

IN THE PRESS



One of the oldest established Armenian businesses in Istanbul, BerKac has survived the political and economic turmoil in Turkey, yet it has remained steadfast serving its community that it was established for. Like many family run businesses, it has undergone the traditional business transition of handing over from father to child, or in this case the elegant and London educated daughter. Read the interview below of the business that has integrity etched in its very foundations:

ACCC: *When was the business first established and who started it?*

Tamar Kaç Erdavityan: *Berç Kaç started the business in 1960. We are the oldest organization company specialized in Baptism, Wedding and Funeral services in Armenian and other Christian communities located in Istanbul.*

Berç Kaç was born in 1943 in Istanbul. He is in the Armenian Church community as Arch. Deacon and in this field since 1960. In his professional life, due to the knowledge of his church services, he has been planning the events related to church.

I was born in 1977 in Istanbul. Studied Marketing & Advertising in Istanbul University and completed BTEC Degree in Management Studies in London. Contributing to the business with decoration and invitation design as well as event planning.

Our business covers 3 major fields in Armenian and other Christian communities living in or out of Turkey: Weddings, Baptisms and Funeral Planning & Transportation. We are working with consulates and helping to foreigners for their funeral & cemetery transportations.

ACCC: *Why do people need you and your services?*

TKE: *Because our business covers too many detail and especially procedures that people usually don't have time or wish to deal with them. We are the oldest professionals that have been serving*

to the community since 1960 with 100% satisfaction.

Also as we are in touch with the families, the business is related to relations / connections as well. Let me give you an example. People have their own local barber or a family doctor or a jeweler ... they also have a planner for their family who deals with funeral, wedding and baptism services and all procedures. Thus, business passes through the elders of the family to the younger members.

ACCC: *Is the business purely a family establishment or do you have other partners?*

TKE: *Our business is purely a family establishment and my father Berç Kaç brought to the business to this stage with his own efforts and good service.*

ACCC: *How did the business start and what led to its growth?*

TKE: *Our business started with the decision of my father Berç Kaç. He has been in the church community since his childhood and due to the knowledge of the services and good connections he started to do "planning" business professionally. He became a brand name in Armenian community in Istanbul. And also to the Armenians who are left from Turkey and now living in abroad.*

ACCC: *How many employees do you have? How is the business structured?*

TKE: *We are a small organisation in our premises. But as we established a good working system, we can handle many organisations at the same time. We have [24/7] service and available to reach by a phone call. Once we receive a call, we can take care of an emergency situation within a few hours. Such as, in case of a death, we take the deceased to our morgue and handle the burial procedures within the same day. And the following day, funeral services can take place in the church with every detail is planned. Such as newspaper ad, flower arrangement, cemetery is cleaned etc...*

ACCC: *In terms of market share, how much of it do you think BerçKac has garnered?*

TKE: *According to the brand awareness and quality of service, we are number one. But for the last 10 years, this business became very popular among the Armenians and therefore our competitors are increased. This affected to our business and market share. But we have our loyal customers and therefore continue our business.*

ACCC: *Do you get invited to work on media and famous events? If so can you give some examples?*

TKE: *As our business in a community job, the Turkish people are not quite interested in therefore they do not know us. Some do, but this is just because they have Armenian or Christian connections. Therefore we have not invited to a famous event yet.*

ACCC: *What is the majority of your client's background? Can you specify the percentage?*

TKE: *The majority of our Clients are Istanbul Armenians. Also, we do have a good reputation in USA. They are mainly Armenians who left from Istanbul. Some of their will was to be buried in the family cemetery in Istanbul and we did take care of Funeral transportation of those families.*

ACCC: *Do you feel that BerçKaç will benefit if Turkey is granted full membership in Europe?*

TKE: *I don't believe that Turkey will be a member of EU but if it happens I am sure this will have positive effect on every businesses and maybe we will benefit as well. I guess baptism and wedding can take advantage of this situation. (As the funeral service is running already)*

ACCC: *Do you have any trade links with Armenia? If so, how do the trade conditions compare?*

TKE: *We do not have any trade links with Armenia.*

ACCC: *Whilst your business mostly gravitates towards happier events such as weddings, Baptisms and so on, what led you to add funeral service?*

TKE: *Actually Berç Kaç is mostly associated with Funeral Arrangements but with my (Tamar Kaç) contribution of the business we started to gain percentage of baptism and wedding events especially on the decoration and design services. But still we are mostly known as funeral home.*

ACCC: *Are you generally known as an Armenian business and does that have any impact on your trade?*

TKE: *We are known as Armenian business and as we are doing our business within the community. And there is no impact of our trade.*

ACCC: *Do you work with other Armenian business in Turkey?*

TKE: *Our Clients are mostly Armenian but our suppliers are Turkish people. Such as flowerist or coffin maker. Because no Armenian are doing that job any more.*

ACCC: *What is your hopes and dreams for the future?*

TKE: *Our dream is to be able to continue our business according to our traditions.*

Also to be able to serve to the Armenians around the world in their happy days as well. We do not want to be remembered only in the sad moments. We also would like to be helpful on their happy days with our designs. As Turkey is still very cheap compare to Europe, I believe there can be opportunities for us on invitation printing, decoration items and candy designs. We can produce and deliver those materials to abroad.

Also destination wedding became very popular. Especially for Greek people. They come to Istanbul to get married so Armenian people can consider that too... they can come to Istanbul as we have 38 Armenian churches with beautiful gardens suitable for Weddings and events.

By Contributor/ACCC of GB