

PRODUCTION

Interview: Kim Moses: Women in TV being told “no” should find the “yes” elsewhere

The executive producer behind *Ghost Whisperer* and *Reckless* explains how to further the cause of women in the TV industry

by JAMES MARTIN on JULY 9, 2014

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As a principal in [Sander/Moses Productions](#), Kim Moses is behind shows such as **Ghost Whisperer** and **Reckless**, and actively tries to change women’s role in the TV industry, notably through the group of 12 influential women she founded, **The Vault**. She answered our questions regarding this fight for equality that impacts production processes, casting decisions, viewers’ habits and TV management.

MIPBlog: Key crew and cast members of *Reckless* are women. What difference does that make, both in terms of the end result, and in terms of entertainment industry working processes?

Kim Moses: On *Reckless*, having so many women in key creative and technical positions behind the camera as well as strong women in front of the camera — and a female creator, Dana Stevens — is very valuable because the hook of the show is: Sex and romance are the lynchpins between cops and lawyers in the hot, sultry south. This show could go a lot of ways and become very exploitative in the wrong hands, which I do not believe is what most women want to watch on TV. However, women today are very much in touch with their sexuality. Think about how things exploded with *Fifty Shades of Gray* when women started reading it! And **women are strong but we also own our femininity; sex and romance is nothing that women want to shy away from.** To make all this authentic, we needed women to help us thread the needle creatively on *Reckless* (*watch extended preview below*).

> Would you say women in entertainment are more influential now than, say, 20 years ago?

Absolutely. I love that when I go into meetings at the networks and studios there is more of a balance in gender than when I first came to Hollywood. **The entertainment industry just like most other businesses still has a ways to go** – in regards to show creators and women behind the camera as well as women in front of the camera in the feature world. But TV is definitely getting better and better. One of the key reasons I believe the TV industry is making strides is because **sponsors and networks understand that women are the loyal watches of dramatic television** — we return over and over again to see our shows, and our beloved characters. We are also the most aggressive in social networking, particularly when it comes to connecting and recommending content we love. And we drive e-commerce, so it makes perfect sense that sponsors and networks and digital platforms want to engage women with content women are interested in. Furthermore, we can do that without the exclusion of men. The brand of my company is: **Female empowerment with a twist that brings in men.** Reckless does that. Ghost Whisperer did that. And the new show I'm working on for FOX certainly does that.

> What progress remains to be made in this domain?

One of the most important things is for women to become even more proficient in mentoring up and mentoring down. Our male counterparts across the aisle do this really well — women in every business globally need to do more of this and you can only do it if you understand the value of it. Take a law firm for example. A male lawyer organically mentors young men coming into the firm, then when the mentor gets older, the guys he mentored, turn around and mentor him by moving business his way, making sure he has an office, etc. Women do it, but not as much or as well. Consequently, **we age ourselves out of the business faster than men do.**

> Why did you form The Vault?

Because of my unique expertise as a woman working at the intersection of TV and digital media, I do a lot of speaking engagements all over the world. And in doing so, **I discovered that it was mostly men on the panels with me or I was the only woman at the podium and very few women were in the audience.** So I found myself swapping strategies with lots of guys – and they are really smart men — but **for every one of those men, there's a woman who's equally as smart that we're not hearing from.** So I decided if I brought together a group of 12 influential women doing amazing things around the world, and every month we asked another fascinating woman outside of The Vault to join us, I and the other women at The Vault could grow expeditiously and support each other through that growth. It's not that men aren't invited as special guests. We figure when we run out of fascinating women, we'll turn to the men!

> **Why was it important for you to be featured in *Stiletto Network*? How have books like this, and Sheryl Sandberg's *Lean In*, helped further the cause of women in business?**

First of all, it was truly an honour to be included in Pamela Ryckman's fascinating book because the other women featured on her pages are so impressive and doing amazing things. Honestly, I feel like a junior leaguer compared to them. And Pamela did an outstanding job researching and writing the book that revealed an underground railroad of women working to help each other — all across the United States. It's important for books like *Stiletto Network* and *Lean In* get out there because: "see it, be it" — **If there are no role models for women of all ages, than how do we know how to create a strong viable path forward?** I did not have a role model where I grew up — I was raised in a small coal mining town southwest of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania – and it was a poor, isolated area — I believe I was a late bloomer specifically because I had no role model when I was young. Today, I'm the luckiest girl in the world because I'm working in the entertainment industry and in Los Angeles, I am surrounded by role models. Therefore, **it's my duty to be a role model to other women and help them find their paths.** Or connect them with women who can.

> **You've said it's important in life to "break rules purposefully." Which rules do you think women in entertainment should focus on breaking first and foremost?**

My favorite thing is to break rules purposefully! Systems don't always have the answers.

Sometimes, you have to step outside the system to get perspective and to create change.

Systems deal in absolutes, but there are a lot of grey areas. So don't be governed by absolutes.

When you're being told "no", and if what you're trying to do has true value in your eyes, then find the "yes" somewhere else. And act on it. But be prepared to get knocked down. Persevere. If you're going to be a rule breaker, you have to be resilient to the core. When you get knocked down, get up! It's what my mom used to always tell me — "Get up! Get going!" But it's important when you break rules to learn from it: **How and why I broke rules; how it feels to do that; what I learned; take responsibility for it; and watch myself learn.** And don't make it about ego. Motivation and perseverance need to be about creating the future instead of defending the past.

*Kim Moses has been in the TV industry for over 20 years, as the executive producer of successful realities series and network shows such as *Ghost Whisperer* and *Reckless*. She co-founded *Sander/Moses Productions* with her husband Ian Sander, and works to further the role of women in media.*