

Member Spotlight: Mădălina Hristescu

The pioneer woman: why Mădălina Hristescu enjoys the challenge of the great unknown



Mădălina founded the Hristescu & Partners Law firm in 2010 in Bucharest, Romania. Later on, she developed a branch of the firm in Rome.

As a Founder and Managing Partner is involved daily in administration, talent acquisition and business development.

As a Lawyer, she counsels clients on Banking, Non-Banking and Financial Services, Corporate Governance, Employment & HR, Real Estate sectors and coordinate Mergers & Acquisition transactions.

As an Entrepreneur, she understands and supports the daring challenge of the status quo, by investing resources in start-ups that may shape our future.

Mădălina is a graduate of the Bucharest Faculty of Law and her professional training includes also London School of Business and Finance LSBF, Boston University School of Law - Contracts & International Business Transactions, Churchill College, Cambridge - Leasing school Program.

Previously, Mădălina has led the Legal Department of an international corporation and she currently acts as a Council Member of the European Regional Forum-International Bar Association (IBA) and an Official Partner of the Financial Institutions' Association in Romania (ALB).

When recalling the final dark days of Nicolae Ceausescu's rule in Romania, Mădălina Hristescu has an abiding memory of an elegant female lawyer who lived next door to her family.

She was a glamorous, professional woman in a male-dominated industry. An impeccable figure amid the drab mediocrity of the country's stifling, bankrupt communist regime and the vision stayed with Mădălina, lighting a spark that has burned bright ever since.

"There was something about her grace and her purposeful way of being that was mesmerising and inspiring," Mădălina recalls. "Especially since it all took place in the '80s when Romania was under the communist regime and the legal professionals were a rare breed. I wanted to be like her."

With the death of Ceausescu and his regime, Mădălina had the good fortune to grow up in a Romania that was more liberal and open to the West. At school, inspired by her glamorous neighbour, the legal profession was an obvious choice for Mădălina. It was exciting, offering a world of intellectual creativity where a strong sense of character can make all the difference.

Start out on a career

After graduating with a law degree, she was hired as legal counsel by an international banking group where Mădălina worked for eight years. It was the start of the millennium and Romania was beginning to attract foreign investors and capital – perfect timing for an ambitious lawyer eager to forge a career.

"It definitely shaped me into the professional I am today and gave me the taste of this niche for finance and business," Mădălina says. "What also weighed a lot was the fact that I was part of the founding process of an emerging sector – the nonbanking financial institutions sphere – which created a con-

nection with the clients that I still represent today.

"The beauty of this industry, and of this niche in particular, combined with the range of investment potential and M&A-related opportunities, is what allows me to play with legal instruments that benefit my clients' businesses."

Growing and taking risks

With several years of experience in finance behind her, Mădălina decided to take the risk and open her own practice. It was a huge decision given that the legal profession was still young in Romania and women lawyers were a rarity. But that was precisely why she took the risk; it was a cause she believed in.

"Everything you do is a challenge when you're a risk taker – and I am," she smiles. "Every time I get involved in different causes, I try to make sure they are for the right purpose, and I always make peace with the risks they open, because I follow my passions and don't accept any compromise. I draw very steady lines in the sand and never cross them, which has been a guiding principle throughout my career."

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Starting my own company

Mădălina admits it was a huge challenge for a young woman with only few years of legal experience. But she knew she had to act to make a name for herself in such a closed industry where the established, international legal players own a big slice of the market. Above all, she had to have a unique selling point to compete.

"Being part of a very stiff market, where practices that are client-oriented such as not billing by the hour, but by the solution, are a novelty that sets you apart immediately.

"It's easy to stand out if you're just a little different, but I got used to doing things our way because it comes with the job.

"I firmly believe that a law business is a business first, which means that the clients' interests should be prioritised. This is the point from which you scale up. But once you're ready to be different, things become smoother and fall into place."

A pragmatic approach to business

This pragmatic approach to running her own business and working with clients has helped to ensure that Mădălina and her colleagues are able to deal with even the most chaotic and stressful of circumstances.

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"I wake up every day with the hope to resolve everything from my daily agenda and in 22 years of practice it's rarely happened. Unpredictability is a huge part of the day – and handling chaos comes with the job.

"I do try to keep everything as organised as possible, through careful time allocation. It's essential not to give in to pressure and stress, but the truth is that unfortunately this doesn't happen too often."

To overcome the pressure and ensure that clients' problems are handled properly for the right resolution, Mădălina always approaches risk with what she terms 'future-ready' solutions: "Being future-ready means you have to be on top of the wave and to welcome change when it benefits you, even if it means having to rearrange your business model or your communications process.

"The power to adapt and strategise depends not on the way that you're used to doing things, but on the particular set of needs that every client walks in with. And it stretches beyond that too. It can be about anything, ranging from the way you handle every business opportunity, to embracing the power of digital.

"It's not an easy thing to do, being flexible. But it keeps you in check, and it gives you balance, and purpose, and the framework you need to create a climate of sustainable and controlled growth. Be simple, pragmatic, and always save your client's time."

Work/life balance

As a risk taker and someone who likes to win in life – and work hard to win for her clients – Mădălina is only too aware that she has to compromise her personal life for the interests of the firm. But she also approaches her work/life balance in the same way she approaches all her tasks – it's a challenge to resolve. Relaxing and taking time off predictably for Mădălina has an almost entrepreneurial zeal about it. Her perfect solution is to get away, right away, from everything. Splendid isolation – and plan it properly.

"I do decompress," she laughs. "For instance, I take vacations where I get the chance to relax. I seek locations that are isolated; I love just going out with the boat for a week or being in places where I don't meet people for two or three days in a row."

She finds travelling a recipe for recharging her batteries and refueling. It helps her disconnect from the social and professional ties that are always working in the background to somehow pull her back into work mode.

"For the past few years, I've been intensively preoccupied for always optimising my time as much as possible as I've learned that stress is damaging in the long run and that time allocated to myself is not wasted, but well invested.

"It never gets easier. Work. You have to be ready for an industry that swallows you whole and transports you into its depths. It's not an easy professional choice, but it's the right one if you're truly passionate.

"I think that we, as humans, are the results of the rooms we've been in, of the people we've interacted with most meaningfully, of the social contexts that we've exposed ourselves to. From this point of view, my proudest achievement is being surrounded by magnificent professionals, who are fundamentally good people striving to make a change for the better and whose determination is contagious."

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Without doubt Mădălina is a pioneer and has been since she caught glimpses of her elegant lawyer neighbour all those years ago. It helped her to reach goals she knew were achievable, they just needed that passionate drive to succeed: "I enjoy being a pioneer and exploring new paths that other people run away from out of the fear of the unknown. This great unknown is to me a universe of possibilities that are worth exploring."



Mădălina Hristescu

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Hristescu & Partners is a law firm that provides legal services for Romanian and international companies, including assistance and representation, with strong credentials in the business law. We aim to provide our clients a completely different consultancy approach, as we grow into a partnership that our clients never had, and we answer to questions they never knew they had to ask.