler. With only 6 years of experience and hard work, Seraf became one of the important representatives of Anatolian Cuisine and entered the recommendation list of the Michelin Guide for 2023. They are currently preparing to start their second affiliate, Seraf Vadi Istanbul, in the first half of 2023.

Traveling in Anatolia for collecting ancient recipes

Since its establishment, Seraf has had a very clear vision and goal: to keep Anatolian cuisine alive



"Local cuisines contain history, culture, geography, migrations, wealth and even poverty. That's why I prefer it to be talked about more often, to be passed on to future generations, and to keep the palate memory fresh."

with the best ingredients and in accordance with its original form, and to let its guests experience it. For this purpose, Sinem Özler, so to speak, travels every inch of Anatolia with the goal to find the most accurate, highest quality and freshest ingredients to use in her meals, as well as to discover authentic food recipes and present those ancient recipes to her guests in their kitchen. Stating that Seraf emerged from an idea, from a dream, Sinem Özler tells that they started with the dream of making the freshest, natural and original of everything, while picking pomegranates from Hayat and making their own pomegranate syrup, then going to Geyve for quince, to İnegöl for strawberry, to Mardin for kelek (rami). She says that they make all their jams and pickles in their own kitchen using the traditional methods.

Noting that a turning point for them is to open their kitchen to their followers through social media in the most transparent way, Özler adds that they share almost every moment in



the kitchen with their followers and guests, and they develop an extremely sincere relationship. Stating that they carry out their work with a meticulousness that is rarely seen in Turkey, Özler speaks as follows: "The environment in which the vegetables and fruits we use in meals are washed is at a standard that is hard to match even in a house. In the preparation of the meals we serve to our guests, we maintain the conditions under which that meal was prepared historically as much as we can. For example, the minced meat and vegetables we use in making lahmacun are never minced in a machine. It is ground with armor every day. This has a very

high cost and in fact our guests do not even see that the lahmacun mince is ground with armor. For many businesses, this may be seen as an unnecessary cost. But we never give up on any standard that allows us to keep the quality bar high. We regularly go to the harvest. We believe that good food can only be made with good ingredients. We buy a vegetable not only from the region where we can find the best, but also from the best field in that region. We believe that all these details led us to success, so we do not give up on them under any circumstances."

Telling that her career journey is not very similar to familiar stories and that she started from scratch years after graduating from university, Özler adds: "Therefore, I tried to find the right path a little bit by hand. It would not be possible to pass without mentioning the help and contributions of Doğan Bey. It is not easy for me to imagine where I am today in my career. There are crossroads in one's life, and which side of them you select to walk on at those crossroads changes the whole flow of your life."

"The palate memory should be kept fresh"

The menu of Seraf includes many special Anatolian delicacies, from Gaziantep's Beyran soup to Mardin's stuffed ribs, from Şanlıurfa's vegetable garden salad to Sivas's date dessert. Its local soups are specially prepared every day. Syriac style stuffed meatballs, hummus and olive oil celery, stuffed ribs are among the most special dishes on the menu. Stuffed ribs are made entirely from lambs raised in a natural environment in the Southeast. Pointing out that it is a great responsibility to transfer the dishes that are about to disappear to future generations, Özler

says: "It is not enough to look at the matter only as a kitchen and a meal. As Seraf, we promise to offer the best in a modern ambiance for those who want to capture Anatolian flavors with their original taste, those who love and wonder about the taste of Ottoman Cuisine."

"Don't listen to those who say you can't do it"

Noting that they currently have a team of 80 people, but they will increase to 150 together with Seraf Vadi İstanbul, Özler underlines that they continue to open space for them by supporting female employees. Claiming that women outperform men in many areas without feeling the need for any positive discrimination, Özler tells the following:

"Actually, the only thing that needs to be done is to remove the glass ceilings that exist on women in different layers of society, which does not exist on men who do the same jobs. I feel myself lucky. I have a partner who always supports me in this regard. Now, to the best of our ability, we try to support women among our employees, suppliers and third parties with whom we cooperate from time to time. It is a fact that women are more disadvantaged than men in society due to all kinds of social, cultural and familial prejudices. On the other hand, I think they are structurally stronger in terms of resilience and not giving up (which I think are very critical features in the entrepreneurial journey). They should be aware of these features and use them. There are also those around who say "you can't do it" more than encourage them on their entrepreneurial journey. Let them not listen to them, let them continue on their way with determination."



ZEYNEP DAĞLI KASTRO

Founder of Momento

EDUCATION: Graduated from St. George Austrian High School. Then she completed her undergraduate education at London School of Economics and got her master's degree in Finance at Oxford University.

Mediating companies to “thank” their employees

Momento, which was founded by the young and successful entrepreneur Zeynep Dağlı Kastro in 2010 as a loyalty systems initiative that offers innovative solutions in flexible fringe benefits and reward systems, became a company that mediated the “thanks” of more than 650 companies to their 500 thousand employees within 12 years. Offering and focusing on digital solutions since the day it was founded, Momento closed the year 2022 with a growth of 6.5 times.

Zeynep Dağlı Kastro borned in İstanbul as the daughter of doctor parents and completed her secondary and high school education in St. George Austrian High School. After studying in German language for 8 years, everyone around her thought that she would continue her higher education in a country and field where she would use German. But she turned to England. She completed her undergraduate education at London School of Economics (LSE), also with the attraction of London being a financial center. She started working as soon as she graduated from LSE. Dağlı Kastro, who started her career at ABN Amro, worked with government bonds and made very high volume transactions at this bank. Later she worked at JP Morgan.

After a 4-year banking career, Dağlı Kastro got her master's degree in Finance at Oxford University in 2010 and decided to return to Turkey. Having made up her mind for business, Dağlı Kastro founded Momento the day after she came to Turkey. When she founded Momento as a loyalty systems startup that offered innovative solutions in flexible fringe benefits and reward systems, she didn't have a network, but well she had a lot of enthusiasm for doing business. She had learned from her parents to be self-giving and always being able to make something possible. Stating that "I have adopted 2 basic principles in my working life; the first of these was not to give up, and the second was to give space to others", Dağlı Kastro always worked for more, whatever she needed to do throughout her career.

Dağlı Kastro started by thinking 'at which points we can further develop the sector by in-

novating'. So she founded Momento as a company that focused on people and set out with the desire to bring a new purpose to the Fin-Tech ecosystem. Momento was built on solid foundations over triple and quadruple chains as company, dealer, employee/user and member business rather than a single stakeholder for the created value within this framework. Since 2010, the company managed the projects of national and international firms on the subjects like human resources evaluation, recognition, awards, flexible fringe benefits, social benefits, dealer and distributor awards.

The epidemic period of Covid-19 has been a turning point for Momento. With the pandemic, new fringe benefits such as technology and furniture assistance and bill payments that did not exist before in reward systems came to the fore. Physical gifts such as food boxes, chocolate boxes, flowers, gift certificates, stubs and gift cards have been replaced by digital solutions. With the increasing demands of companies and employees for digital reward systems and with the entry of portal systems into our lives, more retailers have started to provide digital codes. The critical and uncertain period of the pandemic was a period in which Momento grew very quickly, as digital wallets, which were used by individuals in the past, came to the fore as a solution that companies also include in their reward systems today.

Demand for digital wallet increased 18 times in the pandemic period

Zeynep Dağlı Kastro describes the adventure of her brand as follows: "The fact that the demand for portal solutions, which we can call Momen-

Advice from Zeynep Dağlı Kastro to entrepreneur candidates:

No matter what difficulties you face, don't think that anything is impossible; because you can achieve everything. First of all, you must believe in the power within you and be able to look at life from a wider perspective. Make sure that path B is open if path A is closed, or path D is open if path C is closed. Whatever you need to do to reach your goals, always work for more. Success will be sure without accident by working hard, when accidental success may be possible by working less. Never forget that the most important thing in this journey is the investment you make in yourself. Remember to focus on your personal development for a clearer mind and higher energy. In this sense, my suggestion to make use of the opportunities of the future: to establish structures which focus on people. In the not too long term, I foresee a world order in which the companies can be successful not only on profit but also on the total value they create for society. And maybe they could survive only in this way.



to's digital wallet, increased 18 times during the pandemic period and this is also an indicator of the tendency towards the digital solutions in reward systems. On the other hand, touching employees digitally has become a necessity rather than a choice today. While the demand for digital solutions is increasing, we, as Momento,

have been offering and focusing on digital solutions from the very beginning and we have raised the bar a little higher. For example, we brought the current version of our mobile application together with the employees during the pandemic. And when we looked at our instant user data, we saw that users preferred mobile applications almost 3-4 times more than the use of portals over the web."

On the other hand, Dağlı Kastro emphasizes that the current economic conjuncture makes interim incentives important for companies and adds that: "The waves of 'big resignation' and 'silent resignation' that started in the USA and affected the whole world increased the employee turnover rate and reward systems became an important tool for retention of fringe benefits and talents, and also for the protection of existing talents."

Momento grew 6.5 times in 2022

Explaining that Momento closed the year 2022 with a 6.5 times growth and increased the number of member businesses by 50 percent in this period, Zeynep Dağlı Kastro says that they received 3.2 times more demand for their products called 'Digital Supply' last year. Noting that the sectors that most prefer Momento's solutions are production, finance and automotive, Dağlı Kastro adds: "We are very proud to have closed a very challenging year with growth, in which the macroeconomic and financial environment deteriorated on a global scale and the markets were volatile as a reflection of this. I can say that we are reaping the fruits of the digital solutions which we have focused on for a long time."

65% of the team consists of women



Expressing that women are underrepresented in FinTech sector, Dağlı Kastro says that as Momento, they are aware of this situation and that 65 percent of their team consists of women. Zeynep Dağlı Kastro, who argues that the entrepreneurship ecosystem eliminates the glass ceiling syndrome, tells the following:

"If more women and men are aware of the new career alternatives and innovations and opportunities in the professional world, it may be easier to remove the glass ceilings from society. At this point, I think the increase of the role models is very important, especially for women. Women are underrepresented in the workforce at many levels. This is true not only in our country but all over the world. This is not a correct and useful point of view for the business world either. While it is possible to get efficiency from the whole society regardless of gender, it is not correct and logical to focus on only half of the society. At this point, societies, companies and managers have a very important role to play: make advance and take an inclusive step in every innovative field. I think it is necessary to make an active effort to express the principles of inclusivity clearly by the com-

panies and to adopt them by the managers."

"If you don't think about tomorrow, you definitely get stuck on the past"

Dağlı Kastro states that in recent years, besides institutions, the public have taken serious steps towards gender equality. She advises everyone who takes part in employment and who wants to take part in it to focus on how to overcome difficulties rather than obstacles, work more than necessary, and identify role models and talk about them actively. She recommends them getting inspired and constantly being focused on personal development. Zeynep Dağlı Kastro says: "The risks are increasing in the period we are in because we are passing through the VUCA world. Technology moves faster than ever before. If you are not thinking about tomorrow, it definitely means that you are still

in the past. Therefore, you need to progress in a planned way, be agile and have a very advanced adaptability. On the other hand, this speed can mean you have got advantage. While thirty or forty years ago, you had to have a serious capital and a serious physical infrastructure to establish a billion-dollar company, today, due to the speed of technology, you can achieve very important successes without these. In other words, I can say that we are much stronger as individuals at the moment. We should focus on people and strengthen our agility muscles."



We are not followers of trends, but pioneers. In this context, we are proud to have achieved a 93% success rate in employee satisfaction for our business partners/customers, as well as facilitating a two-fold increase in companies' dealer sales performance. As a company that has embraced digitalization at the core of its operations, we have facilitated over 500,000 employees of more than 650 companies to receive "appreciation" within the last 12 years.



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