

IMAGE

Portrait of a lawyer in a woman's suit

How to maintain your femininity and freshness in a business dominated by men? A story told by Cristina Ghica, one of Romania's successful young lawyers. **Oana Coşman**

„YOU MUST BE SO GOOD that you can even wear jeans in court“, a faculty professor kept telling her. And Cristina Ghica, founder lawyer of Ghica Boutique Law Firm, may as well do it because she is that good. It does not mean that she appears in court or before the clients other than with sober elegance and extremely well prepared in all the details of the case, she says.

We started our discussion about clothes and look because in our country, at least in the legal profession, your image is truly a defining element. More often than not, it makes the difference between gaining and losing a client.

„Image matters a lot. Until you become known, your image is the one that sells. It takes long enough for a potential client to realise that you know very well what you are doing and quite often the client forms an opinion during the first meeting“, says Cristina Ghica.

On the other hand, abroad, people focus on the training level of the lawyer, a quite widespread practice being that a client follows the lawyer regardless whether she or he works for a top law firm or runs own business, even a small one.

However, Cristina says that the most important thing is that you feel good in your skin and adopt a decent conduct primarily to show self-respect. „Let's face it, we have a different attitude when we are elegant, dressed according to a business code“.

And we come to our second subject of equal importance, even nowadays, in 2014: how to practice a profession as a woman in a field in which men set the rules, especially when Cristina's passion, and her niche of practice, is business law.

„There are times when you have to fight to make your presence felt there“, she says about the business meetings she attended during her career of more than 10 years. But it is also an advantage: „If you know what you are talking about, you did your «home-work» to the last detail and make them listen to you, you earn them instantly“.

I wanted to stand exactly where I should be, neither higher nor lower. This is how it came up the idea of a „boutique law firm“.

And Cristina Ghica knows how to make herself heard. Maybe that is why, before she started her own law firm, she worked in-house for some of the top multinational companies in Romania: Volksbank, Anchor Group or Argo Capital Management Property, corporations that have instilled a high level of business conduct. Moreover, in her opinion, the experience gained in the legal department of a corporation is defining: it prepares you for any problem that your future client may face and it helps you to understand how all departments, with whom you come into contact, operate; business culture being quite difficult to gain when you are on your own even from the beginning.

„I learned to make strategies, to be organised and to be a manager“, she says. She defines herself as a person of detail, an important aspect for a good lawyer, and she likes to get involved in a project when she has a full overview of all pieces of the puzzle.

Maybe the mathematics and science high school that she graduated in Piteşti, her hometown, or performance sports (swimming and volleyball) that she practised are „to blame“. And even if her grandfather dreamt of her becoming a doctor, she was determined to become a lawyer ever since she was a child. „In the 5th grade, one day, I went home and decided I wanted to go to the law school. When I was a child, I used to say - «it is our right» and I wanted to become a lawyer and to make justice“, says Cristina.

In law school, she wanted to become a prosecutor and take the magistracy exam. „I changed my mind when an unfortunate event took place and one of my mentors, with whom I was preparing my diploma paper in Criminal Proceedings, prosecutor at that time, died. In that moment I realized that my choice was not the right one, that the pressures and implications were huge“.

Until 2010, Cristina Ghica worked as in-house lawyer, working for 4 years within Anchor Group, one of the most important real estate developers on

PHOTO LASZLO RADULI



CAREER
Cristina Ghica is a founder partner of Ghica Boutique Law Firm

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the local market (the group holds Bucharest Mall and Plaza Romania, the first shopping malls in Bucharest, Shopping Moldova in Chisinau, InCity Residences, as well as an office building, Anchor Plaza).

She also coordinated the team of lawyers, who successfully carried the international group split-off, one of the achievements she is so proud of.

In the present, Cristina Ghica has her own law firm, a boutique that she opened in 2011. Why a boutique on her own and not under the umbrella of a big law firm? Because she wanted to do something different. „I wanted to stand exactly where I should be, neither higher nor lower. This is how the idea of a «boutique law firm» came up, a new concept on the Romanian market, which exists in the United States of America for more than 100 years“, stated Cristina Ghica.

With this approach, Cristina tries to bring the client-lawyer relationship to a new level, the lawyer being a business partner who attempts not only to earn the client's trust, but also his/her understanding - an idea that persisted in her memory due to the business culture in which she nurtured. With her experience mainly focused on the corporate (national and international), commercial, banking and real estate fields, this young lady managed to create a law firm that is known for its professionalism.

One of the things she takes pride in? Last year she won the litigation files received (quite a lots), although this is not one of her favourite areas.

As for the next step, it will not pass too much time before we may see Cristina Ghica abroad, in Paris or London, leading the legal department of a corporation or the team of a top law firm. We do not exclude that anything could happen. For now, her steps will lead next toward to an MBA programme. ■

MANY THANKS TO JW MARRIOTT BUCHAREST GRAND HOTEL FOR THE LOCATION