



The Maltese Business Story

An ongoing initiative based on “*MEA*” TV programmes, originated by MEA-SME Helpdesk

BRIEF

Malta Employers' Association

Description of the initiative:

The Maltese Business Story Project, is a Malta Employer's Association initiative, promoting an entrepreneurial mindset especially among SMEs. Its aim is to assist start-ups, micros, and medium enterprises in achieving success in their business endeavours. This is the climax of a four year project, (so far) based on the production of 91+ television programmes "MEA".

It kicked off in 2013, by the production of the first series of 26 weekly TV programmes MEA. After four years and after more than 91 programmes have been produced, we arrived at a point when it was feasible to utilise this treasurable knowledge and transform it into this innovative initiative.

The Maltese business story follows two characters, Ġanni and his daughter Katrina, from their decision to open up a family business, onwards. The story delves into the situations they encounter and the way they manage to tackle the challenges they meet throughout their business venture.

After each situation that Ġanni and Katrina encounter, a link to the appropriate MEA television programme is provided. Each programme includes advice from a number of business experts explaining in more detail and in a more visual manner, a particular employer-related subject.

The characters of Ġanni and Katrina, father and daughter, were chosen purposefully to appeal to both generations. The decisive and entrepreneurial character of Katrina is relatable to those in the young generation and also to the female counterparts who wish to set up a business of their own.

Topics and business situations vary from industrial relations, issues in the HR department, particular circumstances which an employer encounters during his day to day business administration, and trade union interferences.

During this story telling, we mentioned also events, when the business entrepreneur has to react fast, and take a stand, in front of various situations. We also included situations when employees challenged their employer on very particular issues, which might had upset and created tension at the workplace.

Not only, but this story included also the local and international political scenario which might had an effect on the running of the actual business operation.

The main challenge, while creating this initiative was to identify all sort of circumstances, and situations, which a business owner might encounter, and to produce informative tv programmes on the right topics.

The idea of creating this typical Maltese business story, incorporating these 91 television programme material, was incepted after getting feedback from our Association members, that local entrepreneurs might lack knowledge about what might prop-up during a business activity, and how they should handle such situations.

This business story brings all these aspects to life, and helps all those working in the business world, to understand how important is the fact, to adopt a proactive approach, and anticipate problems prior occurrence. Therefore, this project is leaving a positive effect on the relations between employers and employees.

This initiative, which has already been circulated amongst hundreds of SMEs, made an impact on start-ups and young entrepreneurs, and their response was overwhelming, which encourage us to keep moving ahead in developing more this initiative.

This innovative and original project, as a start, was launched in the Maltese language, but it's the intention of MEA that eventually, versions of this story will be translated into other languages, to enable foreigners to access it, and get hold of these precious guidelines.

So far all tv programmes, which the Malta Employers' Association, produced were all in the Maltese language, and so it was a natural decision to materialise this business story project in Maltese. Having said that, from the feedback we already received, it seems that such a project will make sense if it has to be translated at least in another foreign language.

It's a unique experience, in promoting the entrepreneurial spirit, which can be easily repeated elsewhere around Europe, and we're sure that the majority of small business entrepreneurs will find it helpful and interesting.

To run a business, today one needs a skill. Need to be attentive to what's happening around. Need to be always on the edge, of understanding business trends. Can't lose opportunities which might give advantage in market competition. One should never ignore the fact that taking care of your employees might be the key of success in your business.

This project is innovative and we are proud for implementing such a pro-active approach, especially with start-ups and micro enterprises, to facilitate and alert young future entrepreneurs, about, what's the real business world, look like, and how they can be well prepared to change every challenge to an opportunity.

The Maltese Business story project, is another important loop in the chain of SME tools which MEA has been working on, during these last few years.

So far we proudly were involved in:

- the outreach project "capacity building programme" amongst hundreds of SMEs.
- the establishment of an MEA-SME Helpdesk.
- the creation of the executive post at MEA responsible for the SME sector.
- the production and printing of an employers -HR handbook.
- the organising of various info sessions, seminars and National Conferences during the SMEWEEK events.
- the cooperation with "Business Doctors Malta" with the intention to push forward the Business Clinic Idea.
- the establishment of an accredited course in level 5, about employment law.
- Currently working to start organising a "basic guidance for business start-ups" course.
- the launch, and application through ESF, to move forward with the AMEAZ app. concept.
- And now, this Maltese Business Story initiative

MEA is quite aware of the small business sector situation in Malta. 98% of the business community on the island, are SME's. The absolute majority are family-run business. At the moment the 40,000 registered active business units in Malta employ not less than 163,000 employees. This puts pressure on us, to ensure close surveillance on this small business sector. It's our duty to keep on creating SME tools to assist and nourish these ambitious young entrepreneurs.

This is not just a story, but its an ongoing initiative which is here to stay, evolve, and continue encouraging start-ups and eventual young business entrepreneurs and business owners to stand up to be counted on the front line of entrepreneurship

Results of the initiative so far:

In just under 4000 words, this story incorporates 91 business topics, each hyperlinked to their respective “MEA” TV programme.

During the four years of the MEA TV series, more than 300 business experts shared their insight and knowledge to an audience of at least 20,000 people a week or 50% of all registered SMEs in Malta. Along with our youtube channel, it is estimated that these programmes had over 2,000,000 views.

In total, this project includes over 2,300 minutes of visual material aimed at helping business owners tackle problems at the place of work with further tips on how and when it is best to act.

This idea can be easily replicated elsewhere in Europe. In fact, it is the intention of the Malta Employers’ Association to translate the project to other European languages in the near future.

The Maltese business story is a unique way of promoting the entrepreneurial spirit through a concise and sequential rendition of a hypothetical family business with very real work place situations.

Prior to 2013, we used to receive a number of complaints from our members regarding lack of proper knowledge about certain situations which pop-up during business activity. The problems were many and diverse, therefore we decided to initiate the production of a series of tv programmes, dealing with issues which are important to employers, and which might be able to guide them accordingly.

This started with one series of 13 programmes, and after four years we are still producing new programmes with invaluable educational content for SMEs and the general public alike. We have also produced programmes with updated information on topics that we touched upon in previous programmes.

Just to mention a few, amongst the 91 topics, one can find specific programmes on :

- Education and work
- Small businesses
- The effect of Bureaucracy in business
- Persons with disability at work
- Youth and entrepreneurship
- Making work pay
- Health and safety at the place of work
- The use of sick leave
- Childcare centres
- family businesses
- employment contract
- Foreign workers employment
- Mental health at the place of work
- Union recognition
- Gender paygap
- Employability index
- Multiculturalism at the place of work
- How future technology might effect employment malta
- Financial literacy
- Informal education accreditation
- Teleworking
- Tatoos at the place of work

The SME Helpdesk, within the Malta Employers' Association, was intrigued to create a project which combines the reservoir of information that we have gathered through the years into a compact portal. That is how the idea of this project was initiated.

This story project is an interesting and structured way of getting into the subjects, and surf online through these tv programmes while following a typical business life.

The interactivity between our members and our association, is very important for us to be able to understand better, the employers' needs. Throughout the years, we managed to establish the perfect chemistry between us, and so we

are being able to identify the right subjects on which we should focus and go deeper to come out with proper guidance.

The Maltese business story initiative, is unique of its kind, and its dynamics urge you to scroll down and find out different circumstances where need attention and knowledge how to handle each and every situation.

Ġanni and Katrina, worked hard, to keep themselves aware of all sort of situations, but we intend to keep on developing this project, by adding on other particular occasions, where business owners need to focus on, and be guided accordingly.

This initiative sparks the idea, among young future entrepreneurs, to build up a portfolio full of important data, policies, and strategies, on which a business must follow, and refer to, when needed. This project does not resolve it all. Its just the begining of an awareness campaign to educate and highlight important aspects of a business activity life.

Although this initiative is aimed to be for SMEs and future entrepreneurs, there is no specific and particular target audience, which must be directed to, excusively, because this can be also usefull to big companies, that might encounter such situations. In fact, so far through our membership its estimated that approximate 55,000 employees, (which is one third of the work force in Malta) are already getting some sort of benefit from this initiative. This is happening, because we are already sharing this project with all our 600 members, and more.

We believe that entrepreneurship must start from the early stages, and this initiative helps alot to identify the needs and where one should distinguish himself/ herself as a proper entrepreneur, by applying the pro-active and professional approcah, in every step they take.

The latest World Bank Group Flagship Report under the title of Doing Business – Equal Opportunity for All (2017), uncovered that Malta’s ease of doing business ranking was 76th out of 190 countries. More alarmingly, is the rank that Malta achieved for the ease of starting a business, from the same report. Malta was ranked as 132 out of 190 for the ease of starting a business. This was mainly due to the bureaucracy involved in the process. Hopefully, through ‘The Maltese Business Story’ and future projects of the MEA with the same aim, starting a business will be an easier task for the Maltese public.

The full benefits of this initiative, are still have to be calculated, when in the near future we intend to keep on marketing this project amongst the largest number possible of business oriented persons.

Its just a click of a button away. One can even download a library full, with over 2,300 minutes of entrepreneurial business material, compressed in one single document, on a pendrive, without the need to surf on google accounts, or various youtube channels.

We managed to create such an easy access for information to SMEs, that we strongly believe that The Maltese Business Story initiative, with its innovative concept, is already engraving another important milestone in MEA's achievements, and offering loads of benefits to the Maltese SME sector.

Electronic Links

Electronic link to "The Maltese Business Story Initiative"
(pdf document format):

<http://www.maltaemployers.com/en/the-maltese-business-story>

Electronic link to the initiative promo in english:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_YURXpR-9M

Electronic link to tv programmes *MEA*, promo:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iftH0gs06tc&feature=youtu.be>

Electronic link to the MEA youtube channel :

www.youtube.com/user/dcilia1

Electronic link to the MEA official website :

www.maltaemployers.com

Details re parts of the initiative, which we plan to finish by end of 2017

We strongly believe, and intend to keep on developing this Maltese Business Story initiative.

In the immediate, we will ensure the most publicity possible to market the project among all those who works in the business sector, especially young future entrepreneurs.

Till the end of 2017, (maybe as part of the 2017 smeweek) we are planning to organise a half day seminar, where we can discuss in detail the response, evaluate the project so far, and hold workshops to keep on identifying more topics, for further tv programmes, which eventually will be also incorporated in the development of the story.

Besides an online version on our website, we also intend to put this project on a number of USBs and if feasible also on our MEA Employers' handbook app.

For the next year, we will be considering the option of translating parts of this project, in the English language, so to be able to make it available also for foreign entrepreneurs, working in Malta.

How the initiative will be expected to relate with one or more of the areas mentioned below:

- *shows recognition in entrepreneurship excellence*
- *supports entrepreneurship*
- *be instrumental to inspire others*
- *shows the contribution of the entrepreneur in society*
- *serves as a source of inspiration to new entrepreneurs*

Definetly this Maltese Business Story project, is a perfect example how we can support entrepreneurship and we believe that its the right instrument with which we can inspire others.

When a business owner will be kept on track, regarding all current issues, and business particular circumstances, indirectly will be helping him to be more responsible in his/her attitude with the employees. Its of extreem importance that people in business will follow best practices and try to contribute for a more entrepreneurial society.

This project is an eye opener to those who never realised that in a business venture, everything can happen. While in business, the employer still need to understand that his/her employees are not just a number, but they are humans full of dignity.

The keys to success in business are RESPECT, DIGNITY, TRUST, and LOYALTY.

When an entrepreneur gives special attention to all these attitudes in life, automatically he will paving the way for full satisfaction in his business adventure. To be able to do this, one should be well informed, full of knowledge, and educated how to tackle eventual circumstances in business.

One cannot show respect to others if he/she does'nt know the facts, policies, and good governance of how one should run a business, even in difficult times. One cannot be loyal, trust worthy, and full of dignity, if he/she does not understand that the society is full of diversification, which derives from

muticulturalism.

Certain issues which prop-up at the place of work, need to be tackled carefully. Sometimes it will not be a one fits all solution. Its here where entrepreneurship stands out. The right and balanced attitude at these particular moments is imperative.

The Maltese Business Story project, obviously help out in all this. With this initiative we intend to keep on promoting the entrepreneurial spirit amongst those already in business, but also in those prospective candidates to become our future entrepreneurs.

This is an innovative initiative to encourage and facilitate access for information, and to keep all those within the business community aware of all issues related to commercial activities, while respecting social corporate responsibilities.