

Valentina Kislaya

The Founder & CEO of the Phoenix Leaders executive and leadership training consultancy and the first Private Members' Club for the Cypriot business community on why she chose the specific venue for The Club, how she spends her free time, and how she maintains a good work-life balance without describing it as such.

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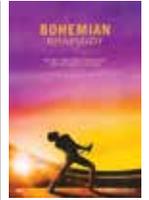
spend about 30% of my time in Cyprus and the other 70% in the UK, where my son goes to school. In my final year of high school in Belarus, we were asked to write what we expected to be doing five years later. I wrote that in 5 years I wanted to have my own company and in 10 years a family. In the end, I had a family first and a company second. I have a BA in Modern Languages (English and German) and Intercultural communication. I grew up in a home surrounded by books and I have never lost my love of literature and always have a book on the go; right now I'm reading *Work Like a Woman* by Mary Portas. During my first year at university I worked for an advertising agency, which was the first to translate Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged* into Russian where



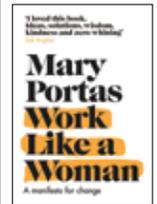
I managed to get a hold of a copy. I then read *We The Living* in English and that changed my attitude to the English language completely. As for the idea of starting up my own company, I didn't know what it would be but I knew enough not to surround myself with people like me! I also knew that my business had to be connected to my values and the concept of legacy, which has always been very important to me. The Club is a symbol for me in so many ways: the previous owner of the building wanted to knock it down but I knew that I had to preserve it and bring it into the 21st century. I guess this had a lot to do with the idea – probably also taken from Ayn Rand – that, in order to become a real member of society you need to learn everything, take as much you can and then give something back. For me, The Club is a way of showing respect

and gratitude to the Cypriot community. I don't believe in work-life balance as such; it all comes down to values and the choices we make on a daily basis. If I know that my son has a football match on Wednesday at 2pm, I schedule my meetings around it to make sure I'm there because it matters to me, not because I have some sort of ethereal concept of work-life balance in my head. I respect and understand the fact that he needs and wants some time with me and of course I want that as well. We have to be flexible. A musical ear for languages is pretty much all I've got when it comes to music! I am very sensitive to words so I tend to listen more to a song's lyrics rather than the tune. There's a group that I love called Okean Elzy that sings in Ukrainian. I also like Alicia Keys, especially the song *Brand New Me*, again for the lyrics! I discovered jazz in Atlanta, Georgia on my first trip to the United States and it really touched me. I watch very little TV and seem to be one of the few people who have never watched – or read – *Game of Thrones* but I watch movies, often with my son. I've already seen *Bohemian Rhapsody* three times and it inspired me to

read a biography of Freddie Mercury to know how much of it was true. A documentary which really resonated with me was *Fail State*, about higher education in the US, as did the film *On the Basis of Sex*, which is all about the lawyer Ruth Bader Ginsburg. I always pick up magazines at the airport like *The Economist* and *The Spectator* and I go online for local news from Belarus and Cyprus so I mix and match my media. Just as I did at school, I still think about what I'm going to be doing in five or ten years' time, all I know is that I want the company to grow, both here and in London so for the time being that's where I am putting all my energy.



I've seen it three times



My latest read



A favourite band of mine

THE CONCEPT OF LEGACY HAS
ALWAYS BEEN VERY IMPORTANT TO ME