

# PARTNERSHIP FEATURE: SORORITY OF SURVIVORS



## A candid *interview* with **ODESSA HOPKINS**, the Founder of SOS...

### **Was there a specific moment or situation that inspired you to found SOS?**

I come from a long line of strong women who survived everything imaginable, and yet, they never considered themselves a victim of anything. They considered it one of life's blows and, as with any fight, you take the blow and come back swinging until you're knocked out – permanently. That's what inspired me to found SOS. I know what it's like to want to give up. I know what it's like to want to give in. I know what it's like to fail – big time and multiple times; but, I also know what it's like to turn all of that into success. That's what I

bring to The Sisters of SOS. My experiences do me absolutely no good if I can't share it with other women, and help them become successful – whether in their careers, in their business or in life.

**I'm sure every woman you encounter has a special story of their own. Is there a story that has rung true to you personally or one that has reminded you as to why you started SOS in the first place?**

The story that has most impacted me was a conversation I had with a friend and mentee. Her

daughter heard me speak at an event, and went home and told her mom she must meet me. She said her daughter kept telling her this, but she couldn't figure out why. One day she called me and asked if I had time to speak with her and I told her I was busy, but could spend a few minutes with her. We ended up talking for well over an hour, maybe two. A few days later, she came by my facility to meet with me. She told me about her journey from being a prostitute, and raising her daughter in the streets, to turning her life over to God and becoming the owner of a successful landscaping company. She feared I would judge her, and told me it was like talking to Oprah. We laughed and I assured her that with my past, I was in no position to judge anyone, just to teach, and learn from, them. It's women like Jacqueline who remind me of the gift I'm blessed with. The gift of trust. Women trust me, and I value that trust.

## **Has SOS experienced any setbacks that have made you feel like running the site was more of a hassle than it was worth? What were they?**

No. Not yet anyway (laughing). If you feel like running, less than a year into your business, you're probably in the wrong business. I've never really felt like running in any business I've started. I have, however, felt overwhelmed and under-appreciated, but not at SOS.

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## **The goals of SOS are clear, but what is it you want women to feel or do after coming across/joining the site. Should they be able to define their goals more clearly, or is it simply designed to provide women with feelings of empowerment?**

Well, keep in mind that SOS is not an online site, we are a full fledged organization. We do most of our communicating

online because, in only six months, our members are already global – including in the Bahamas, Puerto Rico and Australia -- but we have both offline and online events, especially in the spring, summer and fall.

In joining SOS, feeling empowered is certainly a goal, but it's so much more than that. One of the things women get, pretty quickly, is that I hold them accountable. They're a little surprised, at first, because it's something other organizations don't take time to do. Yet, it's one of the

reasons so many don't succeed. When you have a job, your employer holds you accountable. When you're in business, your clients hold you accountable. But in between your job, and having clients, there's a space where you're just trying to make something happen and often things get started, but not completed. You get overwhelmed, and you don't do everything with excellence. You stop promoting your business consistently or you stop investing in educating yourself. Whatever those things are, our goal is to provide reminders and hold you accountable for getting things done, and in helping you move to that next level of success – whatever that is for you.

### **What is one of your favorite parts of SOS?**

Definitely the relationships I'm building with women from all walks of life. It's like traveling the globe without leaving home. We contribute and teach a lot, but I'm learning so much more – especially about the different cultures and lifestyles. I'm getting everything from geography lessons to lessons in foreign economy; and history lessons to education on religion and foreign policy. I also get to hear their stories and, hopefully, make enough of a contribution in their lives to become part of their story. So the relationships, by far, is my favorite part.

### **What kind of self-empowerment tools does SOS offer women with their membership?**

One of the self-empowerment tools all members, including our All Aboard members, who pay only \$15 a year, receive is our quarterly Live Broadcasting series. We recently conducted a broadcast series called, Wake Up Your Life with The Sisters of SOS. For 12 days we featured a different speaker, and topic, all conducted by our members – who are speakers, coaches authors and entrepreneurs. Those broadcasts are now available, free, in the Members Only portal of our website. That portal is another empowerment tool – a Video Vault of content from experts in categories of health, wealth, parenting and business. There are also weekly empowerment, and leadership, calls available to all members. That's in addition to a very interactive FaceBook group, where we have a daily agenda and theme. Of course, with the level of membership comes more tools and resources, but those are for women business owners, speakers and authors who require more promoting and assistance with building or expanding their craft. So the empowerment tools are there, and members can be as active, or as inactive, as they choose to be. As with most things, the value is based on the time and resources you are willing to invest.

### **Where can women read about your own personal story of struggles? Is it something you publicize for other women to relate with?**

I've shared my story in a few broadcasts, but I'm currently in the process of writing my autobiography. I don't want it to be another story. I want it to be a guide to getting to the next level by building your own ladder, so it's taking more time than expected. I once told someone that there is a time to tell your story, and that only you know when that is. This is my time, so I'm looking forward to completing my second book and putting it on our website.

### **I'm sure many of your subscribers learn a lot from you and your story. Do you go out of your way to listen to the personal stories of others?**

Absolutely! You can't really get to know a person without knowing their story. The best way to assist my members is to know their journey. It's especially important for my Elite and Platinum Members because we can't effectively promote them, and their business, without knowing who they are. That's like an agent trying to promote a musician, without knowing what kind of music they play. It doesn't work.

### **Along with the weekly conference calls and online broadcasts, does SOS host many live events for speakers to share their stories?**

SOS does not host events, online or offline, for women to share their stories of victimization – because our focus is on the next level. We do host events on how they started a business, how they became a speaker or coach, how they landed a six-figure income, how they got their sexy back, how they landed a contract, how they are successfully raising five kids, as a single mom – stories of next level living. People hear the word “Survivor” in our name and assume we focus on being abused, ill, victimized, etc. But, for SOS, a “Survivor” is simply a woman who, in spite of adversity, chose NOT to be a victim. So we don't talk about victimization. I tell women that you ceased being a victim when you survived the situation – no matter how difficult it was. If you're here to talk about it, you're a Survivor, so let's focus on the next level. There are enough organizations out there to hold their hand. We are not that organization, but we do support those organizations because there is value for those who are not yet ready for SOS.

### **Tell us a little bit about the sisters of SOS. Does each member offer a different kind of service?**

We have a blog called Everyday Women, and that describes The Sisters of SOS. They are you and



me. They are exceptionally supportive, talented and intelligent career women, entrepreneurs, aspiring entrepreneurs, moms, mompreneurs, senior citizens, women in transition and just everyday women. They are of various race, religion, nationalities and income brackets. They have G.E.D's, Bachelors, Masters and PhD's. The one thing they all have in common is the desire for more. What that more is varies from member to member – just as it does with everyone else.

### **What is one piece of advice you would offer a woman who hasn't had a chance to join SOS yet?**

I would encourage women to join SOS to experience the difference. When I say "experience the difference" it's because I've been affiliated with women's groups, Chambers of Commerce and other organizations for many years, and I took what I learned from them and created a company that has the best of those organizations. It's not the only organization they should join, let's be clear. I believe women should explore and join a couple of organizations, in order to meet, network and learn from, different people. But SOS, without a doubt, should be one of them. There is no contract or commitment because we want women in SOS who bring, and give, value and who want to be there.

### **Is there anything else you would like to add?**

I just want to thank Successful Startup 101 for providing the opportunity for me to share SOS with your readers. I also want to congratulate you on filling a void in an industry that caters to businesses who are up and running, but who often forget about those aspiring entrepreneurs, and those just in the mist of bringing their dreams to life. Your magazine is their roadmap, and The Sisters of SOS will be taking advantage of, and sharing, the information you provide.

I want to leave your readers with this. I set out to lead a happy, productive, fulfilled, blessed and priceless life. And, I'm living that right now! But, if I could assist women in accomplishing what their life's mission is, through their involvement in SOS, that would be the icing on a beautiful cake for the both of us.

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