

# *One inspirational woman's secrets for success.*

BY **KATE ORSON** - FRI, 25 OCT 2013

Lisa Mundembe-Chuma moved to Switzerland less than two years ago, but she's already been busy. She hosted the country's first Women's Expo in 2013, and continues to inspire and support women as chief editor of Inspirational Woman magazine. I met up with her to discover why she's the woman every 'mumpreneur' should know, and to hear the very personal story behind everything she does.



## **So how was the first Women's Expo?**

We had a great turnout. There were 85 exhibitors and over a thousand visitors came through the door. There were all different types of women, some with children and a good number of men as well. Everybody seemed to feel that something significant was happening.

## **It must have felt very rewarding.**

Yes. My biggest goal is to promote and help women become successful in whatever they want to do. It felt great to see that happening, to be able say I made it possible for all those women. It was so busy that some exhibitors started setting up at 7am and didn't even take a break until 3pm. I thought "Wow! I knew it would be good but I didn't expect this!"

At the Expo, some women exposed their businesses to the public for the first time, others made sales, many met new potential clients and most of them connected with women they could collaborate with. The atmosphere was amazing. I can't really even remember everything because I spent most of it floating on air. That's the feeling you get when a group of women are united by the same aim – to promote their businesses.

## **Weren't the women entrepreneurs all competing for attention?**

No, not at all. There was a real sense of support for each other in the promotion of their businesses. Women are really keen to connect and work together. It's something that i a lot of fun to be a part of.

## **Do women have a different way of doing business?**

Yes, I believe so. Women tend to take fewer risks - which can be good, although some risks are necessary in business. Women are more likely to pay a lot of attention to the ethical side

of business. They tend to set different priorities, especially when they have a family at home to take care of as well. Women also have a different way of communicating and are usually good at managing more than one thing at a time. These are mostly positive things. On the other hand, some women lack confidence in what they are doing and often undersell themselves. Unfortunately, as women we often underestimate our own abilities.

### **Do women entrepreneurs need more support than men?**

I wouldn't say we can't do it by ourselves, but I know what it takes to be a female business owner, to be a mother, to be a wife. My husband helps as much as he can, but sometimes all he has time to do is go off to work. I get the kids off to school and normally the laundry is done, dinner is ready and my business is running as well. It's not an easy path and when someone chooses it, I think "Wow! Well done! How can I help you? How can we help each other?"

### **How does the women's expo differ from say other expos such as the ones for Expats?**

Although I am an expat, the Women's Expo is not exclusive to expats. At the first Women's Expo the exhibitors were 50% expats and 50 % Swiss. It's really a way to bring the two communities together and give the exhibitors a chance to reach a client base they might not have access to otherwise.

### **What inspired you to found the Women's Expo and Inspirational Woman Magazine?**

I grew up in Zimbabwe. My desire to help other women came from my childhood. I was raised by a single mother who was supported by her female friends so she could go out and achieve her dream to pursue her career as a nurse. Her friends were always there to offer support or take care of me so she could work. They were more than just babysitters. Her friends treated me as one of their own. Even though I was young, I understood how significant that was. Now I look back and know that if we hadn't had that support, we wouldn't be where we are now. I grew up thinking that that is what I want to do. I want to help other women to reach for their dreams.

When I was 16, I moved to another country and initially didn't have a lot of friends. Loneliness made me realize just how vital it is to have women around who understand what you are going through and can support you.

It was these experiences that made me think, "Yes, that's what I want to do. I want to bring women together and give them a chance to succeed."

### **What do you enjoy most about your work?**

I enjoy being able to connect with a lot of people. I have become a 'go-to' person, the one who is asked, "Do you know someone who does this?" Once I know who people are and what they do I can connect them with other people who might be able to help them in their careers. I have had the privilege of getting to know a lot of people and I've been able to generate business for a lot of women. For me it is priceless to provide a platform where women can connect.

### **Are you busy preparing for the next expo?**

Yes. Registration is already open for May 2014. There is a lot to do while we manage registration and then later start to market the expo to the public.

**Do you have any tips for a mumpreneur just starting out?**

I would say the first thing is to convince yourself you can do it. Secondly, try it and see if it works. Thirdly, when you're starting out, be careful who you share your ideas with. Don't listen to people who try to talk you out of it. Surround yourself with positive, supportive people. It's important to believe in yourself and have strong moral support.

**That's such a great philosophy to just believe.**

For the first Women's Expo I set a goal of having 40 exhibitors. At that point I did not know how I would make that happen, I just knew that I would. I didn't know anyone in Switzerland at that stage since I'd only been here for a year and a half. Of course I had some doubts, but if I had let them stand in my way I would have missed a life-changing opportunity. I believed it could happen. And it did!

**That's amazing that you did all that after being in the country for such a short time.**

A lot of people are shocked at what I managed to do so quickly. But I am a bit of a crazy person! I think you just have to try things and see if they work. Not let fear get in your way. Just go for it.

**Well it's good to be crazy in a productive way! So did you adapt to life in Switzerland pretty easily?**

Before I came I didn't have any preconceptions about what Switzerland was like. I didn't have any expectations so it wasn't possible to be disappointed. I thought, "I'll just go and see what it's like." I was very open-minded. I just took Switzerland for what it was.

**Do you have any big dreams for the future?**

My biggest dream is for the Women's Expo to become the world's largest expo for women in business. It will be amazing when women from all over the world come to Switzerland to find business partners and sell their products. I also hope that what I am doing will be an inspiration for other women and girls – including my own daughter!

[www.womenexpo.ch](http://www.womenexpo.ch)