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Job Market

Women remake networking style

By **Pamela Sitt**
Seattle Times business reporter

Nancy Solomon had been at a monthly eWomenNetwork networking luncheon barely 15 minutes when she landed a speaking engagement.

The Seattle businesswoman struck up a conversation with an acquaintance shortly after walking into the Columbia Tower Club on the top floor of the 76-story Bank of America building in Seattle, which led to an introduction to a friend who was looking for a last-minute replacement for a speaker. It was a done deal before they even sat down to lunch.

"The people you meet there will inevitably introduce you to someone else or refer you, and that's where the business comes in," said Solomon, who calls herself a spiritual corporate coach and therapist. "This is a perfect example."

Such success stories are the reason more than 100 women from Seattle to Tacoma to Bellevue are members of eWomenNetwork, a national networking group aimed at helping women in business help each other. The group was founded in 2000 as a "good ol' girls network" in Addison, Texas, by chief executive Sandra Yancey and her husband, Kym. It has since opened chapters in 46 U.S. cities and expects to grow to 100 cities this year, according to Bettina Carey, managing director for the Seattle group.

"Sandra Yancey said it best: Women build



[enlarge](#) KEN LAMBERT / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Professional women, from left, Corinne Gregory, Trish Reutebuch, Susan Stone and Cassandra Williams gather at a meeting of eWomenNetwork in downtown Seattle last month. Gregory was the featured speaker, with the topic of "Ten Tips for Surviving and Thriving in Times of Economic Turmoil."

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WOMEN AT WORK

There are a number of programs and organizations aimed to help women in the workforce. Here are some of them.

eWomen Network, Seattle chapter. A professional women's group.
www.ewomennetwork.com
 Bettina Carey at 206-349-2497 or 206-781-6919; e-mail bettycarey@ewomennetwork.com or write 3002 N.W. Market

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rapport and men build reports," Carey said. "Women, by their nature, are more community builders. We tend to operate as a community more than we do in a competitive sense."

They are ladies who lunch — but they also are women who know how to get down to business. At eWomenNetwork's monthly events, women meet and greet and are encouraged to make connections more meaningful than just an exchange of business cards. Carey says she eschews the traditional "flinging" of cards common at other networking events that typically result in nothing but unwanted solicitations.

"Rather than arbitrarily giving everybody your card, if you have a lead for a business owner, you exchange a card with them," she said. "What I hear is that bar none, out of all the networking events that they've been to, women found that this one leads to business opportunities far and above other organizations."

It worked for Nancy Solomon at her second eWomenNetwork event — before she even became a member. Guests may attend eWomenNetwork events for a fee; membership costs \$290 to join and then \$16.95 a month.

"I have to tell you, I have never been to a networking meeting in which I was so well-received so quickly," she said. "These people have really changed the climate of networking."

Solomon came to the eWomenNetwork lunch with a stack of fliers. She usually gives out 50 to 70 at each networking event, but parted with only one this time — and that one led to a job.

"That means to me that these people want to get to know me," she said. "I've already gotten three or four notes and e-mails from people saying, 'Hey, it was great to meet you.' Not 'Hey, it was great to meet you, let me sell you my product.' "

Corinne Gregory, a corporate speaker and president of the HartGregory Group, says the atmosphere at an eWomenNetwork event is noticeably different from more traditional networking events she's been to, which she calls "professional meet markets."

"You walk in a room and everybody's competing with everybody else," she said of other networking meetings. "Here, it's more like a camaraderie. There's not so much puffery. ... There's an understanding that you go to

St., Seattle, WA 98107.

Renton Technical College's ANEW program. (Apprenticeship and Nontraditional Employment for Women and Men) Offers free training in construction and manufacturing careers. 425-235-2212; 3000 N.E. Fourth St., Renton, WA 98056.

The Seattle Community College system. The Seattle Community College system (www.seattlecolleges.com) has a number of programs aimed at training women for work in nontraditional careers. For more information on them, contact:

North Seattle Community College: Rachael Mendonsa, Advising Center, 206-527-7305, rmendonsa@sccd.ctc.edu

South Seattle Community College: Carmen Chambers, Women's Program Coordinator, 206-768-6801 (Mon-Fri, 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. in office), cchambers@sccd.ctc.edu

Seattle Central Community College: Maggie Sutthoff, Women's Programs Coordinator, 206-587-3855, msutth@sccd.ctc.edu

Seattle Vocational Institute: Bob Markholt, Program Coordinator Multiple Trades, 206-587-4974, bmarkholt@sccd.ctc.edu

National associations: Tradeswomen Now and Tomorrow, www.tradeswomennow.org and the National Association of Women in Construction, www.nawic.com.au

meet people, not go and see what you can get out of everybody."

Gregory, who recently spoke at an eWomenNetwork lunch but is not a member (yet), added that she is much more relaxed doing presentations for women than for men. She says doesn't play golf or smoke cigars, two pastimes during which men often make deals.

"That's boy networking," she said. "Women have to make a conscious effort to get out and meet women, and meet businesswomen."

Cassandra Williams of Seattle went to last month's eWomenNetwork luncheon to hear Gregory's "Ten Tips for Surviving and Thriving in Times of Economic Instability." Before sitting down to lunch, Williams chatted with two other first-time guests.

"My objectives have already been met," said Williams, executive director of the nonprofit Center for Empowerment in Seattle, "... to meet women who are already taking a holistic approach to business. It's a confirmation that we're heading in the right direction."

Michelle Whitten, a home-mortgage consultant looking to expand her client base and another first-timer, made new acquaintances at a table where the conversation veered from pregnancy to fund-raisers to networking.

"You want to empower other women and support them in their careers," Whitten said.

Which is not to be confused with not supporting men.

"Women make a lot of buying decisions, but if they're not deliberate and thoughtful about who they give their business to, it will go to a male business owner," Carey said. "We're not not supporting men's business. (But) if there's a woman (business owner), we're trying to be thoughtful and deliberate about choosing that as an option."

To that end, eWomenNetwork offers an online file of its members and their business profiles, including a photo and information about their business.

"If I'm looking for a business owner in the health arena, for instance, then I would go to the directory and see if I could find a (member) that I could give my business to," Carey said.

Members say it works.

"I ask (members) straight out, 'Do you get business from the people you meet here?' and everybody tells me the same thing," said Solomon, who plans to join eWomenNetwork this month. "Most of the networking here leads to real connections where you make business by the people they know."

And despite the moniker, men are welcome to attend an eWomenNetwork event. But they have to play by the rules.

"Often times, when (men) come, they start into the song and dance about selling themselves and doing some sort of a pitch," Carey said. "You give them the instructions and they don't get it. It doesn't seem to be a natural experience for them."

"Most of them don't come back."

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