

## Hara Koutalou, Greece



*“It is difficult to be the only woman in the room sometimes. I have to speak and act as a man, and this is the biggest challenge I face all the time.”*

### Hara Koutalou’s professional background

- Founder at Matrix, a Greek SME.
- She holds a Diploma in Mathematics from AUTH (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) and an MSc.
- For more than 6 years she has been member of the board of directors of SEPVE (Association of Information Technology Enterprises in Northern Greece)
- For more than 4 years she has been Secretary General of SEPVE. She is the coordinator of the AgroTech working group at SEPVE that includes all members offering IT solutions for agricultural & food.
- Is an active member of the Sector of Women Managers and Entrepreneurs (TOGME) of HMA (Hellenic Management Association)
- She is also a member of the Greek ACM-W (ACM's Council on Women in Computing).

### Hara Koutalou’s story

After her studies, Hara Koutalou worked as an IT professional at many positions and organisations.

In 2010, at the age of near 40, she founded Matrix, an SME that develops and offers IT solutions to the agri-food and the environment sectors. Transportation, storage and logistics are an important part of agri-food products and have a significant impact on the environment and are of course part of the business.

At school Hara loved maths and technology. Her father played an important role in her career choice telling her from a young age that she could do whatever she wanted, regardless of her gender.

10 years before, she decided to start Matrix in order to develop and offer simple but also effective IT solutions. As a young entrepreneur, Hara realised that being successful takes certain sacrifices in private life, particularly regarding time. At her age she was able to manage her time more efficiently than a few years earlier. She had already developed management skills that helped her become more productive and efficient as the head of the new business. She realized that her effort would now have a greater impact on more people and that her responsibility would be greater.

The first critical moment of her career was the

time that she had to decide if she should establish this SME or not. There were also critical moments when, together with her team, she took risks that were important for the company and the team, especially during the first few years. She and her team made these decisions with respect to team members and the customers and partners.

Always eager to enter new fields and be a pioneer, she started this new venture with enthusiasm, faith in her own and her team's potential and having made the decision to work hard.

Gender mainstreaming in businesses and entrepreneurship is her priority. She is an active member of the Sector of Women Managers and Entrepreneurs (TOGME) of HMA (Hellenic Management Association). TOGME's mission is to contribute in practice to the promotion, development and establishment in Greece of as many women entrepreneurs and top-level executives as possible, as well as to improve their competitiveness.

Performing in a male- dominated environment, she was faced with several challenges from the external environment along the years. She had to work harder than men at the same positions and she decided to do her job better as far as she could, so the others could not ignore her.



She decided to use her different "female" abilities to promote more cooperation and to get support from other women and help them too. She chose to participate actively in women's collective organizations for science and entrepreneurship that promote mutual support.

She believes that she owes her success especially to her ambition and commitment to quality results, hard work and the behaviour that she can do things as well as a man.

She is not afraid of work and the obstacles that appear in front of her and especially the obstacles due to gender make her more stubborn.

It is difficult to be the only woman in the room sometimes. These times she reminds herself to work hard and to speak loud and steadily.



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