

## "Turkey's Business Persons"

### DeLeeuw International Levent Erkan

The founding story of DeLeeuw International, which is one of the most respectable consultancy companies in Turkey, is very interesting. Story begins with TED and METU graduate Levent Erkan and his wife's decision to go to USA for university education. Moreover, the money they had in their pockets was enough only for about 6 months... Levent Erkan tells those days: "For 6 months we have applied each and every university in the USA. We participated in all interviews, but they did not accept us. Finally, we were accepted as temporary students. At the end of these 6 months SIUE University, which was 5 hours south from Chicago, has accepted us as scholarship graduates and teaching assistants. This was kind of a trial period. If we would get high-grades, they would continue our scholarships and assistantships for the following semesters. However, at the end of our education, my wife and I were graduated from the university with the highest grades (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>). Throughout our master's education and assistantship, we started to earn money. We were attending school, we were helping students as assistants, and also we were making our living by working as waiters and such." "For us, USA became a road from the lowest level to the highest. I have worked almost in 15 projects, levels varying from analyst position, to project manager to regional manager and worked in Missouri, North Carolina, Florida and New York States. During the last three years of our stay in USA, I was the Regional Manager of New York for DeLeeuw Associates. I was responsible for Wall Street-based Projects. The number of staff who was working in our project teams was changing from 200 to 2000."



"I worked especially in the projects about the purchase of more than 10 banks and different corporations and the integration of them to Bank of America during the bank's transition from a mid-scale bank to a giant institution of 160 thousand people. At the end of these projects, with its new corporate structure, Bank of America became one of the strongest and biggest institutions of the world."

## How was the DeLeeuw International founded?

We went to New York in 2000. In this period my wife started to work in the New York Office of Philip Morris. And I was working as DeLeeuw Associates' Regional Manager of New York at World Trade Center. Unfortunately, my office was there during the collapse of the Twin Towers. While projects were having successful endings, we started to make plans of turning back to Turkey.

In 2003 we decided to come back to Turkey and started-up DeLeeuw's Turkey and Regional Office. We chose Ankara as our headquarters. In Ankara we wanted to work with international funds and public institutions; we wanted to create a difference from the other important consultancy companies by focusing on this area. Moreover, we wanted to use our knowledge especially for management consultancy and professional project management. We named the company and established as "DeLeeuw International" and my previous boss Bob DeLeeuw also became a partner and an investor. Thus we started to work in Ankara as a company which has Turkish and American partnership.

## Could you talk about your projects?

After proving ourselves in mid-scale projects during the first two years in Turkey; we started to implement more than 10 EU Funded and Public-based projects, and each of them has more than 1 million Euro budgets. We have implemented our projects successfully in important institutions such as Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Health, Turkish Accreditation Agency, Secretariat General for EU Affairs, The Telecommunications Authority, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, State Planning Organization, Delegation of the European Commission to Turkey, and Undersecretariat of Treasury Central Finance and Contracts Unit. Recently, the number of our works with Metropolitan Municipalities and private sector is increasing more and more.



## Are there any alliances with foreign companies in the future?

Some companies in Europe had started to notice our success through our international projects, and after 3 years from our foundation; they had started to show interest. In 3-4 years, DeLeeuw International had become a company which was wanted to be purchased with a good brand name, niche and success. On April 2007, we said yes to a merger that we thought will be a good synergy for both corporations and WYG acquired DeLeeuw International. After this merger, we became a more successful institution in the region by merging our experience in the region with the experience of WYG, which is one of the most successful institutions in UK and world and which is a consultancy company with 3500 people. Therefore, the company continues to grow each year. While I continue to be the managing director of DeLeeuw International, I am also trying to make contributions to

WYG International as a member of the Board and Director. Now, my prior aim is to make WYG and DeLeeuw the best consultancy company of our region.