



ACS Athens interviews Ms. Christina Dutton-Karanikos

Founder of Dutton & Co.
Mother of Ian and Natalia

by Katerina Michalakakou



Christina Dutton-Karanikos is a Financial Consultant and Founder of Dutton & Co, an independent Investment Intermediation Company in Athens, supervised by the Hellenic Capital Markets Commission. She has more than 20 years of experience in the financial sector, with a specialization in strategy. Christina Dutton-Karanikos talks about her childhood years and explains that the primary role of schools should be to mold children into becoming responsible and caring individuals.

Which school did you go to and what do you remember from your school days?

I came to Greece when I was four and I went to St. Catherine's for the first six years of schooling. Those years were amazing. The school was at the embassy's grounds in Kolonaki. I remember for example, that we learned what a mile was by actually walking a mile. Another moment that comes to my mind is when I was taught about the middle ages and how the fields were planted. The school had an extraordinary way of explaining things to children in a way that would remain with them forever. If you now ask me what a manor house layout looked like in the Middle Ages, I could draw it for you. For me, that's the way one should teach.

When I was twelve, I was unfortunately put in a Greek school, and because I was an average student, it was a very traumatic experience for me, as I was not able to follow what was happening in class.

Luckily enough, a professor of history changed the way I saw things and helped me develop a keen interest for history. He was the one who taught me everything about Homer. He also helped us visualize each historical moment in a way that would interest us to learn about it. This inspired me immensely and thus history became my favorite subject.

Did you have any idea what your professional life would be like?

My bachelor's degree was in Literature and my master's degree was in Business Communications. I never imagined that one day I will be working in Finance. However, as a result of my interest in reading historical and literary books and being able to understand how many different perspectives people can have, I was able to transition very smoothly in my finance career and be able to provide quality services to my clients.



I had always been involved with communications, and my current role, which involves a high degree of listening and advising depends greatly on the ability to communicate effectively. Before I entered the finance sector, I was involved in a few other areas also. For example, in Italy, I was in charge of the public relations for Gavello, a very well known jeweler and when I had returned to Greece, I somehow had got caught up in the garment industry and worked there for a couple of years. I was offered my first position in finance when I was thirty, following an interview with a financial company who offered me the position of the relationship manager. I had no prior experience, and I remember that the company offered to pay a training course overseas. After I had completed my training course, I was the first trainee to land a deal and that's how my career in finance began.

Did someone inspire you to aim high?

Yes, my father. As he was British, he had the intense anglo-saxon ethic in that he worked very, very hard throughout his life and in changing circumstances. Although we lived in different countries and even though he was from a different generation, he was an excellent father and always kept contact with us. He was a great example of how one can manage both personal and work life. He was very encouraging and supportive as far as my career choices were concerned and also motivated me to balance my work and personal life too.

What were your hobbies in school and what are they now?

In school, my hobby was reading and it's still reading; only that now I read more historical and political-themed books. Today, I also enjoy working out at the gym and I'm ashamed to say gardening (giggles), which has become my new craze.

Do you believe that work and personal life can be balanced?

First of all, it is difficult to achieve. I started working full time when my daughter was one years old, and my son one month old.

The only aspect that I strongly regret is not being with my son during his first year, and missing out on many things that I would have otherwise been able to experience, if I had worked part time. Currently, I have a flexible time schedule and I make sure that I am able to travel to England, where my daughter is and to cater to my son's needs every time they arise. Working for myself has been really helpful, as it helps me manage my time the way I see fit. However, as we are a very democratic family, we also try to discuss all issues with our children and therefore are able to reach an understanding with them.

What attributes in your personality do you think have helped you to succeed in your career?

I think the main two attributes that have helped me in my career is listening and caring, not in the Christian sense, so to speak, but that I am genuinely interested about what my client is doing and wants to achieve. In this business, these two attributes are very important.

If someone asked you to describe yourself in three words, what would you say?

- 1) Strong self-esteem
- 2) A sense of civic responsibility
- 3) Positive

In October 2009, you established your own consultancy business. What did that mean for your career?

I have been in this business for the past twenty years. While I was working for others, I always had to offer clients the products the particular firm had to offer, whereas now that I manage my own business, I have the freedom to select products that suit the clients' needs. I work from the client side now, so I am able to offer my clients whatever I feel is best for them. Although I'm a financial consultant, my biggest strength is strategy. For this reason it is important for me to be able to contact any company, anywhere in the world, because when you wish to implement strategy it means being able to find companies with the products that will best fit your client's needs.



Has the current situation in Greece influenced your business?

As I started my business in the crisis, I'm right at the beginning, so it can go only upwards. It has not been influenced negatively. However, if I had started my company four or five years ago, like lots of other people, I may have found myself now in a difficult situation. My company is a small-scale business and as I have modest aspirations, I am positive about the future

You have a son in ACS, Ian in Grade 9 and a daughter, Natalia, who is now studying in England. What factors did you consider before picking the right school for your children?

There are three factors that I considered, firstly, the Anglo-Saxon system, which I had also personally experienced and strongly support, secondly, the fact that ACS is abreast to what is happening in the international field of academia, and thirdly, ACS offers personal training to students with learning differences and helps them overcome and handle these difficulties.

What improvements would you like to see in the School?

There are two distinct areas that come to my mind: the first is to have smaller classrooms and the second is that I would like to see the students become more aware of the crisis and be more encouraged to participate in community service through school-related projects, such as maintenance painting, planting flowers or even picking up the garbage outside the metro station near the school campus. The school has a significant role in molding the students into caring and responsible citizens

What activities do you enjoy doing with your children?

Well, both Ian and Natalia are at an age, where they don't spend very much time with us; however, we do go on holidays together, to the cinema, music concerts (jazz, rock etc...) and we discuss quite regularly about worldwide politics and other global affairs.

We have a wonderful relationship and I try to be more of a mother to them than a friend. I disagree with parents who want to become friends with their children, as it is very important for parents to be caring and supportive and to discuss everything with their children in an honest and democratic manner.

What message would you like to share with the ACS Athens Community?

I would like to urge everyone to be collective and have a strong sense of community service.

As far as ACS is concerned, I hope it continues its academic excellence and becomes a benchmark for all other schools in Greece and abroad.

