

# For spotting an opportunity, Alexandra is equal to the task

**SMALL WORLD**  
SUZANNE DENNIS

After spending much of her career trying to ensure other people get fair treatment in the workplace, Alexandra Papadopoulos is now seizing her own opportunity in the private sector.

While her recently established company Workplace Solutions is still very much in its infancy, the timing for Ms Papadopoulos could not have been better.

A longtime Hong Kong resident, Australian-born Ms Papadopoulos was employed by the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) for nine years, a period that she says provided much food for thought on workplace environments and relation with workers and their rights.

"I arrived in Hong Kong in 1992 and was working for the government doing prosecution work and really enjoyed it but wanted to develop other skills," says Ms Papadopoulos. "So I did a post-graduate diploma out of Sydney University majoring in arbitration and alternative dispute resolution [mediation], which interested me greatly and was something I was told I was quite good at.

"In 1996, I saw an EOC advertisement for a legal adviser required to head up the legal services division and the role of mediator was one I was extremely interested in, however, little did I realise I would dedicate myself to this for nine years.

"My motivations for establishing Workplace Solutions was that I now



**Alexandra Papadopoulos: finding solutions**. Photo: Jonathan Wong

want to fill the gap I have become aware exists between an existing government statutory, and neutral, authority in its provision of very general advice and that given by the big human resource companies and legal firms, as prior to my company there was nothing in between."

In September, she established her company to meet the needs of organisations which require expert knowledge to create working environments that are conducive to happy and productive employees and which result in satisfied customers.

"Workplace Solutions offers training and consulting services in respect to a numbers areas, including unlawful discrimination [on the grounds of sex, pregnancy, marital status, disability, family status and race], sexual harassment, racial harassment, victimisation and vilification, development and implementation of policies and procedures,

handling of grievances and complaints, neutral fact finding/investigation, mediation and facilitation, and conflict management and resolution."

It is a one-person operation, but Ms Papadopoulos has consultants and trainers whom she can call on to assist in relation to the particular needs of clients. "I feel that this is really the best way for me to operate at the outset, as it also provides me with flexibility in relation to not only workload, but the specific expertise being sought by a particular client."

Ms Papadopoulos says her initial company start-up costs were around \$100,000, which included an office and clerical support at a business centre, production of company literature and the creation of a company website.

As with all new small business, Ms Papadopoulos says that the biggest hurdle is creating awareness of the company's presence in the marketplace, together with an understanding of the very specific services offered.

"I feel establishment of Workplace Solutions is timely, especially given growing awareness in Hong Kong of both employer and employee rights and new workplace legislation that the government plans to introduce and implement," continues Ms Papadopoulos.

"There is a niche market that exists, the demand for services such as those I am offering definitely exists, and I know, thanks to my personal qualifications and areas of expertise, that I can successfully cater to the requirements of that market." [www.workplacesolutions.com.hk](http://www.workplacesolutions.com.hk)