

**Sandra Yancey**  
**eWomen Network**

Lorin: Let's look back to 2000, when you started the eWomen Network. Can you tell me a little bit about how the idea for it began?

Sandra: As I look back, I think I started the Network at a state of what I call unconscious incompetence. I mean there was more that I *didn't* know than I did know, but what I *did* know helped me get through what I didn't know!

What I knew was that the idea of a network was a viable concept that was desperately needed. I believed I understood what it is that women need, what it is that women celebrate, what it is that they desire, and what it is that makes them feel fulfilled. I knew that.

Lorin: So, how did that idea become a reality?

Sandra: Well, it was interesting. It was a result of experiences I was having that were not satisfying, and then doing what women do best. I began talking to other women.

I would talk with my colleagues and say, "This is what I am experiencing," and other women that I respected who were incredibly accomplished women were saying, "Oh, I am having that same experience, too. I am having that in Albany, New York." Another friend said, "I am having that in Alexandria, Virginia." Then another said, "That's happening to me in San Diego, California."

When I realized that it wasn't region specific, but it was life specific, if you will, I thought, "Wow! There is really something here!" What that was for me, Lorin, was my desire to begin to build my own consulting practice that I had at the time, with more local business. I live in a major metropolitan city, Dallas, and yet I had no Dallas-based clients. But I was always on an airplane and I was always

heading to Atlanta for Coca-Cola and all these various different areas for my clients. I thought, “Gosh, I hate this whole living on a plane out of a suitcase concept. What if I could balance it a little bit better with some local clients?”

So, I started networking for the very first time. I wasn't *from* Dallas. In fact, I was still relatively new. I had only been in Dallas for less than four years, so I thought, “Let me really go out and network, because I had been building my practice previously on referrals.”

And then, when I started networking, I was not satisfied with my experience. It's really that simple. I really felt like while I was going to networking events, and I was part of the experience of networking, I was relegated to the stands. I was a fan, because I was watching all of these men network with each other in amazingly powerful, productive, and profitable ways!

I wanted to be in the game! I didn't want to be the cheerleader. (Laughing) You know? I also didn't want to be a fan sitting in the stands. I wanted to be in the game!

Lorin: Exactly! Yeah.

Sandra: It seemed that the way in which they connected and moved was foreign to me. Then, I realized something. It took me a few minutes to kind of step back, observe, and say to myself, “No wonder it's foreign for me, because networking really is about communication, how you connect. Men and women connect and communicate differently.”

Lorin: Right.

Sandra: I mean, even if you haven't read the book *Men Are From Mars or Women Are From Venus*, you are familiar with the core messages that we're different. Not

that one's better or worse, not that one is more right versus wrong, but we are simply different! So, this isn't really about male bashing, this is about just being honest.

Lorin: Being human and acknowledging the differences! Acknowledging them and saying, "Men do it one way and we *can* be successful at doing it a different way."

Sandra: Right! So, I started looking at this whole thing called networking and I thought, "Wow, networking is a process, and it's probably just established on a very old traditional model of what works for men, because it's been predominantly men, historically. Networking has been around a long, long, time; and it follows a very male model. So, no wonder we are not good at it, because women have thought, "It doesn't work for us." There are going to be some women who say, "Ah, no big deal for me!" But, I've found, there are, generally speaking, more women that are *not* comfortable in those realms.

Lorin: I would say you've hit the nail on the head! Look at your business.

Sandra: So, what I felt was, if Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus, then why would we think we could effectively network like Martians when we are not in our element and we are not being our true selves? We are not being in our own self-described version of integrity.

Then I started thinking, "Why don't I just start going to some of these women's networking groups?" So, at the time – 1999 – I started signing up for some women's groups. For me, my personal experience was that they were social! Even I noticed, when I started signing up by myself, I felt odd showing up. I felt like I was...even just walking into the building, it was odd to be alone...and I realized that women were used to doing everything in pairs. They were driving in pairs, walking in pairs, registering in pairs, sitting in pairs, talking even at a table of

eight or ten, they were talking amongst themselves, watching the speaker and then leaving. I felt interruptive, even intrusive.

When I would say, “Hey, what’s your business?” I felt women weren’t reciprocal and they weren’t really engaging. I wanted to be in an environment and not be ashamed of the fact that I have a great amount of passion for my business, I want to make it work, and I want to make lots of money!

I don’t want to be ashamed of that or be viewed as shallow, or greedy, because it is NOT that for me. Money provides wealth and wealth is not all about money! Wealth is about having freedom. I want to be wealthy in terms choices and of impact! I want to be wealthy in terms of how many various different ways I can help others. Money provides various types of wealth. When handled with integrity, that’s what ultimately differentiates greed from abundance and incredible impact.

Then I found that there were other women colleagues who felt the same way. And I said to myself, “I think I’ve got something here.”

Lorin: So, Sandra, did you *think* you had something or did you *know* you had something?

Sandra: I knew I had something among my circle of girlfriends and influence. What I didn’t know was how reflective my girlfriends and circle of influence were of the larger population of women entrepreneurs.

Lorin: Can you remember a time in the past nine years that there was a turning point – an action or something that happened – that changed the way you looked at things?

Sandra: Well, ironically enough, I called a coach. The biggest thing I learned to do was get out of my own way. Unequivocally, more than money, more than technology,

more than all the things that so many people think are the requirements for building a great business, the biggest obstacle was *me!*

Lorin: You. Yeah, I think that's true for most of us, don't you?

Sandra: My guess would be yes. It was my own myopic view. I was approaching my business as a job and not as a business. I was not the C.E.O., the Chief Executive Officer, I was the C.O.E. I was the Chief of Everything. I was running myself in the ground and I was tired. I was exhausted, more than physically tired. The exhaustion was affecting my mental energy, my confidence. All of those things started getting eroded. I was lonely. I was adopting very dysfunctional behaviors. Somebody had said to me, "You've got to fake it till you make it." I personally believe that is one of the most disastrous messages and behaviors.

Lorin: I agree with that!

Sandra: While I want to always look my best and I don't need to fake that, and I always want to put on a smile; that doesn't mean that I want to fake it! I do believe your attitude impacts your altitude. I do believe that a smile and laugh can turn an otherwise negative situation around, but you can take that to a place where you are just totally not your authentic self. I don't believe ultimately you can build anything of magnitude without authenticity and in being in integrity. Anything maximized too far can become a weakness.

What I found myself feeling was that I was being an imposter. When you are faking something, it really begs the question, "If you are not true to yourself, how can be true to others?"

So, I was living this unauthentic life. People were saying, "How is it going?" and I was answering, "It's great. It's wonderful," and then not revealing that I had just

called the electric company and said, “What’s the least amount I have to pay to keep the lights on?”

When you are not in your authentic place, I don’t think you can ask for what it is that you really need. What I learned through coaching was to get myself out of the fog of it, so that I could step back and see a greater view of what was really happening. I had to take a closer look at what it was that was putting me in the fog. A lot of that was my own behavior, so I had to start experimenting with and, ultimately, adopting new behaviors.

I had to realize that I was abdicating, not delegating. I was so desperate for help that when I got it I gave it away without being really clear about what my expectations were and so people failed me, which just caused me to go back and grab everything. Here I was, Chief of Everything again!

Lorin: Everything; you recreated it.

Sandra: Exactly! But now it was worse because the volume was bigger! I needed somebody to help me. I needed to ask for help, but I didn’t want people to be afraid of my mood and think, “I can’t hurt her feelings today.” You know, when you really connect with a girlfriend who cares about you, she can’t be an unbiased third party. I don’t care what anybody says! I really believe that.

Lorin: I do, too.

Sandra: You need people that are not totally invested in keeping you comfortable, in keeping you safe, in keeping you happy.

Lorin: Because success is not any of that!

Sandra: It is through the lows and the tears and the sadness and the frustrations that often that my greatest transformations have occurred. And I think that success gives

you the leeway to, in many ways, reveal all of it, unless you are not in integrity and have something to cover up.” Do you see what I am saying?

Lorin: So, you are saying that you have revealed all.

Sandra: Yeah. I really feel that part of the power of what even the network represents to women is that we can never forget that I am still a small business owner, so I still get it!

I still feel the pain. It’s all relative. There are just more zeros, but I still get scared. Do you know what I mean? I talk about how I took a course about trying to get over my fear, which is just a ton of crap for me.

I mean I still get really scared! The difference now is that now I can frame it differently. Now I am a lot more comfortable with the discomfort of fear. Now, I can say, “Oh, I am familiar with this feeling. I have been here before and I can go away and really focus on the all the positive outcomes that have come from jumping, and how much bigger my wings are and how much farther they carry me with the more practice I have in jumping.” Things don’t always work out, but it’s never been devastating, and I think that experience is what allows you to embrace it.

It’s kind of like somebody told me one time, “What really creates success?” I think it’s practice!! Isn’t that what differentiates an amateur from a pro, if you really think about it?

Lorin: Absolutely.

Sandra: Because once you practice and practice and practice, you can anticipate what the returns are going to be. Then you can better position yourself and put yourself in a place where you are able to play the game with better brilliance and competence.

So, when you give up and you retreat, it reminds me that that is what often happens with amateurs and, therefore, they can't really anticipate what the response is going to be. So, they are going to get what they are going to get. It will be more of a non-deliberate response, and I don't know if that's the right thing.

Let me clarify... Wayne Gretzky is a hockey player. I'm using a sports male metaphor, but I think this was powerful and I have never ever forgotten it. He was interviewed one time by some sports guy before he retired and he was asked a very poignant question, which he answered even more poignantly. He was asked, "Why do you think you are so successful?" and he said, "Because most players go to where the puck is and I go to where the puck is going to be."

Lorin: I love that!!

Sandra: That is what differentiates a pro from an amateur; the great from those that just try and never really make it.

Lorin: And the anticipation of our actions and getting to know ourselves well enough to know that if I take or accept this action, this is the result.

Lorin: So, how do you set goals? What is their role in your life?

Sandra: My goals are everything to me! I live for goals. My goals are tied to my dreams. I find that when you dream great dreams, they don't just come true, but they can just extend farther than you can ever imagine. I set lofty goals because I believe that it's easy to play it safe a lot. If you ask yourself, what do you think we can really achieve? Well, that's not a goal to me! That, to me, is just an expectation. What do we expect to achieve? So, I don't set expectations. I don't even like that word. Expectation is the slam dunk. I want to go beyond that. Somebody said, "Reach for the moon. Even if you fall short, you'll land among the stars."

Lorin: That's right. I know that.

Sandra: You know, I have actually had employees (who are no longer employees to be real honest with you) who rolled their eyes at my goals, at my dreams, because they felt that they were so lofty that they were unachievable. I am okay with that, because I never achieve my goals. Do you know what I mean? What I need you to know is I set them that way on purpose. Do you know why? Because that reminds me that life is the journey, it's not the destination. You never really get there!!

Lorin: I love that! I love that you are willing to admit that!

Sandra: Yeah! So, when I set goals and I say, "This is the dream, I know that it will never happen, but I also know that it will stretch me and everybody else around me farther than what we would do if we just set expectations."

I believe when you set great goals that they work in a couple of different ways. While you work on them, they work on you. You've got to be able to believe what you see, imagine the glory of the accomplishment, and also not beat yourself up. Also, enjoy where you are at and know that you learned a lot, you stretched more, and you're in a far better place than had you just set expectations. Think about it. Expectations has what word within it? Expect. Well, you know, if that is what you expect, does that really stretch you? I don't think so.

Lorin: Definitely not!

Sandra: I love *my* opinion.

Lorin: I think that most people wouldn't admit that they don't reach their goals, and I think that in more cases than not, that is true. But, that's the nature of setting goals.

Sandra: Oh, I set myself up so that I don't reach them. I really do! But I don't set them so that I believe, "Why bother, if you can't achieve it?" A lot of it is not just the concept of goals and dreams, but it is your attitude towards them as well, because there are people out there that will say, "Well, if you'll never accomplish it, why bother?" And I say, "Because it's the quest and it's the journey." It's the challenge of going after it. I always stop and look back and say, "Wow! Maybe I didn't get it, but look how far I have come! You know, I'm not on the moon, but I'm in the stars!"

Lorin: Exactly! The view in the stars is spectacular. Look where the moon took me! So, how have you been able to blend career and motherhood as you are "going for the moon?"

Sandra: Well, first of all, I have got to tell you that I think women are the natural leaders. We *so* don't give ourselves credit for being the CEO's of our household. We are raising these incredible children, which we hope to raise to be better than we are! You can almost make the parallel between our children and our employees in some ways. When you have employees, you should want the same things for them. I don't want any employee that I am better than. I try now to hire employees that are either smarter than me when I hire them, or I know all I have to do is provide some coaching and the environment and support and they'll blow me away! Because if you are the smartest tool in the toolbox, I believe you are setting yourself up, unnecessarily, for some real pain and struggles, if not, bankruptcy! (Laughter)

A CEO can never be the person that is the brightest in all the respected disciplines it takes to run and grow a business. The focus of a CEO is on learning how to inspire others to see what it is that you already see.

And going back to your original question, that is also what motherhood is all about. I'll never forget when I was a little girl and my mother, who grew up incredibly poor saying to me at one time, "My goal is that you step on me." Now, she didn't mean "step all over me," but rather you step on me so that I can lift you up and raise you to be better than me.

If I die and have done that, I will know that I have accomplished much. So, while we've acted as CEO, in terms of running the mechanics of our homes, the most important job that exists on the planet is being a mother, and being a part of developing their human potential. I find myself repeating the same things to my children that I heard from my mom.

Lorin: Wow! I have not had the opportunity to meet your son but I have met your daughter. She is such an inspiration!

Sandra: Yeah, it's a little scary. I mean, at seventeen she's an amazingly, confident, self-assured young girl. While on one hand I am incredibly proud of that, what I also know is there are a lot of life lessons that she hasn't experienced yet and so it makes me a little bit nervous about the confidence she has on her ability to conquer. But, that comes from the inherent nurturing safety element that I think we have as women, which can get in the way of our businesses. Because, really, operating a great business is a lot about living on the edge. If you wait until everything is tried and true and perfect, you are probably too late.

You are probably just a "me, too" or an "also ran." I think we have to allow our kids to reach and grow and not get caught up in trying to play it safe, and waiting until they know there is no element of failure. The truth of the matter is it is those low moments that often become the roots, the seedlings, of the greatest opportunities for transformation.

Lorin: I love that. You are just so eloquent, Sandra. I just love you. (Laughing)

Sandra: You need to talk to my kids about that, because they roll their eyes. (Laughing)

Lorin: I really feel like equality is here. In fact, there is nobody holding anybody else back. There is a shift happening...and it's happening among men, too. I'd like you to talk a little bit about your husband, Kym. From your perspective, what role has he played in your success, even the network's success?

Sandra: Okay. From a dynamic standpoint, Kym is raising a daughter! Do you know what I mean? He is married to a wife going on 30 years, and I am *not* the same person that I was 30 years ago. I am actually not the same person that I was three years ago. I actually hope that to be true. I hope that there is evidence of me constantly learning and evolving. The dynamics for Kym and I, clearly since we've worked together, are about our fundamental belief that we are a metaphor of what our business is – that relationships are everything.

In a business, you can have a great website. You can have fabulous business colors and the other associated marketing collateral. You can have an ideal business plan and a revolutionary business model and, while they are fundamentals, they are not what make success. I am not saying that they are not important. I am saying that they ultimately don't drive success. What drives success is access...and I think the same is true in a marriage. I mean, Kym and I, at this particular stage of our lives, have a lot of blessings. We have two healthy kids. We have the pretty house. We have the nice cars, a lot of those things that are nice to have. It helps, don't get me wrong, but it doesn't drive success in our marriage.

What drives success in our marriage is access – access to being honest with each other. Access to shifting our very low moments. Kym's good at coming to me when I am starting to feel a little bit nervous about something and giving me a hug and saying, "No matter what, if it all falls apart, we've got each other."

Every now and then, that dose of reinforcement of not feeling so alone is important. We have a set of dynamics where I will give him access to information that he might be passionate about and I'll just look at him and say, "This is one of those moments I need you to trust me. This will not work and I don't even want to spend the time right now quantifying it or even qualifying it. I want to make a statement. I want to look in your eyes and I want you to just know and I want to say, "This won't work. We are not doing it. Can we just move on and save ourselves a lot of anxiety and pain and frustration and opportunities to make other fabulous things happen?"

So, it's access to each other: our feelings, our fears, and our celebrations in our future.

Lorin: What you are saying then is that Kym has had to learn to trust you...and not just when it comes to your personal relationship. He represents, in my mind, how men in general have had to begin to trust women when it comes to business and when it comes to success.

Sandra: I think the word you mentioned is it and that is trust! You don't have any relationship without trust.

Lorin: But I think that is so new in business, don't you?

Sandra: Yeah!

Lorin: That's what has made equality work here, that need to trust. Equality is coming from trusting both ways. Without that, we don't have equality when it comes to business success for women.

Sandra: Everyone who knows me knows I am a counter. I like things tested and measured and one of my favorite sayings is, “While everything that can be counted, counts. But while everything that can be counted, counts, not everything that counts can be counted!”

And while I don’t have the quantitative data, I know that, qualitatively, women entrepreneurs let this get in our way and we call it an equality issue when it isn’t. I think that what holds women back is not inequality. What holds women back is a fundamental attitude or belief that what’s holding us back is our fear of wild, crazy, fabulous, outrageous, abundant success! I think we are less afraid of failure than we are of success.

We know what it means to pick up the pieces. Whether you are a mother or you’ve been a babysitter or you’ve just been around children, we see them fall and we reinforce them. We say, “It’s okay.” We get up. We give them a hug. We dust them off. We spray on a little antiseptic, put on a Band-aid, we give them a hug, and we push them and we say, “Go.”

We know how to pick up and start over. What most of us *don’t* know is crazy, abundant, fabulous, *wild* success!! I think that it’s because we don’t know what we would do with something like that...with something so big that it’s bigger than ourselves! More than anything, that’s what has held us back.

Lorin: Until now.

Sandra: Exactly! And that’s because we have access to each other! It’s the support that we give each other that gives us the power to know that we *can do it* and that we don’t have to do it alone.