



Business

Sandra Jones Explains How Diversity Correlates With Profit

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SECURE Perspectives is a monthly column by the [Security Industry Association \(SIA\)](#) profiling women in the security industry. This column is part of SIA's [Women in Security Forum](#), an

initiative to support the participation of women in the security field through programs, professional development and networking events.

For this edition of [SECURE Perspectives](#), SIA spoke with Sandra Jones, a security industry veteran, insider, deal maker, author and [SSI Industry Hall of Fame](#) member. Fifteen years after founding one of the industry's first distribution businesses, Sandy started the consulting business of Sandra Jones and Company (SJandCO) in 1990.

She and her firm's other experts assist the industry's top manufacturers, integrators, central stations, investors and new entrants to accelerate their business plans, profits and growth. Sandy is the creator of SIA's New Product Showcase, a founder and producer of Securing New Ground (SNG) and a member and former president of the SIA Board of Directors.



How did you get into the security industry?

Interestingly enough, I got into the security industry when, back in 1975, my husband and I needed an alarm system with an outdoor keypad for a home we were building in Cleveland, Ohio, and there was really nowhere to find what we were looking for. My husband, an engineer, owned a manufacturing company and decided to design and build a keypad (which, by the way, functioned flawlessly for over 40 years).

He had an interest in building keypads for resale, but, not knowing anything about the market, we realized that it would be difficult to market and sell the product. We did know, however, that there was a need for a wholesale distributor of security products in Ohio.

We purchased about \$10,000 of equipment in New York, brought it back to Cleveland and made some space in front of the manufacturing facility to create Security Products Company. My husband continued in manufacturing, and I found myself in the wholesale distribution business.

I fondly remember how kind my initial customers were in helping me understand how they used the products we sold, what challenges they faced when installing them and what customers needed that manufacturers were still not providing.

I realized no one was listening to the installers or the distributors; if they had, they would have quickly discovered profits were being squandered and opportunities lost. Knowing I could make a difference, I left distribution in 1990 armed with the cumulative knowledge from dealers, integrators and my own experience and started SJandCO.

How does your organization serve the industry?

SJandCO has consistently focused on helping our clients accelerate results and increase profits in the security industry. I'm an attentive listener (a skill I developed in my childhood, as my parents and all of their friends spoke English with foreign accents). It is through my listening skills and the talents of other industry pros, ranging from engineers and marketers to financial experts and business brokers, that SJandCO was able to refine our services and serve the industry.

During our nearly 30 years, there have been three phases of services: in phase one, we primarily helped manufacturers improve their profits through better policies, marketing, product refinements and the addition of new products and services. In phase two, after 9/11, we helped many investors and manufacturers to explore the growing security industry. Our current and third phase is focused on financial guidance and mergers and acquisitions.

What is your current role?

I still do some consulting and remain active on SIA's Board of Directors.

What types of job functions do women fill in your company? Is there diversity of roles in your company, or do women gravitate towards certain job functions?

At Security Products Company, I was the first woman who worked a city counter in distribution and, by example, changed the way other distributions followed. Additionally, I hired women to serve in most of the key management roles and helped them grow in the industry. It was through my role in product selection I became the first woman to judge what is now SIA's New Product Showcase; this was also my first involvement with SIA.

I believe that women have always played an important role in the industry. Just look at any successful security dealer or integrator, and you will likely find a woman doing support and back office work — important, but maybe not in the forefront.

I moved to the forefront of the industry because I become involved in SIA and was not afraid of failing. There were many naysayers but also many who helped me succeed. I was always hopeful that leading by example would help other women succeed by breaking the mold.

After judging New Product Showcase I joined the SIA Board as the first woman and ultimately became SIA's Chairman many years ago. After that I remained on the SIA Board, chaired the Nominating Committee for many years and worked to encourage other woman to join SIA's board. I am the only woman on *SSI's* advisory council and became the [first woman to be inducted](#) into its Industry Hall of Fame in 2005.

As a founder and the producer of SNG I have always tried to find women in leadership positions to participate as speakers. I'm proud to say that I am moderating a session of all women industry leaders at this year's SNG.

With more and more data that shows diversity makes a better workforce, what opportunities do you see for women in the security industry? What impediments do you see for achieving this? What could remedy some of these impediments?

In January 2018, McKinsey & Company reported that “gender diversity in management positions actually increases profitability more than previously thought. In the firm’s previous analysis, companies, in the top 25th percentile for gender diversity on their executive teams were 15% more likely to experience above-average profits. The latest data shows that likelihood has grown to 21%.” If profits are at stake, what other proof is needed to make the case to advance woman?

What do you see as important technology trends in the security industry?

There are more elegant solutions being created through technology and innovation, but it’s not always about technology; it’s about solutions and value. Sometimes the simplest products become the most successful; look at the video doorbell.

What do you hope the Women in Security Forum can achieve for the security industry?

Creating the forum and dialogue will help women network, learn and grow. But really, it’s not just woman who should be interested; it is anyone looking to hire the right talent, understand women’s issues and add profits to their organization.

I commend SIA’s Board of Directors and chairman for creating this forum, but equally important is how SIA’s CEO, Don Erickson, has led by example by creating a diverse workforce at [SIA](#). As McKinsey also pointed out in its study, “companies with more culturally and ethnically diverse executive teams were 33% more likely to see better-than-average profits.” Or in SIA’s case, better-than-average accomplishments and benefits for their members.

McKinsey also points out “at the board of directors’ level, more ethnically and culturally diverse companies were 43% more likely to see above-average profits, showing a significant correlation between diversity and performance.” Over the years I’ve sat on several advisory boards, and now that I am not as involved in consulting, I will have more time (and fewer conflicts) to sit on corporate boards.



What advice would you give women who are in the industry?

Simple — give people more than they expect, and remember it’s about them, so listen carefully, as too often we work to solve the wrong problems. I also encourage women who have become successful in the industry to mentor other women. Over the years, I have dedicated myself to mentoring as many women as I could helping them to grow in the security industry.

Who or what was the strongest influence in your career (e.g. a mentor, an event that inspired your career decision)? How do you define success?

Like many, the strongest influences in my career were my parents, especially my mother. I was born in a DP camp in Germany to survivors of concentration camps. If they were able to make a new life after the horrors they endured, anything I encountered in business became manageable in comparison. I define our success as contributing to the success of our clients.

How do you achieve work/life balance?

Who said I have? I especially regret not spending more time with my daughters while they were growing up, but I hope, if nothing else, they learned from me because I'm proud to say they have become successful, independent and talented woman.

What would you say to new women coming into the industry?

I have been in the industry over 40 years, so I have had many firsts, but this industry is about the future, not the past, so think of all your firsts yet to come. Keep moving forward, give 110%, be honest to yourself and don't forget to laugh along the way.

Learn more about [Sandra](#) – and SJandCo.com