



## WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO START A NEW BUSINESS?

If you have the opportunity to live between countries and cultures, it is a real treasure to observe the differences between them. You can feel what is missing in one place or another more acutely. And if you have that entrepreneurial spirit and you are enough crazy enough to take the risk, it is a wonderful time to turn your experience and knowledge into a business.

I had been thinking about, studying and working in various areas of food and environment for the last decade. A degree in Food Science began my intense curiosity about the source of food, the path it's taken, and the post-production impact. What's it leaving behind in our bodies, on our skin, in the environment? The skin is the largest organ; what we feed it should be considered food. To nourish the body inside and out with healthy food is vital. I was missing the organic products and lifestyle I had in Latvia. It was completely non-existent in my new big city life and I wanted to do something about it.

### TEAM IS EVERYTHING

While I was on my academic path and my children were small, I was challenged and motivated by all of the opportunities I saw. At that time, I could only dream of starting my own business. But it happened that I met like-minded friends at the right time and place and we started to work on my own organic skin care line. I had a team in Latvia but since I was alone in Turkey, I needed a partner to help me enter the great Turkish market. And then happily, I met another crazy Latvian living in Istanbul who was ready to take a leap with me into the wild and unknown ocean of Turkish business.

My partner Julia Bayram, is an adventure junkie (official photographer for Expedition Trophy, Trans-Continental Off Road Rally) and was CEO for an International corporation prior to her current incarnation as mother and wife. While

pregnant, she had a moment of clarity; organic living is not optional – it is a must. We were on the same wavelength and the process of creating our own product line began. We worked for two years from the birth of the idea until finally taking the baby in our hands. Anne Nature is the name of our brand; it is an ECOCERT certified skincare line, created especially for the Turkish market.

With simplicity, sustainable consumption and cross-cultural values at its core, Anne Nature reconsiders what is necessary in skin care. We have a total of 6 products which cover a wide range of needs. They are suitable for both men and women, for all skin & hair types, and they are gentle enough for babies. The responsibility we feel for our environment, and care we take in how we live and what we consume inspired us to make just 6 products which cover basic body and skincare needs. With this line, we are hoping it is a step in creating a simpler life, and a happier life.



## BE BRAVE AND MAINTAIN CONTROL OVER THE PROCESS

My original plan was to produce in Latvia and find a partner who could import the products to Turkey. This was my first disappointment: I could not find a company who would invest money to buy all the products from a newly established brand. Then we had the added challenge of the high cost of customs. We also had a lot of negative chatter from people telling us it was 'better not to start at all,' that 'it is almost impossible to register,' that 'it takes such a long time,' 'to start a company 'is very costly,' 'it is very difficult,' and 'the present market conditions are very bad.'

To start a business on your own requires passion, courage and determination. As with any venture, there will be highs and lows, and therefore, it is important surround yourself with positive and supportive people to get you through the rough patches. As circumstances can change, stay optimistic, but be cautious: do not overestimate the market. Initially it seemed like our business would 'fly to the sky,' however you need to have a lot of patience and dedication, especially if finances are limited.

Despite the reservations and doubts, we didn't let fear stop us. I established the company in Turkey in my husband's name to be able to import the goods and maintain 100% control over the entire process – from the factory to the bathroom our customers use. On the positive side, we are in personal touch with our sales points which are mainly organic shops. We choose the marketing communication instruments, and we know our clients. As far as challenges, currently all the work is done by just two of us, and compared to a company with a more established network, it has taken more time to enter the market.

But most importantly – we did it! We got all the necessary approvals, registered the patent of the brand name, organised all the necessary documentation and exactly a year ago, we started our journey in the Turkish market.

## BEING A FOREIGNER HAS ITS ADVANTAGES

We introduced our products in an international expo in Istanbul, and we received a lot of positive feedback and made many contacts. Surprisingly, in this "female" sector of skincare and organic products, the main actors are men. We were encouraged by the outpouring of offers of assistance and support, but we quickly learned these were empty promises. When it came time to commit, half of the people who said they would help disappeared. For those who did work with us, they carried our products, but they didn't deliver what they owed us. But happily, there is still a quarter left and these people are our partners: they are serious, precise and trust-worthy. They do business in the organic sector because of their beliefs and passion about living a healthier life and promoting a greener environment.

Initially, we believed we needed a Turkish sales person to move the business forward, but then we discovered that as foreigners and owners of the brand, people did like to deal with us, and we were considered credible businesswomen. However, we realised it is vital to have a local partner to support the business in place. One of the main reasons being to understand and to behave in accordance with the local business culture. The specific ways of working and communicating are better learned from someone who has been through it. We still learn new things every day.

## FIND A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY

Life in Istanbul is very fast-paced. It is hard to stay current on what all is happening in the city. Therefore, it is very helpful to be socially active and be a part of a supportive community. For us IWI, our Latvian society and Russian-speaking community are very important. There, we meet intelligent people, exchange our experiences and make contacts who help us solve some business issues as well. We donate our time and energy to social activities and it always comes back to us in different and unexpected ways as a new opportunity to grow and develop both personally and professionally. We love doing business in Turkey! Despite some of the unsuccessful business deals and unpredictable political and economic situation in the country, we get lots of positive energy from our "organic family."

*Skaidrite Dzene is a scientist and strong advocate of the environment and sustainable living. She holds a bachelor's degree in Science and a PhD in Agrarian Economics. Skaidrite, a native of Latvia, moved to Istanbul seven years ago. She is married to a Turkish doctor, and is mother to three boys. She considers pregnancy, maternity and childcare as one of the most beautiful and responsible times in any woman's life. It is a time when women must evaluate consumption habits critically to safeguard the new life in their hands. Her business - Anne Nature skincare- is her fourth child, created for children and family.*

