

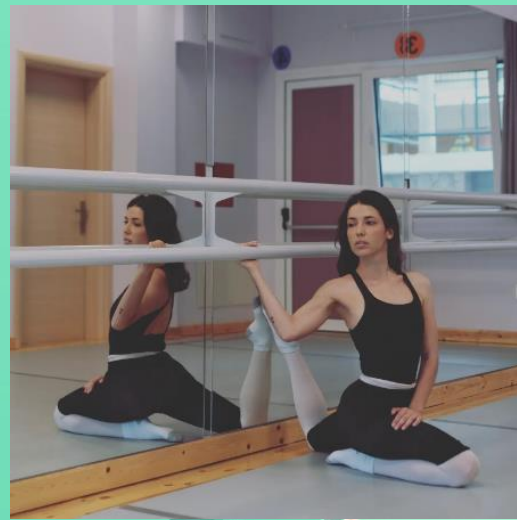


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# Passion into profession

## Lydia Chavda

### Greece



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"SkillsXcellerate: Empowering youth on their path to independence through entrepreneurship"  
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**SkillsXcellerate**



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# HOW AND WHEN LYDIA STARTED HER BUSINESS

At the age of 24, Lydia began conceptualizing and setting up her venture, and by 25, it officially came to fruition. Her background is in dance, both as a performer and as an instructor. In Greece, and especially in Larissa, it is quite challenging to find work as a dancer. For financial stability, she pursued a career as a dance instructor. The early years were both rewarding and tough, requiring her to juggle multiple jobs in various locations, including villages and the city.

At one point, she secured a daily collaboration with a kindergarten, which asked her to discontinue her other jobs to work exclusively with them both in the mornings and afternoons. Lydia agreed, but the following year, they chose not to continue their collaboration under the same terms. Suddenly, having severed ties with her other employers, she found herself without work and had to start job hunting from scratch. During this period of uncertainty, she had access to a space intended to be a home, and she contemplated converting it into a dance school. Opening a dance school had always been a dream of hers, and feeling the urgency of her situation, she decided it was now or never.

Throughout her journey, Lydia drew inspiration from various teachers and mentors. In terms of entrepreneurship, she leaned heavily on the advice and data provided by her accountant. However, her best friend, who had opened her dance school at a young age in Volos, was a crucial source of support and guidance. She offered invaluable advice on how to make her school viable and sustainable, significantly influencing her approach and helping her navigate the challenges of starting and growing a business.



# HOW LYDIA DEVELOPED HER BUSINESS

Initially, as Lydia mentioned, she had a space slightly outside the city center and began evaluating if it could be transformed into a dance school. Her team assessed the structural stability of the building to see if the necessary columns could be removed. Then, they referred to the government gazette to review the specifications and requirements. They also considered the legal framework, and subsequently, she planned the interior decoration, including what to purchase for the children. If she is being honest, the entire process seemed overwhelming and unattainable to her. She also had personal insecurities about whether parents would trust her with their children.

Lydia overcame many obstacles by listening to more experienced individuals who knew more about these matters. The biggest challenge for her was when COVID-19 hit just after she opened the school, forcing her to close for an extended period. During that time, patience was essential. Besides the pandemic, there were moments when she felt like giving up and disappearing. One such instance happened recently when a child started crying, which upset the parent, and another child wanted to leave for the beach. She felt her work was not appreciated. Additionally, to promote her school, she and the children sometimes visit kindergartens and camps, which can sometimes be stressful. All this pressure made her think about quitting everything, changing jobs, even countries. However, with some patience and time for herself, these feelings of anger and frustration subside.

Lydia considers herself very fortunate because she does what she loves. In reality, there are not many moments when she wants to quit, especially now that she has her own school, something of her own. When she had nothing and was at rock bottom, it was harder. She now knows that she can fight whatever obstacle comes her way. The difficult times were in the past when she felt she was not given the opportunity to work. She learned that the most important thing as an entrepreneur is to be proactive and visionary, both creatively and financially. Nothing is guaranteed, and you must always strive to go the extra mile. And of course, as an entrepreneur and freelancer, you never stop working.





# WHAT ARE LYDIA'S PLANS FOR FUTURE

Lydia's goals are to maintain and increase the number of children enrolled in the school and to bring on a partner to help, as she currently handles everything on her own. In the future, she would like to expand the school, possibly collaborating with other artists to create a theatre or a cultural center, which she believes Greece is lacking. Her hope is for all children to get to know and deeply love the art of ballet. Ballet cultivates the mind, spirit, aesthetics, discipline, and coordination, eventually becoming a way of life that enhances it. She would like children, in general, to learn about and appreciate this art form.



# WHAT ARE LYDIA'S SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WILLING TO START THEIR BUSINESS

Lydia's advice is to stay focused, start as early as possible, and listen to experienced individuals who can guide you. In terms of finances, it is crucial to have a trusted accountant. Be prepared to work around the clock, as being an entrepreneur means working 24/7. She does not have a specific methodology or plan to recommend, as she did not follow a concrete path herself. The only thing she adhered to was keeping her ears open to learn from real-life experiences within the industry.



Image source: all pictures used in this story are from Lydia's personal archive.

We wish good luck to **LYDIA!**

If you are interested in learning more about Lydia's business or to get in touch with her, you can contact her by

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