



A little bit of New York in Athens

There should be a statue of Liberty outside the offices of Celebrity International in Athens.

Inside the smart little office block in a leafy suburb of this ancient city you will hear the unmistakable sound of New York accents. One of them belongs to the energetic Kathy Chrisovergis who has actually spent most of her life in Greece yet still retains the accent of her childhood.

Her first experience of an international move was when she was 11 and her parents separated; the memory of that time is still with her and gives her that compassion to make sure that no one should really suffer from a bad move at vulnerable times in their lives.

She learned her craft under the tutelage of Orphee Moschopoulos Beinoglou when she was his secretary. He was a tough but benign task-

master (she can still laugh when she recounts some of her early experiences working for a man who was equally passionate about getting details right) and she learned quickly.

However, when she met and married one of the company's packers George, the couple decided that perhaps they should begin a new life in the USA.

It was not a good idea at the time and they reluctantly returned to Athens where her father urged her to use her experience to set up on her own. It took some persuasion as they had no money but her father gave them plenty of moral support. Eventually the pair found some furnished offices to rent, kicked around ideas by the kitchen table and then put up a sign for business: Celebrity International Movers.

"Once we had the idea, it was simple - we wanted everyone to feel they were a celebrity when they were moved by us," says Kathy. The couple's time in the US was not wasted either as even today, they look upon it as one of their prime markets.

George was the practical man so he took care of everything connected with operations and Kathy handled sales and administration. She used their meagre savings on taking out small advertisements, sending mail shots, making door to door calls and networking at local business meetings.

For his part, George began ordering plain packing materials (cheaper than printed) and rather anxiously signed up for a small 200 sq m warehouse. Meanwhile he taught his wife about volumes so she could do surveys in the evenings

All the packing on the first jobs to come in was done at weekends so that by the Monday Kathy could concentrate on doing the follow-up move co-ordinations in between sales. Although everything they did was outsourced, Kathy's conviction was that everything promised had to be delivered and this became her credo.

Every fledgling entrepreneur deserves a lucky break and Kathy got hers when she was quoting a wealthy Greek lady with a wonderful collection of antiques that had to be shipped overseas.

She took to Kathy and gave her the job because she wanted to help her growing business.