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World Bank lends hand to disabled

SAMSUN

Doğan News Agency

Two Samsun residents, who are confined to wheelchairs because they are paralyzed from the waist down, took out a loan from the World Bank last year.

Hüseyin Aydın and Ertuğrul Keskin prepared a business project, which they named "Hope," submitted it to the World Bank and received a YTL 13,000 loan from the institution. The duo, who opened a mobile phone shop almost a year ago, expanded their venture five months ago to include a technical service center.

"We did not even know how to turn on a mobile phone before this venture started. Now, we are fixing them. We have proven that given the opportunity disabled people can accomplish almost anything," said Aydın.

Aydın, a 36-year-old father of two, and Keskin, a 30-year-old father, have embraced life with gusto with their new business. The partners, who both lost the ability to use their legs due to childhood illnesses, presented their proposal to the Project to Reduce Social Risk, or SRAP, of the Social Cooperation and Unity General Office sponsored by the World Bank.

When the proposal was accepted, Aydın and Keskin began selling mobile phones, accessories and phone units. They have been working enthusiastically for almost a year. "We have learned a lot of things with this business venture. Five months ago we started our technical service center. We are now doing repairs. In three years we will have paid off the loan," said Aydın. "We now also employ someone else. We use our heads and he uses his legs. We are a great team," he said.

Keskin said that if the opportunity was given to them, disabled people could do many things. The business partners are also eyeing politics with their newfound passion for life.



PLANS OF GROWTH: Ekmekiçi, which opened 20 stores countrywide this year, seeks further growth next year. The company's owner Veysi Öncel says he is planning to open 30 new branches in 2009, increasing the number of stores to 100 countrywide. Currently, Ekmekiçi feeds nearly 9,000 people a day.

Kebab defies burgers

İZMİR

Doğan News Agency

Ekmekiçi, an İzmir-based fast food restaurant with four locations that opened nine years ago, has grown 500 percent in 2008 with 20 stores countrywide. The owner of the company Veysi Öncel said despite the crisis Ekmekiçi plans to open 30 more locations next year.

Ekmekiçi began with a single location in İzmir's Alsancak district in 1999 and found a receptive consumer base, which led to new store opening and finally a switch to the franchise model. The growth of the company took off when it started using the franchising model.

"We really got on a roll within the food industry with our smart investments and good service," Öncel said. "In addition to İzmir, we are going to continue our expansion efforts in Ankara, Istanbul, Cappadocia, Şanlıurfa, Diyarbakır and Mardin. Our target for 2009 is to open up 30 more stores, and reach 100 stores countrywide in Turkey before

An entrepreneur remains persistent in maintaining his course despite the global financial crisis. Ekmekiçi, a fast food chain in İzmir, continues to keep an eye on growth, with plans to open 30 new stores next year

taking our operations abroad," Öncel explained.

The company is using the fast food product distribution method, where all the ingredients are distributed from distribution centers. This ensures that the quality and taste of all the products on offer are uniform throughout the 20 stores countrywide. The method will be expanded to provide food for the newly planned stores as well. This is a first for a Turkish food chain, according to Öncel.

Production facilities

"All our products are prepared in our İzmir facilities. We shock the product at negative 40 degrees Celsius before transporting it in special vehicles at negative 18 degrees Celsius," he said. "We provide job opportunities for 300 people and we have 90 inspectors. On average 9,000 peo-

ple a day eat at Ekmekiçi. In 2009 we will increase that number to 25,000 people," Öncel said, emphasizing that the menu options provide a healthy and satisfying meal at a competitive price.

Drawing attention

The company has been gaining attention with its award winning chefs, food engineers as well as its research and development projects. "It is the Turkish kebab versus the American hamburger," Öncel said. "By taking Turkish kebab culture and branding it we are going to take it abroad. We are getting franchise requests especially from Scandinavian countries and Athens."

The company has invested heavily in research and development efforts, experimenting with new bread making techniques as well as new spice combinations.

These efforts to boost their offering and expand their menus have been made all while trying to preserve the ever-elusive quality that makes their products appealing to the Turkish palate.

"Our menu is made up of 10 different products. Our new project is a menu that will appeal to a more Anatolian palate called the Könebe menu, made up of a special wrap with choice of three options; chicken, meat and vegetarian," he said. The menu offers a wide variety of Turkish fare from seasoned lamb intestines called kokoreç to Turkish-style pizza called lahmacun and general kebab options as well as Turkish culinary flourishes such as şalgam, a kind of turnip juice, ayran, a yogurt drink, and künefe, a traditional dessert.

Ekmekiçi has also been active in making sure that the production and service methods are on par with European standards. "We have all of our quality and health certificates," he noted, referring to the company's ISO 9001 and HACCP certificates.



FATMANUR
ERDOĞAN

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Extraordinary roads to success

Last week, marketing and communication professionals gathered for the Marka Conference at Istanbul's Çırağan Palace. Marka is a truly inspiring event. Every year, it lifts my spirit, it unleashes my creativity, and it ignites my passion for entrepreneurship.

The conference had many great speakers, two of whom were particularly memorable. The first, Gerald Ratner, a well-known British businessman, saw his life forever changed by a communication crisis, and in rebuilding he rose above challenges that would destroy most others. The second, Ora-Ito, a French designer, changed his name so he could find fame and success on his own terms, not as the son of famous designer Pascal Morabito. The unknown Ora-Ito reached stardom creating fake products for well-known brands like Louis Vuitton.

Gerald Ratner described the business world saying, "Business is unpredictable." Born into a wealthy family, Ratner quit school and started work at the age of 15. His passion was to build his family business, Ratner Jewelry, into the world's number one jewelry store. In 1991, he became the darling of business circles because even during an economic downturn, he managed to run a perfectly healthy, growing business. However, at an after dinner speech in 1991, he made the mistake of a lifetime: He cracked a joke, which turned into a gaffe, and made people think the jewelry he sold was "total crap." That mistake cost him a 600,000-pound annual salary, and his business' value dropped 500 million pounds. After suffering public humiliation for five years, unable to get a job, he turned his luck around by starting an Oxfordshire health club and signing up 850 customers before the club was even built. His financing requests were rejected by seven banks before the eighth one approved funding, and only because the bank manager's wife had already joined the club. In 2001, he sold the club for 3.9 million pounds. Since his passion is jewelry, in 2003 he went back to the business and now runs an online jewelry company at geraldonline.com

No diploma but determination

The second speaker, Ora-Ito was kicked out of a French design school and was determined to survive on his own. With no diploma under his belt, he sent his resume to companies like Louis Vuitton, Nike, and Apple, but did not receive even one response. So, at the age of 21, he started to create fake designs for those same brands and show them online. When he started to get stacks of orders from customers, the brands finally took notice. Ora-Ito said, "It was my way of taking revenge. If the Internet did not exist, I would not be here today."

His presence on stage is striking, his broken English coupled with a French accent. His energy knows no end, coming from a deep passion for what he does. Like Gerald Ratner, he is not snobby or pretentious. He is simply himself.

One man is 60 years old, the other 31, but both are successful businessmen. Both have endured difficulty. Both have experimented with many options, drawing on their creative talents until a light appeared at the end of the tunnel. Both have incredible passion for what they do, and the determination to achieve their goals in uncommon and unconventional ways. In this global downturn, as layoffs come one after another, I urge you to remember these two men who turned hardship into fame and success. I want to remind you that there is not just one way to reach your goals or excel in your career. Life brings us many opportunities. Grab them, learn to explore and experiment with the new and the unknown. The challenge that intimidates you today might unexpectedly open doors to a wonderful future tomorrow.

3G mobile contract decision in 2 months

ANKARA

Reuters

Turkish 3G mobile phone contracts, won last week by operators Turkcell, Vodafone and Avea, were presented to the Council of State yesterday for approval within the next two months, a government source told Reuters.

The source said the companies have already initiated concession contracts with the Turkish Information Technologies and Communications Board, or BTK, for 3G licenses.

Mobile phone operators are

keen to get the high-speed 3G network up and running to take advantage of fast-growing demand for wireless data and voice services.

Turkcell won the highest frequency 3G license on offer in Turkey with a winning bid of 358 million euros last week.

Vodafone, the global mobile phone operator, secured the second highest frequency 3G license for 250 million euros. Turkey's Avea, owned by fixed-line operator Türk Telekom, won the third highest frequency with a bid of 214 million euros.

Arkas Holding to increase capital

İZMİR

Anatolia News Agency

Arkas Holding has decided to increase the capital of its various companies to the sum of YTL 120 million, said Önder Türkkan, chief executive of the company that operates in areas such as sea transport, ports, logistics, tourism and insurance.

Regarding Arkas' Anatolian Project, which foresees investment in nine cities, Türkkan said they would hold talks with two prospective foreign partners.

"In 2008, the funds Arkas Holding companies accumulated increased 8 percent, compared to last

year," Türkkan said. "We wish to protect this level next year."

Arkas expects next year to be one in which foreign financing sources dry up. "It is the right time to increase capital," Türkkan said.

The global crisis is negatively affecting logistics, but is also creating opportunities in areas such as warehousing, the chief executive said. "In this environment, companies that are well-placed and well-financed will preserve their gains."

The Anatolian Project, meanwhile, involves nine trade cities in Turkey that will be linked to ports through railways.



MARITIME TRADE: With the latest additions Arkas Holding has increased its maritime trade fleet to 25 ships.

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