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EPIISODE
41

Sandra Joseph

Show Notes at: <http://www.aesnation.com/41>



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Best of success,



John Bowen
Co-founder, AES Nation

John Bowen: As entrepreneurs, we're always challenged to be more creative; to be innovative; to really use the right-brain part of ourselves. The challenge is, most of us are left-brained, though. Today I have an extremely talented guest, who is one of the most talented right-brained people that you're ever going to meet. Sandra Joseph. Sandra really has some tremendous fame out there for an awful lot of different things, but it's pretty likely if you enjoy theater that you saw her on Broadway. She was, for about ten years, Christine in The Phantom of the Opera. I know I saw her several times; didn't know her then, but I was blown away with the talent.

Why would we, as entrepreneurs, want to bring an actor on? I've got to tell you, really, Sandra is making some huge changes. Top of her success, she's now re-writing herself as an entrepreneur, and I want her to share her story, because not only is there a lot of inspiration, but some tremendous lessons that we can bring in as entrepreneurs to make a huge difference.

Sandra Joseph, thank you for joining me today here; the magic of skype; it's great to be together.

Sandra Joseph: Great to be with you John. Hi everybody, I'm really happy to be speaking to your audience, thanks.

John: I want to set the stage, Sandra. I heard you on a good friend's podcast ... Jimmy Harding, Game Changers, and I was jogging through the Redwoods; I live in northern California, I was in one of the state parks, and I was listening. It was a long run, it was about an hour and a half, so I was listening to a couple of podcasts, and it came to yours, and I was going, "Geez, I'm not sure I'm going to listen to it, even though I love the theater and the whole thing ..." and I go, "What am I going to get out of this?" I was blown away with what you shared, the difference you're making in people's lives now going forward, how you're reinventing yourself. I wanted to share it with AES Nation because these are fellow-minded, like entrepreneurs that want to make a difference.

Before we go to all the things you're working on now, I'm going to go a little bit to the back story. Sandra, as a young woman, a young lady, a young girl ... I don't know what age you woke up and said, "I want to be on Broadway." I have some good friends who are in the theater, and there's usually a little bit of a struggle there. How did that all come about?

Sandra: Thank you for asking, I'm very impressed with you for your hour-long run through the Redwoods, I need to take a page from your book when it comes to that.

Back to the beginning for me, I don't think I ever woke up and said I want to be on Broadway, but I did have a moment when I was 8 years old. It was on a family trip to see the musical Annie, and I was about the same age as the little girl up there playing the role, and as soon as I saw her onstage, that whole evening it was like being struck by lightning. I actually wear a necklace with little lightning bolts to remind me of what that feels like. I'm sure many of us have experienced, maybe not a moment like that, but some time when you just felt something come alive inside of you.

Without even realizing it, I just felt, I want to do that. Whatever that is, I didn't have a name for it, I just ... it was love, I fell in love with that art form. But it was the last thing in the world I thought I would ever be able to do, because I was terribly shy, introverted, insecure, hiding behind mom ... I had a sparkly, outgoing sister; I was not that kind of kid who wanted to be in the spotlight at all, so it was a huge struggle.

John: That lightening, and that touched moment, that moment of truth here in seeing Annie ... I've seen Annie a lot of times too along the way; I can see certainly being inspired by that at a young age.

So at eight, you kind of go, "Geez, I want to be creative, I want to be on stage, making a difference in an awful lot of people's lives." What happened next? I can still remember, I did a play, I was Charlie Brown about that age, and my career didn't take off.

Sandra: Well, you were braver than I was. I actually auditioned for a solo in my 5th grade Christmas concert a couple of years after seeing Annie; got up my courage to audition and do this ten-second little piece of the Christmas song Chestnuts Roasting on a ... I was supposed to sing a little piece of it, and right before the concert, we were lined up outside of the gym and I happened to look inside, and the minute I saw the crowd, I started to turn red, and started to get tears in my eyes. I ran over to my music teacher, Mrs. Majors, and I said, "I'm so sorry, but I can't do it." She said OK; she was very sweet to me, and she got someone else at the last minute.

I stood back there on the risers, with the chorus, with the rest of my class, and when that moment came for that solo I watched this brave other kid from my class, it was a boy, and

he went down there and sang that solo. That was really a pivotal moment for me, because I felt such regret and such shame, and embarrassment. The same feelings I was trying to avoid by staying hidden; I was feeling those feelings anyway, but without the possible benefit, the payoff, of putting my voice out there and maybe being successful. I was so afraid of failure and humiliation that I stayed silent and hidden in the crowd.

I look at a snapshot of that moment in my life and I realize that could be the story of everyone's life; if they're not willing to take a risk and put your voice out there ... whatever that means for you. It may not be on stage, but at some point we all have to take a risk; the risk of failure. Eventually, over many years, with a lot of voice lessons, and singing in my basement, behind closed doors, I started to overcome that fear with a lot of training and excellent coaches. That's something that I still practice today; I still take voice lessons, I still train and study with the best coaches I can find, in business and as a performer.

John: Let's just stop for a second, because I think there's two big lessons for all of us as entrepreneurs, Sandra, that you're sharing.

The first thing is that everyone on this is already successful as an entrepreneur and you're thinking, "Well, there's no fear." I've got to tell you there's plenty of fear. Entrepreneurs want to mitigate risk; we don't want to embrace risk. A lot of people make that mistake. We want to mitigate risk; we want to play the game believing it's in our favor. In today's world particularly, if we're going to make a difference we have to raise the awareness. There are two things we have to do well. One, we have to delight our clients, we have to deliver a great client experience. Second, we have to have more people to raise their hand to explore working with us.

In today's world, getting more people aware of you ... I'm going to assume that you're delivering a great experience, everybody that's watching this or listening to our podcast ... the ability to differentiate yourself and get out there means that you have to communicate; you've got to use the social media, you've got to use video, you've got to use all these things, and I've got to tell you Sandra, I didn't start using it until about four years ago, and I cut the first video, and I was glad that it was never posted on the internet, because I guess nothing dies on the internet.

I want to know first thing, and this is a real important part for all of us, is just that journey, and I want to go a little bit more on the progression there, because you overcame that initial

fear after the first failure. I think Thomas Edison said, I forgot the number, but it's like 10,000 times he failed on the light bulb. He didn't fail, he just proved those were the wrong ones; he finally got the one that really worked. This is what we want to do.

The second part, and I see this in everyone that I know in theater, as well as everyone that I know in business. They go out and get the best to work with. Life's too short; it's too competitive in today's world; you want to have somebody that's walked the walk before you, that knows how to really help you excel with whatever talents that you have to do that.

This is a story not of only theater; this is entrepreneurs; this is life.

Sandra: Yes, yes. What you're doing with this podcast series, and so many of the things that you do, is letting us hear other people's stories of failure and struggle and disappointment, and certainly in my field, rejection after rejection ... but we do have to continue to stay motivated, and to learn to walk ourselves through that fear, and mitigate risk but continue to walk toward it and move through it, so that eventually we can break through. So many of your listeners know exactly what that is. You fail, you fail, you fail, and then you find something that works, and you build on that.

Yes, working with the best coaches, and learning from other people who have walked the path before you ... it's everything. For me, once I eventually moved to New York, which was in itself an enormous risk ... 88% of people in theater who are members of the Actors' Equity Association ... these are professionals ... you have to work at a high level to be able to join the union ... but at any given time, 88% of union members are unemployed. Those of us who are working ... I just heard this statistic the other day ... the average income is \$7500 a year for theater actors. We certainly don't go into this for fame and fortune and money; we go into it because we're passionate about it, and we can't help it; we love it.

If you're going to go into something like that, you're laying all your cards on the table at enormous risk, and your chances of success are very minimal, but you keep following what you love.

When I first moved to New York, I found coaches that were teaching people on Broadway at a high level, and at one point, I couldn't really afford to eat. I had a bagel in the morning, and then a plain slice of pizza at night; that was my diet.

John: No cream cheese on the bagel?

Sandra: No smear; I could not afford the luxuries of the pepperoni or the smear. I did take, I will confess, cash advances from my credit cards at one point, to be able to study with the coaches that I knew could help me achieve the level that I wanted to get to. It paid off. Working with those coaches transformed my career.

John: Let's go a little further on that, Sandra. You have the talent, the coaches are helping you bring that out and really prepare you to be very successful in theater. I do know ... we've had a chance to talk a few times before ... you didn't start out in New York, you were in Detroit; a young lady in Detroit, moving to New York, and even with all this training, my guess is you didn't show up one day and do the audition, you were the only one there and they chose you ... I'm guessing, what little I know about theater.

The reason why I'm bringing this up is entrepreneurs, there's hundreds of thousands, millions really, of entrepreneurs, we're all out there, we've got to get prepared, we've got to differentiate ourselves, we've got to show up and make a difference. We're going to get plenty of rejection too, but how did you overcome all this? My guess is there were a few other women that were behind you, that were more than happy to take over the role at any time.

Sandra: Women before me, behind me, next to me, all around me, who wanted that part and were up for that part at the same time that I was. Everybody knows The Phantom of the Opera, and the role of Christine is this iconic role for a soprano that a lot of people were auditioning for, and still are to this day; it's still running after 26 years on Broadway.

By the way, it's also the most lucrative entertainment enterprise of all time. Phantom has out-grossed even the most successful film at all time, which at the moment is Avatar. Phantom has out-grossed even that in world-wide box office sales. It's just this incredibly iconic show.

Even the chance to audition was a big deal. I was thrilled to be able to go back stage. All of a sudden this kid from Detroit ... shy, scared ... I'm standing on that Broadway stage ... I would have paid them just to let me walk around back there ... see the set and the costumes up close ... but there I am on the stage, in front of Hal Prince, this famous director who's like the Steven Spielberg of Broadway, and there's that famous giant chandelier up

above me ... well, the scared little girl from the 5th grade who couldn't sing a solo still lives in my body to this day, and sometimes she shows up when it's not at all convenient. That first audition, I was so intimidated and so nervous, and I wanted it so badly, that I kind of choked. I got in my own way, I was frozen, I couldn't move, I was like a singing head with no body. I was numb from the neck down. I did not land the leading role after that first audition, and I was crushed.

I had a couple of things in my favor; number one, I was the right physical type. You've got to fit the costumes, and I was the right type, I had the right type of voice, and they saw something in me that had potential, so they put me in the chorus on the national tour. Off I went. I was suddenly a part of the show, I was a working performer, I was thrilled.

My role actually, for people who have seen the show, there's a moment when a mannequin bursts through a broken mirror and scares Christine, and Christine faints. The mannequin was my role; I got to play a dummy for an entire year; after studying with the best coaches, I was cast as the dummy. Not quite what I had in mind, but nonetheless I was very thankful to be a part of the show.

John: That's great; out of failure becomes success, but it's not always quite the level that we wanted and so on. This is so important as entrepreneurs, I've had so many friends and peers who have just broken through, and people think of them as overnight success, and they're anything but overnight success. It was that 25-year period up until that moment and then there is that success.

So you did the national tour, you played the dummy ... I didn't know that ... what happened after that year?

Sandra: After that year, the Christine, the leading lady, was leaving our show to do another show, so they flew me back to New York to audition for the second time. There I am again, on the stage under the chandelier, decided no way am I going to freeze this time. I'm going to show them that I can be in my body, and I can move.

The second audition I went in there with pre-planned movements and choreography, and dramatic steps and gestures. I don't know if you've ever experienced that thing where you're in the middle of something and you just know it's not working?

John: It's not a good feeling Sandra; yes, I have had that feeling.

Sandra: The egg-on-your-face feeling, and the flop sweat starts ... when I finished that audition the assistant director pulled me aside and said, "What was that?" I really couldn't believe I blew it the second time. Here I'd had my scary moments, I'd gotten it over with, I should have been prepared by then. Once again, I just wanted it so desperately that I showed my desperation; I came across as phony and trying too hard ... so I blew it again.

That was a huge lesson for me. At that point I really thought, well, that's it. It's over. I'm never going to play this part. I've proven to them that I'm not capable of it, that I'm a failure. I had to hang it up, and go back to the chorus, being the dummy, and I really thought, I've hit the glass ceiling now and this is as far as I will ever get. I really had to grieve it; I was really disappointed in myself, beat myself up, hating myself for screwing up like that.

My dad was always the one that was there for me throughout this whole journey, from the night that I saw Annie and confessed in the back seat of the car that I wanted to do that with my life ... he always said, "Keep believing in yourself. I believe in you. Anything's possible." He was just always there for me, and ... I get emotional when I talk about it ... but at that time, when I was so down on myself, I talked to my dad on the phone ... he was back in Detroit, and he said, "You need to shift your perspective on this and realize how far you've come and how much you have to be thankful for. You could be back in New York, eating a plain bagel and a slice of pizza, you know? You're a working actress."

John: There are very few people ... you gave some of the statistics earlier on the equity ... I forget what it's called ... equity ... union ...

Sandra: Actors' Equity Association.

John: Yeah, Association. There are just so few that are having success; you're having success. A good friend of mine, Dan Sullivan, Strategic Coach, he has this whole concept that talks about, you're here, and ideal is way up here, and then what we do is achieve the actual, and we get so frustrated with the difference between actual and the ideal, and he calls that mining the gap. As entrepreneurs, as actors, actresses, no matter what you are in life, you do that. What we don't do, is we don't really reflect on the progress we've made, from that eight-year-old to where you are now. It really gives us an opportunity to regroup.

It doesn't mean that we have to stop there, that doesn't have to be a ceiling, but let's celebrate where we are and then see where we want to go type thing.

Sandra: Exactly, exactly. One thing that I hope that everyone listening will do, is today, have a moment to reflect and think about how far you've come. Yes, I'm sure we all still have another level that we're looking to achieve, or things we want to do with our lives. It's such a gift when someone, like my dad did for me, gives you that perspective on where you have come from, and how much there is right here, right now, to be thankful for.

John: The other thing I want to do for fellow entrepreneurs too, is something that's so important Sandra, out of that last sentence ... you should never worry alone. No matter who you are ... you're the most powerful entrepreneur in the world; you've got to have someone else that's there with you. You never go to a problem alone; you need people to trust. That's one of the reasons why we created this AESNATION.COM, is to have this virtual mastermind. There's a lot of value here, but you want to have somebody that's there with you; you have that emotional connection.

I want to play a little animation here real quick.

What was the big breakthrough? You're playing a dummy, and I know, I'm reading all the press releases, I'm just going to hold it up for a second ... I've got all these quotes here ... Oprah Winfrey, some of you know, "One of Broadway's biggest stars, an inspiration." Other quotes ... "I've had the opportunity to learn from Sandra." "Don't hesitate to give yourself this rare gift." "Sandra's message ... uplifting ... will guide you." I've got a whole ... I've got to print out more and more of this, Sandra ... so what was the big breakthrough that happened?

Sandra: The first one was after that phone call with my dad. I sat down with my journal and started writing all the things I had to be thankful for. The practice of gratitude shifted my perspective on my life, really, and this is something that I still practice to this day, every day. Looking at and really being present to what it is that I have to be thankful for in this moment, no matter what's going on.

Also realizing that when we want something with desperation, it's very difficult to show up and really be present and be in the moment. I was carrying this weight of needing to get this job into those auditions with me, and it caused me to come outside of myself.

What ended up happening was I wrote a thank-you letter to that assistant director, I let go of it, I wrote all my gratitudes, and I really felt myself release it. No sooner did I do that, then I got a phone call from my agent, saying, "They still have not found a Christine, and they want to bring you back one more time and give you one more chance."

That third audition, I walked in there and I really had surrendered my attachment to getting the role. I said, "OK, my only goal is to be myself, to be present, to be in my heart, and to sing that song as honestly as I possibly can." My goal was just to be authentic and present.

I showed up on the stage, and of course I was still nervous, of course I still wanted to get the role, but I wasn't bringing that clinging energy into it. I just said I'm just here to show up and be me, and give my heart and sole to this role in this moment ... and because I didn't carry all of that angst in there with me, I was much more real, and that's what every client, audience member, director, customer, is looking for ... they want authenticity. There are a lot of girls who can fit in the costume, and a lot of girls who can sing those songs. What they're looking for always, is, "Do I connect with this person? Do I see a real human being in there?" Even when you're playing, ironically, even when you're acting, when you're playing a character, we're always looking for the ring of truth in people that we want to work with. It's that know, like and trust factor. It's no different on stage, in a performance, as it is interacting with clients or when you're going to hire someone for a job, you want to work with people that you feel authentic and real. That was the critical key to my success, was bringing more of who I am into that space.

John: There's so much in that you said Sandra, so many lessons learned. Being present, being authentic, recognizing that's what makes people from a marketing ... I love this know, like and trust. If we're going to have more people explore working with us, that's what we need to do. As entrepreneurs, yes we're not actors, but we're on stage, we're communicating, we have to connect with people. I'm a financial guy, it's not numbers that gets everybody excited, it's that authentic, the story, giving of yourself.

Sandra, this resulted in how many performances did you end up doing on Broadway?

Sandra: Well over a thousand. I think it was somewhere ... thirteen hundred ... somewhere in there. A lot ... ten years.

John: A lot. Ten years. Just that moment, being authentic, being present, all the years of preparation, I don't want to take anything away from that, but it's that moment that you're there to do justice to what you're doing. I always think of it as we're going to do the best that we're able to do, and whatever happens, happens. That's all we can do. We can't control other people; we can control ourselves. As entrepreneurs, if you're the best you can be, you're going to win most of the time in life.

Sandra: That's it.

John: Sandra, let me do a little transition here, because this is great.

I want to go to, what are you passionate about now? As someone who's achieved a remarkable level of success ... just huge ... so many people loved your performance, you were a star on Broadway for an awful long time, where it's hard to do that, and at the same time now, you're really broken away, and you're going to be ... you are an entrepreneur. As a matter of fact, I just engaged you to come, I've got an event next week with two hundred of the top financial advisers in the world, and I've asked Sandra to come and share not only her story, but also really interact with them, to help them to understand how to create these connections so that they ... because they're more [inaudible 00:29:32] like most entrepreneurs are too ... how can we do those connections?

Tell me what you're passionate about now.

Sandra: Thank you for asking that. A year after I left Phantom my beloved father died suddenly from a heart attack, and experiences like that really shake you and shift your perception of your life. I never really thought of myself as an entrepreneur, to me that's such a loaded term. I have such respect for entrepreneurs.

I have found myself being invited to speak, which has been such a gift. After my father passed I just wanted nothing more than to follow the path that has heart and meaning for the rest of my journey. I think many of us, when we've had a big career success, a dream come true for me beyond anything I could have imagined for my life, it's no longer about climbing any ladders; for me, it's about connecting from my heart as often, as thoroughly, as I can, and living, really, from that place of emotional connection and authentic presence.

That's really what I'm passionate about now, and the way that has manifested in a career space has been really fascinating and mind-blowing for me. I did start to have inklings in the latter years of being on Broadway. I recognized that my aliveness was no longer there, that I was feeling pulled toward something else. I had no idea what that something else might be.

I went to hear a speaker named Caroline Myss. She's a wonderful author and spiritual teacher. She talked about when we get a download from the universe. I was like, "I am not getting any downloads. I've been asking, and praying, and meditating, and really trying to figure it out, and nothing is coming."

But something magical happened the night after I heard her speak. I had, I guess what would be called a download; a waking dream, a vision, an image, of myself on stage, but not wearing a costume or a wig, not playing a character, just being me.

That had never occurred to me before. I didn't even know being a speaker was a thing that someone could be. One thing led to another, and I started just meeting people, and through conversations and relationships, I started talking about things I wanted to share and inspire other people to go after their dreams. I started to get invitations, and then the really crazy thing happened, is that entrepreneurs started inviting me, people in financial services started to see a connect. They saw the connections long before I did, of my journey and the entrepreneur journey.

There are so many parallels that I didn't even realize before. I've come to recognize books like *The Experience Economy* ... I don't know if you're familiar with that one ... why work is theater ... and then yes, what every business person needs is a way to be in their authentic presence, to bring more of who they are; to differentiate themselves. It's the same thing I had to learn in my audition process. That's what makes people in business successful as well.

John: Yeah, there's a lot of research. I think it was Joseph Pine that wrote that book.

Sandra: Yes!

John: Yeah, it's a great book; it was written a while ago. I remember first reading it ... and it says all life is a stage. I know somebody said that before I did ...

Sandra: Shakespeare.

John: A few years ago. This is something for all of us to think about, because we are, as entrepreneurs, many of us are really in the entertainment industry, to engage people, and we need to take from all these disciplines, really. I really appreciate you being passionate. One of the reasons why I was listening to your podcast, and I contacted you immediately right after was, I thought, "Geez, she's going to resonate so well with the entrepreneurs I have the privilege of working with, and these top financial advisers."

This is what we're all trying to do, is blend that left and right brain; bring the creativeness in to our industries. So many things are being commoditized now, and it's the story, it's that being authentic and sharing that.

I want to get a whole bunch of things, and we're going to run out of time, so I'm going to dive into a couple of others real quick.

Sandra, we have this segment, the App of the Day. You're doing a little bit of travelling, you're coming out to San Francisco next week to visit me and a few of my friends ... what do you keep on your smartphone?

Sandra: That's a great question. I do a lot of travelling. My husband actually ... oh, I should mention this. When I was cast in Phantom, I actually fell in love with the guy behind the mask, and I married the phantom in real life.

John: I'd say that was a very successful career for both of you then.

Sandra: Yes, it worked out. He is now travelling with the national tour of The Book of Mormon, which I think is playing San Francisco next year ... so I spend a lot of time on airplanes, and I'm speaking all over, doing a lot of client appreciation events, and concerts.

One of the things that helps me stay grounded, and like I was talking about earlier, grateful and present, those are two practices for me that I really try to stay engaged with. There's an app that I keep on my phone called Intention Reminder, and it allows you to choose a beautiful background and to type in whatever little message you think you need for that day, or if you have something coming up that's important and you know you need to stay grounded. I use it as a way to ... you can set a little alarm, so the alarm goes off, and I see

this beautiful image that I've chosen and whatever words I've put there that I want to stay connected to throughout that day. It's just a way to remind yourself to be grateful, to be present, to be yourself, to take a risk, whatever it is. It's a way of supporting myself through this journey of ... really, continuing to take risks. I don't think that ever ends. The intention reminder app is something that really just helps me to stay grounded and come back to center.

John: Great. Now let me go to the next one.

This is the Book of the Day, and I'm not going to let you get off too easy, because I know you've done audio books. I'm going to put that up on the screen here. Tell us what you did here and how that relates to what you're doing now.

Sandra: Thank you for that. Actually, Carolyn Myss, that speaker and author/teacher that I mentioned earlier ... I had the opportunity of meeting her ten years after I heard her speak and got that download about becoming a speaker myself. Carolyn invited me to co-author an audio book with her. It's called *Your Creative Soul: Expressing Your Authentic Voice*. It's really about all of the things that we've been talking about; how to stay authentic, and bring what is yours forward. Bring that unique essence of you out into your life; in your business, in your creative expression. It's really about staying connected to your aliveness. We both speak on the program and I also sing five songs.

On my website there are actually ... you can download two of the songs for free, and I created a little workbook to go along with it. It's a four-cd program, but if you want the sound-byte version of what's on it you can go to my website and download a workbook.

John: Let me pull up, Sandra ... you've got a beautiful site here and it's flashing between presentations you're doing and performances you're doing ... for those of you who are not on the video podcast, it's sandrajoseph.com, and remember you can always go to AESNATION.COM to get the transcript of this, all the show notes, and the links and so on ... some tremendous resources there.

Sandra: Thank you.

John: Let me go to the last section here ...

This is Key Takeaways, and Sandra, this has been really great. There's so many things, but as entrepreneurs I'm going to focus on a few.

One, left brain versus right brain. So many of us are so in the business, and particularly if we come up on the financial side, that we sometimes lose track of that ability to connect with people. You need to really work on that, and our research on the financial side, is that before somebody works ... a successful individual works with a top financial adviser, 84% want to connect emotionally first, and then justify that decision with logic. So many of us entrepreneurs just focus on logic; we want to persuade people. It's that creating that emotional connection.

The second thing that I really want to support is the gratitude. I start my day every day by journaling three gratitudes. It's so powerful. We're so privileged; we're so blessed, the lives that we're leading, really just about everybody, if not 100% that are listening to this.

I go back to also that mine the gap; don't get caught up that you're not the ideal of what it is; no one is. You've made so much progress every day; what are the simple pleasures that you should be celebrating?

The last one I want to go is that be present. We bring so much baggage in life; the weight of the different aspirations, the things around us, and all that, but being present in that moment, giving of yourself ... what a difference it makes.

Sandra, you've lived a life of doing all that, you're here to inspire us, which I really appreciate ... thank you again for joining us today.

Sandra: Thank you so much John, it's been a privilege to be here with you and to speak to the incredible listeners that you have.

If I could just share one last thing. People often wonder how you keep it fresh every night when you're performing a thousand performances of the same song, saying the same words, and how do you go out there and give your best, night after night. It comes back to what we've been talking about ... that emotional connection.

When I was feeling exhausted and like I didn't have any more to give, a friend of mine gave me this incredible gift. He scoured the internet and found quotes that people had written on

different forums and different posts, about how seeing Phantom impacted them, how it made them feel, how it changed their life in some way ... I would keep those slips of paper in my dressing room, and pull one out before I would go on stage, and I would think about that one person who was seeing the show for the first time, and how they might have saved up their money, and brought their children or their spouse, and this was a special, special night for them ... and because we all are connected at the heart level, even the most successful, wealthy clients and entrepreneurs, really, it's about the heart, it's about what the money can do for us.

I would think about the love that my dad showed to me, the blessings in my life, and how I wanted to pour all that was given to me into that expression that night, in that moment, for that audience member, in case ... any day could be our last, and I want to show up and give as much as I possibly can out of compassion and love, really. When people are struggling and wondering how to continue to give their all, I always try to remind them just to bring it back to that one person, and think about what you would want to share if this was your last day.

John: So many entrepreneurs do get those emails and letters thanking them for the difference in lives they've made, no matter if they're selling widgets, or professional services. I think that's a great way to end this. Let's go out and take Sandra's advice. Many of us have well over a thousand performances; we're performing every day of our lives as entrepreneurs, and we're making a difference, we're making a dent in the universe, as Steve Jobs talked about. In those individual lives that we're touching, let's make a difference, for our current clients, our future clients, they're all counting on you. Wish you the best of success.

A Second Opinion on Your Finances

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Like many members of AESNation, I'm a serial entrepreneur. In addition to co-founding AESNation, I'm the founder and CEO of Financial Advisor Select, a firm dedicated to helping successful people make informed financial decisions by introducing them to top financial advisors.

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Best of success,



John Bowen
Founder and CEO
Financial Advisor Select