

We begin, therefore, with the broader business culture.

I have a feeling that being an entrepreneur has nothing to do with culture. We constantly search for the secrets of success. There are no secrets. "Doing-business" is a daily process. Every business activity or management decision has always the element of being brand-new, uncertain, unexpected and risky. The combination of these elements, the correct evaluation of data, the fast decisions and the capability of mobilizing groups of people are what bring business results. It is by results, not by theory or adopting a certain viewpoint, that you measure entrepreneurship or success.

Therefore, we are judged by results. We see that a lot of Greek businessmen believe in centralized management. In your opinion, is delegating responsibilities one of the traits of being a good leader or should he be the source of all decisions? In other words, how do we get the correct result in the end?

Two things. Firstly, there is no success without the contribution of many worthy individuals. At the same time, however, success does not come about without the vision, the passion of a leader, who will point the way and unite the people around him and make them follow him.

Then, everything is a matter of finding the right mix. What is the cost of success and what do you gain from failure?

The cost of success is conceit; to believe by definition that it is easy, since you are successful, to have success in everything else and whatever you attempt thereafter. The gain of failure is what we call experience, what to be avoided next time.

Isn't the cost of success imprinted on everyday life? Doesn't each success bring more problems, more responsibilities, more difficulties?

This is no cost. This is pleasure, the motivating force behind every businessman.

The image of a businessman is somebody who works 24 hours a day 7 days a week with no allowances. How do you handle it?

I believe that either directly or indirectly we determine our work schedule. Whenever somebody wants to achieve more, then he must be prepared to pay the price too.... if it can be called a "price", because he expects to reap greater benefits too in the end. Consequently, the price does not appear so huge in the end...

Quite right. Recently the Forum for Competition conducted a survey as to how Greeks handles competition. A footnote, if I may; this question seemed a little too general to me..."How do they handle competition"...How would they handle it? Positively, that is how...

Not, quite. This is what we tried to find out. It is not easy to find what "being competitive" means for every individual. It may even sound threatening, because it is connected with more efficiency, productivity, hence more requirements, less jobs. Consequently, it is a word that usually scares people. Nevertheless, we found to our surprise and delight that people see competition as an opportunity, not only for the country in general, but for personal benefit too. Certainly, help may be needed for somebody to understand that this competition we are talking about will line up his own pocket too...but that is what he expects anyway, so he is prepared to work for it. Indeed, up until now we regarded competition as something to do with running a business, their profits, and the extent of their investment... The survey, however, showed us that each Greek realises that competition should exist and, if we all participate and it is a success, then we would all benefit as a whole and individually.

In real terms, however, they should be prepared to undertake the cost, because initially there would certainly be a cost. Right?

Yes...however, everybody understands that the existing system is based on minimal effort and this is getting us nowhere. What we now call "cost" we should rather consider as a

necessary investment, the one that will bring the benefits.

Do you think, therefore, that in a small country like Greece, where most companies, if they do not actually close down, are certainly affected by personal relationships, a healthy climate of competition could possibly function?

I see it this way: during the last few years we have adopted and use with ease the word «interweaving» and only in its negative meaning. To use personal relationships is a necessary precondition to be a functional member of society, to work in it. It is not necessarily bad to have personal relationships and to use them. This is what we all do every day. From then on there are limits, both moral and legal that we must all respect. The role of an organised society is to make sure that all institutional mechanisms and moral codes of practice apply for everyone...

Greece, in any case, because of its size, favours conditions of oligopoly, not necessarily as a result of any conspiracy theory, right?

Fine, let's distinguish between those things...In any case, small countries may - de facto or because of their small markets - have a bigger concentration of businesses, and there is nothing wrong with that, since the largest Greek monopoly is only 1/105th in size of its corresponding competitors in Europe or internationally.

The question is whether this oligopoly situation, due to size, is acceptable, since we are addressing a larger market, right? In other words, if we only traded within our own borders, or the Balkans, size would have a completely different meaning.

In my case at least, because I operate in a competitive environment in Greece, in Europe, and everywhere, I do not see that oligopolies do not necessarily benefit the consumer, apart from those that started as State monopolies and which need a long time to acquire the free competition mentality. Where there still exists state intervention, greater effort is required to start liberalisation as soon and as effectively as possible, so that competition functions there too. I think that globalization is indeed an economic reality, which can bring more benefits for consumers, more competition but more dangers for commercial enterprises too.

What dangers do mergers bring? Prospects are surely more obvious.

Management theory and the experience of those who deal with it, the consultants, say that the usual problem is that there is a clash of personalities, a clash of cultures, because we have Mr. Big and Mr. Small and they try to bamboozle one another. All these are normal human reactions.

To get to the core question...if it does not succeed, what has each side lost?

Such ventures give an injection of vitality to organisations. You re-examine what you did from a different angle and you always find chances that you missed.

What are the three most important things that a person should have in order to succeed?

I would put first what could be called "a passion to create". Then, to have a vision or rather the will to have vision and to discover something brand-new every time. There should not be a single vision, but one that evolves, and it ought to be evolving in order to help you move forward. Third and most important is self-knowledge, continuous self-knowledge, the capacity to criticize yourself, which is the most effective weapon against conceit, which, as I mentioned before, is the cost of success.

You are making things difficult for us...

Yes. In any case, the most common characteristic that I have found amongst successful people is their capacity for self-criticism and self-sarcasm.