

How to Increase Your Company's Profit by 20 Percent

As an executive coach, I have seen all kinds of problems business owners tend to have: time management, staffing and team building to name a few. One particular issue – profitability – is a constant struggle for most executives. You may be struggling now, but read on to learn about my tips to increase profitability by 20 percent.

Many team leaders work to find the best strategy for increasing engagement, productivity and achieving goals, but it feels like a moving target. This can often lead to stress and self-doubt, especially when the plans you do come up with are useless, uninspiring and unknown to your employees. So what is the road to profitability?

First and foremost, you have two priorities when creating a strategic plan:

1. The plan must engage employees
2. The plan must align with the organization's mission, vision and goals.

Here are the questions employees will be asking:

- Why do we as a company exist?

- What do we specifically do?
- Why do we do it?
- How does what I do affect the world around me?

Here are three tips to consider when creating a strategic plan that engages your employees.

Start with the end in mind

Leaders should succinctly answer the questions above and set measurable goals that will allow you to fulfill your mission. Make sure the goals are broken down on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis. Then, have the appropriate department own their goal. Every week, ask your management team how they're tracking, if they are facing any roadblocks in achieving their goal on time and if there is anything they need from you or the team. Every week, inspect what you expect.

Get your employees involved

Every department in your company should pay special attention to employee feedback, especially on ways to achieve a goal. After all, employees are usually closest to the situation. Also, be sure to communicate to your employees every month where the company stands on achieving goals and celebrate the wins! Make the vision, mission and goals visible to all employees on a consistent basis and get input from your employees on

ways to bring the plan to life throughout the organization. Employees can put up posters, contribute to company newsletters, etc. Have fun with this!7

Use graphics

Lastly, I recommend including pictures in your strategic plan. According to [The Global Business Hub](#), the brain processes visuals 60,000 times faster than text. Remember, the purpose of the plan should be to create a focal point in which everyone can rally behind to move the business forward. [Gallup](#) revealed companies that strategically create engaged employees experience 22 percent higher profitability, 21 percent higher productivity and have 37 percent less absenteeism.

By following these guidelines, you will surely see an increase in your company's profitability and greater customer loyalty. If you'd like to learn more about creating a useful strategic plan that engages employees, visit www.stephaniechung.com.

Creating an Engaging Strategic Plan That Will Increase Profitability by More Than 20%

Have you ever spent days, weeks or even months creating a strategic plan, only to have your ideas shelved, never to be seen again? That is of course until next year, when you'll blow the dust off the plan, update the numbers and then place it neatly back in its permanent spot for yet another year.

The purpose of a plan is to communicate the organization's goals and the actions needed to achieve those goals. Yet, many companies have strategic plans that are useless, uninspiring, and unknown to the employees. For an example, here's a statement taken from a national retailer's Strategic Plan:

“Our mission is to operate the best specialty retail business in America, regardless of the product we sell. Because the product we sell is books, our aspirations must be consistent with the promise and the ideals of the volumes which line our shelves. To say that our mission exists independent of the product we sell is to demean the importance and the distinction of being booksellers . . .”

From there, another 100 words of blah, blah, blah. Good grief! What?! Please tell me what employee is going to remember, let alone execute, on that statement.

Facts

- 70 percent of all U.S. workers are not engaged in their job, which cost the U.S. up to \$550 billion per year.
- Only 41 percent of employees know what their company stands for and what differentiates their brand.
- If you ask leaders whether or not their company is aligned, 64 percent will say yes, while only 2 percent of their employees would agree.

Creating a Strategic Plan that engages employees and aligns the organization must be a priority. Here's what employees are asking:

- Why do we as a company exist?
- What specifically do we do?
- Why do we do it?
- How does what I do impact the world around me?

Leaders, can you answer their questions? Can you answer each question in two sentences or less? Here are three tips to consider when creating a strategic plan that engages your employees:

Start with The End In Mind

Succinctly answer the questions above. Set measureable goals that will allow you to fulfill your mission. Be sure the goals are broken down on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis and that the appropriate department owns their goal. Every week, ask your management team how they're tracking, if they're having any roadblocks in achieving their goal on time and is there anything they need from you. Every week inspect what you expect.

Get Your Employees Involved

Every departmental goal should have employee input on ways to achieve the goal. After all, they're usually closest to the situation. Communicate to your employees every month where the company stands on achieving the goals. Celebrate the wins. Make the vision, mission and goals visible to all employees on a consistent basis. Get input from your employees on ways to bring the plan to life throughout organization. They can put up posters, include in company newsletters, etc. Have fun with this!

Use Graphics

Lastly, be sure to include pictures on your strategic plan. Statistics say that visuals are processed 60,000 times faster in the brain than text. The purpose of the

plan should be to create a focal point in which everyone can rally behind to move the business forward.

Companies that strategically create engaged employees experience 22 percent higher profitability, 12 percent greater customer loyalty and have 37 percent less absenteeism. Now that's a rocking strategic plan!

If you'd like to learn more about creating a useful strategic plan that engages employees, contact me at schung@focalpointcoaching.com.

Five Signs You Need a Business Coach

It takes a very talented, determined and experienced individual to successfully lead a business, complete numerous tasks and meet business goals. As you know, business leaders have many responsibilities and are expected to fulfill their roles to the best of their ability. However, being constantly pulled in different directions, drowning in paperwork and solving all sorts of problems can certainly take a toll and cause a tremendous amount of stress.

It's easy to forget too much stress can be detrimental to your health as well as your business. If you feel you've tried methods like researching advice, applying better management skills, attending business workshops and yet you're still struggling with results, the next option to explore is hiring a business coach. This financial investment is worth every penny, as you'll work directly with an expert to develop effective business plans and successful management skills to meet your goals.

To make sure hiring a business coach is the right solution for you, I have listed five critical signs you may relate to during this time in your life. If you identify with one of the following, then perhaps an executive coach is the answer to helping you and your company grow.

1. You Don't Know How to Reach Your Full Potential

Business leaders are visionaries. They often find themselves thinking about the future and how far the business can go. You may know what to do and how to get there but you need professional guidance along the way. A business coach can help you prioritize tasks, improve efficiency and focus more on achieving short-term goals to eventually accomplish your mission.

2. You Constantly Struggle with Prioritizing Tasks

Time management can be a constant struggle for business leaders. Especially for those who feel they can take care of everything and make sure it's done right. If you've hired a team of people, then it means you need many heads to make your business function efficiently and successfully. Business coaches are always eager to make your life easier. They can help you identify and overcome the many obstacles keeping you from completing priorities.

3. You Have Trouble Putting Advice Into Practice

Are you fond of learning new business tips and tricks but struggle to put them into practice? A coach will not only provide you with proven business tactics, he or she

will also hold you accountable for executing them properly. Your coach will be sure to check on your progress and guide you until you meet your goal(s).

4. You Need Guidance on Understanding Your Company's Financial Health

Is your business financially healthy? Not every CEO is trained in analyzing and managing the financial aspect of their business. Business coaches can provide a closer look at your financial needs and determine ways you can make more money and cut down on costs you don't need.

5. You're Working Too Many Hours

It takes hard work to run a business, however you don't want to feel like the business is running you. CEOs must know how to create a work and life balance to avoid feeling burnt out. If you still feel overwhelmed even after trying different approaches to relieve your stress, you can benefit greatly from hiring a business coach. They can teach you how to delegate, manage your to-do list and set priorities. The goal is to give you more free time, be happier and lead a more fulfilling life, thus inspiring more creative work.

If you can relate to one or more of the signs above, then it may be time to seek a business mentor to help you reach your full potential. It's admirable to build a

company through your own hard work and dedication, but it is just as commendable to acknowledge your business is worth hiring a professional to help you and your business succeed.

Expert Q&A: Talking Business with Stephanie Chung

Stephanie Chung is an award-winning executive coach and sales mentor. With more than 25 years of sales experience and a fun personality, it was only natural for her to become a keynote speaker on numerous stages across the globe. After many years of mentoring and speaking to business professionals eager to meet their goals, Stephanie is sharing insightful answers on the top four frequently asked questions she has heard throughout her career.

1. I have a business to lead and there's so much to do in such a short amount of time, how should I prioritize my tasks?

Think about your hourly pay rate when prioritizing tasks. If your hourly rate is \$300 per hour, then it might be easier to determine which tasks are worth your time and attention. This strategy can help you focus on the high value activities instead of the “smaller” tasks you can work on at a later time or delegate to others you trust to complete the work.

2. How can I stay motivated doing the daily activity I need to do, to get the promotion I deserve?

If you're yearning for a promotion, you must have a vision you're working towards and that's great! You can certainly get the promotion if you think beyond the daily activities and how you can improve strategies or plans. Simply put, promotions are given to those who are good at what they do and think bigger than most. In order to succeed, you need to cast your vision and ensure you have the drive to bring the idea to fruition.

3. How can I make my follow-up process easy and manageable?

In order to turn a prospect into a client, it's essential to follow up in a strategic manner to build rapport and ultimately close a sale. A great way to solidify a relationship with your potential client is to have a follow up schedule in place and make each interaction valuable. Such as sending them additional materials or helpful tips, or even asking about a personal matter they mentioned the last time you spoke. They'll appreciate your attention and your enthusiasm to make their jobs easier.

4. I'm a new business owner, how should I manage my growing team?

If you're feeling overwhelmed with managing your team, think about where the issue lies. Do you not have enough time to complete tasks and discuss projects? Are deadlines not being met? Once you identify the issue, take action. Here are a few solutions Stephanie has advised to new and experienced business owners:

- If you're starting a new business, be sure to hire the right amount of people to get projects done as efficiently as possible. Also, have a hiring process in place so your team is made up of qualified and driven individuals.
- Divide projects among groups of people or departments. This way, they are holding themselves accountable for completing tasks and meeting strict deadlines.
- Have a team meeting every morning or at least once a week. This way you'll have time set aside to focus on discussing current and upcoming projects, answering questions and resolving any issues that need to be addressed.

These are just a few of the many questions Stephanie has been asked throughout her career as a speaker and executive coach. If you would like to learn more about Stephanie's services and upcoming appearances or would like to book her as a speaker, visit www.stephaniechung.com.



Good
Things
Come to
Those
Who Wait
Work
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Butts
Off

SALES

Five Tips to a Smarter C-Level Sale

Salespeople often battle feeling intimidated when working with C-level executives. They are, after all, the definition of success by most people's standards. They've achieved more than most, are highly driven, and have strong business acumen. But with the right tools and techniques, you can excel at selling your products and services to chief executives. If you've identified C-level executives as a target for your sales pitch, start with these guidelines for a more successful sales effort:

1. Know your stuff

Be competent and confident in your product or service and your industry. C-level executives are inquisitive people; they may want to discuss the latest happenings within your industry. Be prepared and don't try to "wing it". You also definitely want to avoid going into a sales pitch mode. Make it more of a conversation and they're bound to participate.

- Read analyst reports, trade association reports, the customer's 10K, with an eye on identifying the critical factors your C-level executive is dealing with. Conduct a Google news search and make

sure you know the latest press releases from your target customer and their top competitors.

2. Ask lots of pertinent questions and listen

Make sure you ask many on-target questions and listen intently. Don't just listen to what they're saying; focus on the essence of what is being said. C-level executives are used to being the boss and telling others what to do. Don't be intimidated; remember you are the expert when it comes to your product. Your questions can demonstrate your expertise and direct the conversation so you don't give up all control of the meeting. Remember, you are having a meeting of equals. You are the expert on your product and your industry. They are the expert of theirs.

- Plan the questions you will ask to reveal the CEO's greatest concerns and how they relate to your solution. Plan questions that reveal what you've learned from working with similar companies to see how the CEO's situation compares.

3. Dress the part

The first impression is the most important and your outer appearance can make or break a sale. Make sure you look like you belong in the C-suite. You have to

dress to impress. Being a poised, polished and well-groomed professional goes a long way.

- Plan your wardrobe for the meeting and get an honest opinion from someone who will tell you if this is your most confident look. If you are in need of a manicure or a haircut, seize the moment.

4. Avoid talking about your financial beliefs

Don't let your financial beliefs enter into the conversation. This is especially true if you are selling a high-ticket luxury item.

- Find out through your network what size of contracts the CEO has approved recently. Odds are your proposal is not the biggest of the bunch.

5. Do not be a walking, talking website

Avoid spouting off features and benefits. If you are only saying things that can be found on your website or on your marketing collateral, then you have not added any value to the conversation. The executive has done their research long before you walked in, therefore, you must add value or else you have wasted their time. These folks take their time management very seriously. Tie the value you have provided to other customers to their financial statements and how specifically your company was able to create that success. Avoid jargon from your

own business. Speak the executive's language instead. If this isn't natural for you, then consider bringing an ally from your company. You always want to be authentic! The quickest way to lose the trust of an executive is to get caught not being yourself.

- Prepare intelligence that will capture a top executive's attention and consider whether you want a partner to assist with part of the discussion that's outside of your scope of expertise.

The most interesting thing about selling to the C-suite is that they are usually more focused on the seller and buyer relationship versus just the technical capabilities of your product. With these guidelines, you can have a better chance of selling your product or services and establishing good, personal rapport with your executive clients.

Three Expert Tips on Beating a Sales Slump

Even the most successful salespeople on the planet have struggled to get to where they are today. During my career as a sales mentor, I have guided countless people from getting out of a sales slump to continuously closing deals.

Whether you are in a sales rut or you're simply trying to avoid getting into one, I have three tips to help you overcome this slump and eventually become the sales closer you've always wanted to be.

1. Recharge Yourself

We all have bad days and instead of putting your head down and feeling discouraged, redirect your mind to something that will allow you to de-stress and re-energize. Whether it's a walk in the park or listening to music, use this time to get immediately back in the game. The key is to relax, trust your training and perform those skills until you reach a breakthrough. This will help you remain optimistic until you find your selling rhythm.

2. Make a Plan of Attack

Review your game plan and goals and determine if it needs some fine-tuning. You want a game plan with tactics that have worked in the past and new material you're excited to include. Once you're happy with what you'll present, start thinking of possible objections prospects may have and fill any holes in your plan. Then, practice until it's perfect. By that point, you will feel eager to get back on track and consistently close one sale after another.

3. Reward Yourself

As you work your way out of a sales slump, think about something you would love to have but just can't afford yet. It could be anything from a spa package to Christian Louboutin heels to even a family trip to London! The point is to have a goal to work towards besides getting out of a rut. This will give you extra motivation to work to the best of your ability and eventually reward yourself with something that was well earned.

Don't let a slump take over your life, remember to trust your training and challenge yourself to become an even better salesperson. Keep these three tips in mind to get back on track, sealing one deal after another.

Selling Tips for Business Women

According to TheAtlantic.com, about 29 percent of America's business owners are women. Although this number is rising, many female business owners continue to struggle with increasing sales and surpassing competitors.

The five key guidelines you should follow to grow your business include:

1) Master Sales

Come to grips with the fact that if you're in business, you're in sales. Do the necessary work to master this skill because without sales, you have no business. Read books, watch videos, or take a course that teaches you the necessary skills of how to sell effectively.

2) Raise your Self-Worth Once and For All

This is based on how we value ourselves; it's the foundation of our ability to believe in ourselves. If you don't believe in yourself or your capabilities no one else will either. The lack of self worth can create problems for anyone in sales because the fundamentals of sales rely on the seller believing that they are the best

solution for their buyer. If you don't believe in yourself, you will struggle to convey this message and it can be visible in many ways. Such as constantly dropping your price because you lacked the confidence to convey the true value of yourself, your product and your service.

You must understand the numbers behind the numbers.

3) Know Your Stuff

You must be competent, confident, and articulate. Being a people person is nice but not enough. You must know your stuff in order to be considered as a serious contender. I've worked with women in sales who relied too heavily on their looks or personality and were then shocked when they had inconsistent results in sales. Be an expert in your industry!

4) Know Your Numbers

If you run a business you must know your numbers. Getting your financial scorecard on a monthly basis is a start. Being able to read a financial statement is good, but understanding the specifics behind what those reports are telling you about the health of your business is imperative. You must understand the numbers behind the numbers.

If you're a sales person then you also need to know your numbers since generating revenue is your primary responsibility. Knowing how much revenue (quota) your company is expecting from you is a start. Also, knowing what activities you must do daily in order to exceed your quota is necessary. Tracking, measuring and adjusting along the way is pivotal.

5) Manage Yourself

Don't try everything you can to satisfy every individual. Not only is it exhausting, it's also a game you will never win since it's impossible to please everyone. Instead, grow to the place where you're okay with making yourself a priority. Think of an airplane, "put your mask on first, and then assist others."

This will help with your self worth, self-confidence and self esteem. It's simple: you can't be your best, walk out your purpose and serve others if you're overwhelmed. Learn to say no to the things that do not align with your goals, your priorities or your purpose.

How to Master Closing High-Ticket Sales

Selling high-ticket products are a true test of your skills as a salesperson. It takes years of practice and patience to learn how to communicate with buyers effectively and master the art of selling costly items. I come from an industry of private aviation sales, therefore, I know how strategic you have to be when it comes to high-ticket selling.

Follow the guidelines below and apply them to your sales process; you'll be an expert sales closer in no time.

Know What's Important to the Customer

Ask questions to uncover the buyer's real motivators. Don't fall into the trap of assuming the benefits your company says should be important to the buyer, is in fact, what the buyer deems important. Ask good quality questions to get your customer's true need.

Communicate With the Buyer the Way They Want

Customers have different communication and buying behaviors. The following list reveals four primary behavior styles buyers tend to have and how you should

communicate with each type:

- Direct, Strong-Willed, Ambitious: Be clear, specific, brief, and to the point
- Friendly and Enthusiastic: Provide a warm environment, and refrain from drowning them in details, unless they ask for them
- Predictable, Steady, and Relaxed: Present yourself softly, non-threateningly, and logically
- Perfectionist, Conservative: Prepare your presentation in advance, stick to business, and don't exaggerate.

You must know and master the four primary styles so your buyers can actually enjoy engaging with you because they feel like you “get it” and “get them”.

Understand your Competitive Landscape

Who is your competition? What are the distinct differences between their product and yours? You'll need to know so you can properly position your product when communicating with the buyer.

Be Confident When Asking for the Sale

Do you believe your product is the best option for the buyer based on your understanding of their needs? Have you received confirmation from your buyer that your

product is the best solution for them? If so, confidently ask for their business and don't waiver on your price.

You will surely notice a difference in being quicker to closing more sales if you simply discover what is important to your clients. And, by guiding buyers to the sale on a consistent basis, you will eventually develop other techniques that work for you. Once you have reached that point in time, you will have become a master of your craft, the high-ticket sales closer you always wanted to be.

Mastering the Art of Pressure

Life is hard as it is, and with the added pressure of deadlines and tasks business leaders have to take on, it's incredibly challenging to manage an entire company. Leading a business while managing stress can certainly take a toll on most people, however, the biggest hurdle is taking the pressure you're experiencing and turning it into brilliant work.

Knowing how to manage your to-do list and provide thoughtful feedback during every business meeting is truly an art, especially for business leaders. By the time you reach a leadership role, some people have learned how to work well under pressure but others continue to struggle in this department.

If you can't easily relate to your colleagues' efficiencies, perhaps you may find the following tips helpful. By utilizing these tips on a daily basis, you will lower your chances of feeling burnt out and improve your chances of completing business goals much more quickly and efficiently.

Use Your Problem Solving Skills

You are probably already talented at solving problems before and after they happen. Right now, your problem is stress. Tackle it by managing your to-do list and delegate any “small” tasks or duties you know others can complete. Prioritize the tasks only you can do and focus on those all day.

Maintain a Respectful Environment

Sometimes, leaders fail to realize that stress can create rude or impatient behavior. It can also build tension in the office as your team works closely on projects alongside you. To prevent a tense and negative work environment, maintain an optimistic and respectful culture by complimenting your team on their efforts and closing your door when you need uninterrupted focus on a task. This gives you and your team the motivation to continue producing even more creative work.

Build Stimulation

It is very important to make time in your busy schedule to take a break and recharge. Whether it is during lunch or in between meetings, relaxing activities like reading interesting articles or taking a walk can stimulate your brain and create more creative and smarter ideas once you get back on track.

Sleep Well

In order to succeed at work, you must be well rested and ready for anything. We have all heard this many times before yet we often forget and think our job is more important than our health. According to Dr. Travis Bradbury, a world-renowned expert in emotional intelligence, it is only when you're asleep that your brain is able to remove toxic proteins, which are by-products of neural activity when you're awake. By sleeping, you are preparing your body for another day of clear focus and sharper memory.

As a business leader, you are fully aware of how much your company needs you, but you also understand the importance of teamwork. By taking the time to rest and take better control of how you spend your time at work, you are unburdening yourself with numerous tasks and trusting the team you hired to help make your vision a reality.

How Kick-Butt Sales Reps Impress The C-Suite

You know what they look like, you know where their offices are located and you know their names. The question is, does the C-Suite know you? What do they think about your performance? Do they think you're an asset to the company? A team player? A potential high-potential?

Fact: When the majority of decisions affecting your career are made, you will not be in the room to speak on your own behalf.

Since you will most likely not be present while others are discussing you, your capabilities and your reputation within the company, you need to be proactive in managing your personal brand. Here are a few tips to help you stand out and integrate with the C-suite:

Hit Your Numbers

This may seem obvious, but inevitably there are sales reps who truly believe that trying their best is enough. Wrong! The C-suite is counting on you to hit your

number. They've based their financials around a few key factors and hitting your numbers is one of them. You must get it done, otherwise this is a non-starter.

Know Your Numbers

You should know your annual quota. Your actual vs. planned numbers. Is your territory up (or down) month-to-date, year-to-date? How's your pipeline? Is it full or bare? If bare, what's your plan of action? How about your market share? Is it increasing or decreasing? Why? New customers? Renewal customers? Your average sales price? Your conversion ratios? Your average sales cycle? You get the point...whatever numbers you're responsible for, you need to know them "real-time," all the time. The C-suite knows your numbers – do you?

Know THE Numbers

Sophisticated sales professionals don't just know their individual numbers, they also know the company's numbers. Is revenue up or down year-to-date? Why? How's cash flow? What about EBIT? Are profit margins up or down? Depending on your company culture you may have to ask for this information versus it being freely shared. Nonetheless be sure to know and understand the numbers that are important to the C-suite. They'll be impressed.

Sell Profitable Deals

Sometimes sales people are so focused on closing the deal, they may disregard whether the deal is worth closing. Not all deals are good deals for the business. Yes, there may be times that you choose to close a deal that makes minimal margin due to extenuating circumstances and that's fine as long as it's not your norm. Remember the C-suite has a sweet spot for profits!

Focus On Others

Often times sales people get a reputation for being focused only on the items that are important to them and their ability to hit their numbers. If you are only focused on your wants and needs, you'll turn-off your customers, alienate your colleagues, and anger your C-suite. Make it a daily habit to look for ways to serve others.

When you're hitting your numbers, selling profitable deals, and being a team player the C-suite not only knows your name but they're also very interested in what you have to say especially as it pertains to improving the organization. In their eyes you've earned the right to give constructive criticism. Consequently, if you have not consistently executed on the items above then any comments you make, especially those related to areas of improvement, may simply be seen as whining and complaining.

Kick-butt Sales Reps impress the C-suite because they get the job done!

Developing a Winning Sales Team

If you're a baseball fan, you must be loving the exciting games that the Major League playoffs have delivered so far. Building a baseball team for a long post-season run has some surprising similarities with assembling a sales team for long-term success. You need different pieces and personalities to account for both strengths and areas of improvement. Here's my recommended lineup for a cohesive and supportive sales team.

The Seasoned Veteran

Every sales team needs a mentor who has seen sales techniques that have worked in the past along with methods that have become outdated. This role can be your team leader or at the very least the trusted teacher that you call on to get new or inexperienced salespeople up to speed on your business and customers' needs.

The Scrappy Upstart

This "rookie" team member has a genuine drive for learning the sales business and will take on any task that is thrown their way, no matter how small or granular. Other team members can find motivation from their young colleague's energy and enthusiasm.

The Glue Guy/Gal

This is your sales team's "grinder." Typically respected across the board by the team and level headed both in good times and bad. Can be counted on to maintain an optimistic tone and also serve as an objective mediator in disagreements within the sales team. This role can also be a candidate for the team leader and has potential for upper management roles.

The Visionary

It is important for your team to have at least one member that is consistently delivering new ideas, methods and processes that benefits both colleagues and the company. This team member doesn't get bogged down in the little details and is more focused on the big picture and long-term, sustained results.

The Lone Wolf

This role is not a must-have for a successful sales team, but the independent, self-motivated salesperson can provide a boost to the team when other members are slumping. This role is more of a "lead by example" type, but still offers lessons that other pieces of the team can put to use.

Take a look at your current sales staff and see how many of the winning team roles you can fill. Then look to plug whatever gaps you have when you're recruiting to diversify and empower your sales team. The players should be there for you to complete your lineup and that will position you as a successful head coach.

The 3 Biggest Changes Facing Sales Professionals in the Last 10 Years

If I were to ask you what has changed the most in the sales professional landscape during the last decade, your initial response might center around the product or service you were tasked to sell. The evolution of products and services have definitely evolved in this era of technology, especially considering that there seems to be an app and/or website for every offering on the market, no matter what type of company or product line you are representing. But this significant change does not tell the entire story. In my 25-plus years as a sales professional and leader, I have seen three additional trends dominate the world of successful sales professionals. It has been the ability to adapt and adopt these trends as standard operating procedures that have translated into success.

1. The Surging Popularity of Video Conferences vs. In-Person Sales Visits

Facetime, Google Hangouts, and Skype are becoming more prevalent as time goes on. The scheduled stop-by at your clients' offices have started to fade as quickly as the Rolodex. Travel budgets are shrinking and with that

understanding, both current and prospective customers have become more comfortable with the “virtual handshake” to close the deal. This is a case where technology is truly serving as a trusted friend to the sales professional. Take advantage of Webinar services that offer video and audio conferencing bundles and the ability to display your sales proposals and supporting digital materials (i.e. Powerpoint, Excel) in real-time. Your clients will appreciate the convenience and security that many of these virtual meeting vendors provide.

2. Sales Territories Grow as Sales Teams Shrink

The economic struggles of the past 10 years have led companies to demand their sales teams tackle larger pieces of the U.S. with less team members. This means you and your sales colleagues are being asked to cover more ground (or air) without any noticeable changes or sacrifices made in customer service and detail. You need to be even more efficient with your time, more organized with your meeting schedule and more prepared to answer as many questions the first time, at the right time.

3. Expansion into Marketing & Event Management

Sales leaders are now called on to work side-by-side with their company’s marketing team to align messaging for the products/services they represent. Its

also become common practice for sales pros to plan and execute elaborate customer events to both demonstrate your product and provide an attractive setting for building client relationships and possibly even seal a deal. These events also provide a natural opportunity for sales professionals to develop follow-up touch points with current customers and prospects after the event is over.

Changes are healthy and the future should be embraced, not feared. The more flexibility and open-mindedness you can bring to the changing landscape of sales, the better off you and your customers will be.

How to Close More Sales (Even When You Are Not the Cheapest Option)

Let's face it. Sales is not for the faint of heart.

You have to get more market share every day. Slice the competition. Carry the quota.

It's tough and in a moment of weakness, you may want to jump to cutting price as the solution to making the sale. But you and I both know where that can lead to...a slippery slope of reduced profits and a devaluing of your products, programs and services.

Thankfully, there is a better way.

I come from an industry of private aviation sales (Yes, selling to people who own their own planes). And being the cheapest option was not going to gain market share. We had to find a way to be strategic instead. Doing things differently allowed me to lead a high-performance team within the private jet industry that generated \$800M in revenue. No, that didn't suck.

Here's what I did and how you too can apply these strategies to your own sales process...

Ask, and then shut up. Most sales professionals lead with features and benefits of their products, programs and services. And you know what the prospect is most likely thinking the entire time the sales person is talking...“So what?”

The prospect only cares how what you are selling will make their lives better so your job is to ask questions to discover what is important to the prospect in order to determine what is important BEFORE you try and sell them anything.

Understand why you are there. Statistics show that 87% of your prospects have already researched you and/or your prospects, programs and services before you showed up. Your job is not to educate them. Resist the urge to rattle off features and benefits. Your job is to uncover the real reason why your prospect wants to potentially buy what you are offering. The difference between a good and great sales person is how much they understand the prospect in front of them.

Ask for the sale. After you have asked every question, answered every concern and then developed a solution together with your prospect that will meet their needs, it is time to ask for the sale.

A simple phrase to try, “Customer X, we’ve discussed your (mention the needs you uncovered) and identified (insert what you are selling) as the possible solution. What can I do now to earn your business?” This statement is a nurturing way to ask for the sale that puts the control in your prospect’s hands and yet still allows you to leave the meeting with certainty of where to go from that moment.

Powerful stuff, right?

For example, “I had a meeting with a prospect about his private aviation needs. Due to him needing to travel for both personal & business reasons, he & I came up with a customized solution that would work for his needs. Before leaving his house I reconfirmed what he needed, reiterated what he & I came up with as a viable solution, and then asked him for his business (on the spot). He said yes, we shook hands, and I sent him a contract (which he signed) that day.”

You will make the difference today in being quicker to close more sales if you simply discover what is important to your clients and then walk them to the sale.

Master Sales: Answering Your Burning FAQ's

Thousands of people have listened to my speeches in an effort to get insight on all things sales and business. After every session, I encounter countless people asking questions such as:

- How do I master selling techniques?
- What is the best way to create and achieve business goals?
- Where can I learn new networking tips?

Although my speaking engagements provide a much more comprehensive learning experience, in this post I decided to share the top five questions I hear from sales and business professionals throughout the world who attend my talks.

1. How do I find clients and present myself as a genuine salesperson?

You can find clients in the most competitive and populated regions as well as the most unlikely places. As salespeople, we can't always rely on marketing to give us leads; it's also part of our job to find them.

There are a lot of places outside of the usual big cities that your competitors aren't looking at where there may be a few big fish biting.

As for how to present yourself to a prospect, one of the best skills you can attain is learning how to adapt your communication style to fit theirs. For example, if the prospect likes details you can provide a thorough presentation. But if they like fast and to the point, you can present bullet points of information.

2. What is your advice on convincing someone to say “yes” when you’re not the cheapest option?

Determine what is important to them before you try and sell them your product. In preparation for your sales presentation, your prospect may have already researched you and your product, therefore you should focus more on why they need your product instead of running through the features. Finally, ask questions, answer every concern and develop a solution that will fit their needs.

3. When is the ideal moment to finalize a sale?

Asking for the sale may be the hardest part of the job. After you've discussed the prospect's needs, answered every question and satisfied the need with a solution. Then, you have earned the right to ask for the sale.

Let your prospect know you understand their needs and have a solution and ask, “Is there any reason why I couldn’t earn your business today?”

4. How can I charge what I’m worth and not discount due to objections?

Although it’s tough, you definitely want to avoid cutting the price as a quick solution to making the sale. This can lead to a slippery slope of reduced profits and a devaluing of your products.

To handle objections, I always try to bring up an objection before the prospect does. This is called the “Preemptive Strike.” You can prepare yourself by coming up with some objections the client may ask. Then, during your presentation explain how clients enjoy your customer experience, but you often get questions about one issue. You can then elaborate on the answer and position it so that you’re in control.

5. What is the best way to become more comfortable networking with other professionals?

Practice, practice, practice! Effective networking is about being genuine and authentic while building professional relationships. Start by researching the networking event to ensure your ideal client, or people with access to your ideal client, are in attendance. Next, while at the event do not push your product. No one

likes pushy people. Instead, ask questions about their product, and ask how you can help them. You'll be amazed how fast they begin to ask about your product. Lastly, be quick to follow up with people that expressed interest in your company. After a while you will gain confidence and build strong business relationships making you a memorable and trustworthy connection.

These are just a few of the many questions I have been asked throughout my career as a keynote speaker. If you would like to learn more about my services and upcoming speaking engagements or would like to book me as a speaker, visit my [website](#) and we can connect there.

Analyse Your Strengths and Weaknesses to Drive More Sales

As a sales professional, you might be familiar with the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis. This insightful tool is valuable to business leaders as well as salespeople as it allows you to create a sales-focused grid (each section of the four-part grid represents a different aspect of the four words attributed to the SWOT acronym) to help identify the selling strengths you have and can continue to build on, weaknesses to improve, available business opportunities and the threats you, your company or product faces. By understanding your strengths and weaknesses, you've taken the first step in improving your selling strategies and techniques before diving in to building an effective sales plan.

The SWOT Analysis can especially benefit five key areas in the sales process. From looking for prospects to closing the sale, this tool can improve one or more of the sales process areas you may find yourself struggling with.

Finding Clients

The SWOT Analysis can help you better understand how you currently search for prospects and what you can do to win them. The 'Opportunities' part of the SWOT Analysis is a great tool for identifying the different clients you should be targeting, why they need your product and what information you should present to them.

Building Rapport

If one of your strengths is 'charisma' and a weakness is 'slow to respond,' build on your charisma and practice responding faster to present yourself as a genuine salesperson with a sincere interest in meeting your prospects' needs. By also identifying opportunities to ask questions and provide important information, you will make the prospect value and trust you more, thus helping you build rapport.

Qualifying Prospects

The SWOT Analysis can also help you improve the qualifying process. Understanding your strengths and weaknesses will help you be able to confidently determine what the prospect will buy, when they will buy and under what agreement conditions (price, quantity and length) they will need to close a deal.

Presentations

Your communication and demonstration skills will also benefit from the SWOT Analysis. Understanding the best talking points of your sales presentation and what needs to be included will certainly help you position your product as the best option for your prospect. Each part of the SWOT Analysis is valuable for this part of the sales process as identifying your strengths and weaknesses can provide a confidence boost and determining opportunities and threats can help you answer many questions.

Closing the Sale

Asking for the sale is one of the more intimidating positions to be in, but it's also where, as salespeople, we all want to be. Strengths like 'consistent follow-ups' and identifying threats like 'my product isn't the cheapest option' will help you determine how to best approach an offer, handle objections and negotiate confidently before officially closing the sale.

With your refined sales strategies and techniques from taking this analysis, you'll be well on your way to becoming an expert sales closer. If you'd like to evaluate your sales SWOT Analysis, visit [Stephanie Chung and Associates website](#).

Top 5 High-Ticket Selling Tips

Being in a sales position isn't an easy job, especially when it comes to selling high-ticket products and services. To succeed in high-ticket selling, you must be able to communicate the right way with buyers looking to make a big investment. It takes years of practice to effectively communicate with clients in this field as they expect you to be at the top of your game, ultimately knowing your product, competitors and customer.

With a background in private aviation sales, I know what it takes to succeed in high-ticket selling. I have learned that, in order to be a successful high-ticket sales closer, you must ask the right questions and understand your buyer.

To achieve that point in your career and consistently close deals, I have created a list of guidelines to help you get started on the path to success. Apply each of these strategies to your sales process and you'll soon see an improvement in sales.

1. Understand your customer's needs

To close a high-ticket sale, you must start with building a list of questions to ultimately discover the buyer's real motivators. Never assume the benefits your company says should be important to the buyer, is in fact, what the buyer deems important. Make sure to ask the right questions to essentially meet your customer's actual needs.

2. Adapt your communication style with the buyers'

We each have different communication styles and clients are no exception. The following list reveals four primary behavior styles buyers tend to have and how you should communicate with each type:

Direct, strong-willed, ambitious: Be clear, specific, brief and to the point

Friendly and enthusiastic: Provide a warm environment and refrain from drowning them in details, unless they ask for them

Predictable, steady, and relaxed: Present yourself softly, non-threateningly and logically

Perfectionist, conservative: Prepare your presentation in advance, stick to business and don't exaggerate.

It's important to understand and master the four primary styles so your buyers can enjoy engaging with you. By doing so, you will also make them feel like you fully understand them and what they need.

3. Know your competitors

As you know, there are many competitors in high-ticket sales with products like planes, industrial equipment and so on. It's essential you know who your competition is and what the distinct differences are between your product and theirs. By knowing these answers in detail, you can then properly position your product when meeting with the buyer.

4. Prepare for any objections

To handle objections effectively, try to bring up an objection before the buyer does. I call this the "preemptive strike." Prepare yourself by listing some objections the prospect may ask. Then, during your conversation explain how clients enjoy your customer experience but you often get questions about a certain issue. This will allow you to elaborate on the answer to a possible objection and position it so that you're in control.

5. Be confident when asking for the sale

If you feel your product is the best option for the buyer based on your understanding of their needs, then you have the right to ask for the sale. Ask him or her to confirm your product is the best solution for them and if so, confidently ask for their business and don't waiver on your price.

By applying the guidelines above, you will notice an increase in high-ticket sales and even a lasting relationship with your clients. Understanding what is important to them and fulfilling their needs on a consistent basis is the key to making you the successful, high-ticket sales closer you've always wanted to be.

LEADERSHIP



**The Secret To Getting Ahead
Is To Get Started**

3 Traits That Make a Great Leader

Being a leader isn't easy – if it were, everyone would be one. Leading others comes with more responsibility and accountability in all that you do, at all times. With that being said, it's important to sharpen the traits that will mold you into the kind of leader you want to be.

At baseline, every leader should have honesty and integrity but in order to succeed and inspire others to respect you and grow your business, there are a few traits every good leader should work to develop and perfect.

Vision – Leaders have to have vision in order to get anything done. Leaders are “future focused,” meaning they are always thinking “what if?” or “how can we?” when it comes to getting things done. Simply put, leaders think bigger than most. In order for things to get done they must cast their vision, ensure they have the right people in place to bring the vision to life, hold them accountable to do so, and know when to get out of the way and watch it happen. Every goal starts with a vision, and it's a leader's job to follow that goal from start to finish.

Emotional Intelligence – Of course every leader needs to be well-versed and knowledgeable in the field they work in, but beyond that lies emotional intelligence. The most effective leaders have developed emotional intelligence skills, which allow them to work better with a wider variety of people. This skill in itself will benefit you in and outside of work as you grow in your leadership role. With businesses rapidly changing, leaders who can understand and apply the power of other people's emotions along with their own, are able to facilitate higher levels of collaboration and productivity which puts them at a much higher advantage over those who don't.

Effective Communication Skills – We've all heard the phrase "communication is key" and in a leadership role, communication is imperative in order to achieve success. It's important that a leader knows how to communicate with all people, but just as importantly, a leader has to be able to listen actively. In today's world of "multi-tasking" learning how to focus on the person in front of you and what they're saying is needed, and also hard to do. Savvy leaders understand that there is optimum power in listening, asking questions, and then speaking if something needs to be said.

Author John Maxwell states, "Those who follow a crowd, will never be followed by a crowd." As you continue to grow your leadership skills commit to

thinking big, surrounding yourself with great people, over communicating, and always remember to apply the golden rule.

Leadership Qualities Every CEO Should Have

Every leader is different... some are natural-born leaders and others worked hard to develop such respected skills. The commonality is the final product: An influential executive. However, being CEO can definitely continue to be an intimidating position considering the amount of responsibility and accountability leaders have. Therefore, it's imperative to always seek ways to sharpen your leadership skills to become the executive you aspire to be. We all have room for improvement.

Successful CEOs developed their leadership qualities and, with time, have mastered many skills. Every leader, however, must reflect on the following traits to master inspiring others and increase company growth.

Emotional Intelligence - Beyond your expertise lies emotional intelligence. The most effective leaders develop emotional intelligence skills to work smarter and better with a wider variety of people. With businesses constantly changing, leaders who can recognize and apply the power of employees' emotions along with their own are able to facilitate higher levels of collaboration and productivity.

Vision - Leaders must have vision to achieve their business goals. Leaders focus on the future and always think of ways to improve strategies or plans. Simply put, leaders think bigger than most. In order to succeed, leaders need to cast their vision and ensure they have the right team in place to bring the idea to fruition. Then, you you'll feel comfortable enough to step aside, watch it unfold and oversee the plan from beginning to end.

Effective Communication - Communication is key and in a leadership role, it's imperative in order to succeed. Leaders must know how to communicate effectively and listen actively. Leaders are incredibly busy and have many things on their mind; this can make it very difficult to listen attentively. Savvy leaders understand there is optimum power in listening, asking questions, and giving thoughtful opinions.

In summation, being a leader isn't easy, but by recognizing and improving your management skills, a lot can be accomplished. In order to accomplish business goals as the head of your company, you must remind yourself to think about these qualities in yourself and what you can do to hone these skills for personal and professional growth.

How Behavior Assessments Affect Leadership Communication

Leadership communication is key in any organization. Without it, people would never know which direction to take when discussing a business plan or who is handling which aspects of keeping the company running. To combat this mess, leaders must have a solid game plan to improve productivity, profitability and performance.

In order to build more effective teams, leaders should learn employee behavioral styles, motivators and preferences. By doing so, you can analyze results and discover ways to adapt your own leadership style in order to meet your team's needs. By learning more about themselves as well as their similarities and differences when compared to coworkers, employees will also understand how they operate and what they can do to improve their communication and performance for the betterment of the team.

Behavior assessments are key to a successful business team. Assessments are one of the most powerful tools to drive business and are known to help teams gain a deeper insight for that competitive edge you desire for your company. Comprehensive science-based

assessments like behavior assessments utilize analytics to provide an in-depth understanding of your behaviors and motivators as well as your teams'. Behavior assessments are also a perfect solution to attain strong communication within a team. Further, successfully implemented assessments can help improve communication, increase engagement among employees and build smarter leaders.

Knowing on a deeper level what motivates and drives an employee can be very beneficial for leaders and their company. Like yourself, employees have depth; they have different motivators. It's important to understand employees are motivated by something larger than themselves that goes beyond the workplace.

With the help of behavior assessments, you'll not only understand your employees' needs but also another strategy behind creating a successful team and company. Learn more about the [Behaviors DISC Assessment](#) on my website and try it for yourself.

The Corporate Woman - Tips for Success in Any Field

Being a woman in the corporate world is no longer an unusual occurrence. According to the United States Department of Labor, an estimated 60% of American women are employed either part-time or full-time. While women certainly hold top positions in major corporations like Google and Microsoft, they remain a minority compared to men in the same C-level positions. As a female businesswoman, it's crucial to understand ways we can establish ourselves as distinguished leaders in a work environment through communication, confidence and knowledge.

Be an effective communicator -- A lot to do with verbal communication, and a lot more to do with listening, being an effective communicator is key to any leader's success. Being able to listen and understand your counterparts is crucial to succeeding in the workplace. Understanding what is expected of you and acting on that gives you credibility and makes your peers see you as dependable. In the workplace, you interact with various people at various levels of the

organization. The absolutely best thing one can do to further their career is to learn how to effectively communicate with people of all levels.

Exert your confidence -- You've heard the term "confidence is key" and it applies to careers now more than ever. If you don't have confidence in yourself and what you're saying, no one else will either. Being proactive and confident will help you earn your spot at the table. For example, if you're going into a meeting and want to share an idea, run it by your colleagues one-on-one beforehand. Most colleagues will be extremely receptive and provide support when you need it most—during the meeting. Not only will boosting your confidence make you feel good, it will show others around you, including your superiors, you're fit for a greater leadership role within the company.

Know your craft in and out -- You can be confident and be an excellent communicator, but these two skills won't matter if you don't know your craft. The key here is to strive for progress, not perfection. Knowing your craft is vital but so is being able to effectively communicate that you know it. No one will care how smart you are if you can't articulate it. In addition to your on-the-job experience, find ways to expand your knowledge through online courses, conferences, mentors and the like.

While the methods above may seem small and easy, you would be surprised by how many don't incorporate them in their daily corporate lives. Ladies, follow my tips and you'll not only improve yourself as an employee but you'll also prepare yourself for greater leadership opportunities. One key to being a great leader is learning how to be the best version of you. Remember—your spot is at the table—you just have to seize it.

Powerful Speaking Tips to Help Executives Own the Stage

While many CEOs and executives are thrown into the spotlight to deliver moving speeches and presentations, it's important to note the behind-the-scenes training that goes into effectively commanding a stage or boardroom.

Having worked as an executive in the aviation space for 20 years, Stephanie Chung observed the mistakes and pitfalls that many professionals were making when speaking to both intimate and large crowds.

“The most important thing for all leaders is they really have to get a clear understanding and have their own reality check in terms of where they are with their communication capabilities,” Chung tells [BlackEnterprise.com](https://www.blackenterprise.com).

Shedding light on how to command attention when speaking, Chung offers the below tips for executives looking to perfect their speaking skills in the boardroom and beyond.

1. Be a good listener: “People think communication in the sense of speaking, but really what I like to work with executives on is listening. Unless you’re on stage doing a presentation, then you should not be the one speaking the most,” says Chung. “The people who really have the most power are the ones who tend to be the most humble, they certainly listen more than they talk and they know how to ask questions and be engaged.”

2. Plan and prepare: If you are asked to speak at a public event or office event, Chung says that the best way to ensure that you nail your speech is to plan and prepare. “It’s great when you have teleprompters and all those other things, but at the end of the day you don’t really want to rely on those things because they can break down,” says Chung, while adding that you always want to speak on topics that you are passionate about and have credibility on.

3. Master storytelling: “People don’t want to just hear you stand up there and lecture them or tell them your top three points,” says Chung. “At the end of the day, the best way you can relate to your audience is to have them see you and feel like you’ve been there, and the best way to convey that is to really get involved in telling stories.”

Five Powerful Public Speaking Tips for Senior Business Leaders

Glossophobia is the fear of public speaking. According to Glossophobia.com, as many as 75 percent of people have the fear of public speaking. This number can be quite frightening considering we have many business executives around the world expected to lead entire companies but may hold back due to their anxiety over speaking to a room full of people.

As a sales advisor and public speaker, I have had the pleasure of speaking in front of many groups of people, from ambitious sales teams to successful executives and even packed conferences. Over the years my public speaking skills have improved drastically and helped me gain the skills necessary to succeed as a business leader and mentor.

The skills I have mastered as a public speaker comes from years of practice and many lessons learned. By practicing public speaking, you gain confidence in yourself as an expert in your craft and your ability to lead a company.

It can definitely be an intimidating position to be in if you're not prepared in advance of your presentation. By following the list of tips below, you can combat your possible fear of public speaking and earn confidence in your ability to inform and educate a room full of colleagues and industry leaders.

1. Prevent Mistakes

If your fear of presenting stems from making mistakes like your PowerPoint failing or having your main speaking points fall flat, prepare in advance! I recommend listing your greatest fear or fears and determine how you can prevent them from occurring. Such as taking a backup USB drive, making copies of your presentation or spicing up your points with interesting facts and statistics.

2. Practice Makes Perfect

It's always a great idea to practice your speech in front of people several times before your presentation day. Whether it's front of your spouse, friends or co-workers, they can be hugely helpful in terms of giving valuable feedback. You may not realize how distracting certain actions may be for your audience, such as saying filler words like "um" many times or walking from one side of the room to another and not stopping. Catch these distractions early on and break those habits.

3. Share Personal Stories

Leaders are often seen as distant or hard to relate to, when in reality, they share just as many, if not more failures than they care to admit. By sharing personal or emotional stories with the audience, you are admitting mistakes and highlighting how far you've come; making you relatable and inspiring.

4. Answer Questions

Always be prepared to answer questions. Audience members may interrupt to ask questions or there may be many people waiting to ask questions until the end of your presentation. Be prepared to answer all kinds of questions the audience might come up with. And, if you don't know the answer, tell them what you do know. A great strategy is to reference a question at a later time in the presentation. This shows you're paying close attention to your audience's concerns.

5. Practice Confident Body Language

They say actions speak louder than words. Your body language speaks volumes in terms of how you really feel at that moment in time. If you're stressed you might rub your neck, if you're nervous you might have shaky hands and so on. If you're feeling nervous before speaking, be sure to take a deep breath, stand up straight and smile. While you're speaking, make sure your

hands and arms aren't too distracting as you make your points and be sure to look at people in the eye and not just scan the audience.

By following these guidelines, you will certainly feel not only confident in your presentation, but also in yourself as a skilled speaker. Being a public speaker communicates your vast knowledge in your craft, your ability to help fulfill business needs and your impressive critical thinking and listening skills.

The Best Briefcases for Business Women

Many business women (including myself) like to pair our power suits with fancy bags or briefcases. But are they always as useful as they are stylish? They are not necessarily the best brief cases for business women.

When picking a briefcase you must focus on three factors: Practicality, efficiency and elegance. You need all three components to get the most out of your briefcase.

Since we all have different preferences in bags I have listed bags that are not only different in style but are equally dependable.

Tote Bag

While small bags are easy to carry around, tote bags are both elegant and practical. With multiple pockets for tech accessories, pens, notepads and other important supplies, you have enough room to pack various items for back-to-back meetings and even for traveling.

Consider upgrading from a fabric tote bag to something in leather (or faux leather) for a more upscale, business-appropriate look.

Satchel Briefcase

The satchel briefcase is a classic that looks great and has larger compartments compared to tote bags. Women who tend to carry a laptop to and from work can benefit greatly from owning this type of briefcase. The long strap hangs across your body, giving your fragile tech accessories protection from falling and makes your hands free to carry other items. Briefcases always look chic in a more durable material like leather.

Wheeled Briefcase

When traveling, you're not only juggling your itinerary, but also your belongings. You can benefit greatly from a wheeled briefcase. They are easy to move around, many have a tough exterior for added protection and they provide several pockets to carry supplies. I gravitate toward a more classic color in this instance, such as black, navy, brown or grey.

Planning to shop for a new work bag soon? Take your current bag along with you for the shopping trip. It's great to test out potential bag candidates by taking a test run with the "stuff" you typically take with you on a trip. Most importantly, make sure that laptop fits and leaves enough room to carry other travel essentials.

By owning one of the bags above, you'll feel even more sophisticated and confident knowing your tech accessories and travel gear are all safe in one place.

Five Must-Have Travel Items for Every Business Woman

Has business travel become such a routine that you don't give much thought to what you need to bring along? Or, is preparing for a trip more of a chore than an excitement? You're not alone. Packing is not necessarily at the top of your list of things to put a lot of thought into but it is incredibly important to create a checklist before a trip instead of hoping the items you pack will come in handy.

As a frequent business traveler, I know what it's like to be rushing for flights, juggling multiple gadgets and frantically searching for my travel itinerary (you do have an itinerary, don't you?). Preparing a checklist of travel items is the first step to becoming a seasoned traveler.

To make your life a little easier, I have prepared a list of important items to take for a more efficient business travel experience. The meetings and presentations you're going to have are stressful enough; this is the perfect opportunity to help you focus on your goals for the trip and less about what it takes to get there.

Tote Bag

Although it makes perfect sense to travel with a small bag, a medium-sized tote bag can make you look stylish but more importantly, provide the practicality every professional can appreciate. These tote bags have multiple pockets for your tech accessories and more room for other important supplies you may need quickly as you dash through the airport like pens, cash, beauty essentials and your travel itinerary.

Beauty Kit

If you are preparing for a long trip, consider packing sets of makeup, skincare and hair products in your carry on tote bag. These items will keep you looking and feeling refreshed throughout the day as you sit through multiple business functions. Many times we're invited to attend a business dinner after a long, exhausting day. Avoid that tired look by revitalizing your appearance with the kit for a final round of socializing with colleagues.

Portable Organizer

This travel-sized item is perfect for business trips. Portable organizers can carry important tools like a tablet or phone, credit cards, a passport and pen all in one place! I use mine to keep track of cords, cards and

other items I may immediately need. It is a must-have for women who love to multi-task while they're on the go.

Personal Security Door Stop Alarm

It's always better to be safe than sorry, especially if you're traveling alone. Stores may sell doorstops that can keep someone from trying to get into your hotel room, but a doorstop with an alarm not only stops the door but alerts you and others while you're sleeping.

Disposable Toothbrushes

Surely you plan to take your regular toothbrush on your trip but what if you have an appointment right after your flight lands? This would be the perfect time to take out a disposable toothbrush from your tote bag while you rush to an important meeting or event. They can truly be a lifesaver as you prepare yourself for a meeting with colleagues or networking at a social event.

Portable Slippers

Now here's an item you're going to thank me for if you haven't thought of it already. I make sure to always bring foldable slippers to wear on flights and around my hotel room. Walking all day in heels and going from one place to another is exhausting for you and your poor feet. Use the slippers to relieve some pressure!

The best way to get the most of your business trip is finding ways to make yourself feel ready to contribute during meetings and presentations. After all, we are most productive when we are restful and comfortable, right? Through smart and careful planning you'll find yourself being less worried about misplacing items on your trip and more on the business tasks at hand. With these travel items on your checklist, you will surely look and feel ready to contribute valuable ideas and enjoy a much smoother travel experience.

Top Three Travel Items Every Business Woman Should Pack

Business traveling can be quite the hassle, especially on those quick 24- or 48-hour trips. If you don't have a solid game plan for items to take on your trip, you're just hoping what you throw into your carry on will be exactly what you need.

Besides taking the most important items like clothing and gadgets to keep you connected while you're away, I've found a handful of items to be truly indispensable when I'm on the road, no matter the length of the trip.

Tote Bag

Some ladies prefer to travel with small bags, but tote bags like this one, will leave you looking elegant and offers the practicality every professional can appreciate. Tote bags that have multiple pockets are perfect for your tech accessories and any other important supplies you may need while you're running from airplane to taxi like pens, cash and your travel itinerary.

Portable Organizer

Similar to the tote bag, this travel-size item can also carry your electronic tools like a tablet or phone. A portable organizer is another great tool to keep digital and travel essentials organized during a busy trip. I use mine to keep track of cords, cards and more!

Portable Slippers

I always bring foldable slippers during any trip and use them on the flight and around my hotel room. Walking all day in heels and going from one place to another is tiring for you and your poor feet. Use the slippers to relieve some pressure!

Business meetings and presentations can be stressful enough... through some smart planning you can make your life easier by organizing your essentials for your next trip.

Flex Your Style to be Likeable in Any Situation

As a sales professional, you understand the importance of building personal rapport with your clients. It's the first thing you're taught, and it's the one skill that can always use more improvement.

Webster's Dictionary defines rapport as "a friendly relationship," one that is crucial in maintaining and increasing sales. However, building rapport isn't as easy as it sounds. You must be able to understand how to effectively communicate with people. It's about not only knowing and understanding your preferred communication style, but being able to know and understand the receiver's communication style as well.

Analyze Your Communication Style

Ask yourself a series of questions to get a feel for how you are most comfortable communicating with others.

- How do I influence others?
- How do I handle challenging situations?
- How do I change my approach when dealing with different behavior styles?
- Am I able to recognize different behavior styles?

Once you've given the answers thought, consider the different styles of communication you deal with on a daily basis. Think of your clients and co-workers, since a large part of your sales job depends on the rapport you build with them.

Modify Communication for Different People

More times than not, people conduct sales calls or pitches with a one-size-fits-all approach. If you want the best opportunity to win the business, it's imperative your communication style is adaptive to the person with which you are communicating. Meaning: If you enjoy details and analytical data and you're communicating with someone who likes to get straight to the point, it's important to adjust your tactics and provide them with the bottom line. Drop the abundance of details unless they request more information. This rule not only applies to sales pitches or calls, but to emails as well. Adapt accordingly to the people around you, and success will be realized sooner than later.

Here are a few suggestions for dealing with the following behavior styles:

- **Direct, Strong-Willed, Ambitious:** Be clear, specific, brief, and to the point
- **Friendly and Enthusiastic:** Provide a warm environment, and refrain from drowning them in details, unless they ask for them

- **Predictable, Steady, and Relaxed:** Present yourself softly, non-threateningly, and logically
- **Perfectionist, Conservative:** Prepare your presentation in advance, stick to business, and don't exaggerate.

Maintain Your Relationship

Rapport needs to be established throughout the entire sales process, not just the beginning. This also allows the seller/buyer relationship to grow and positions you for referrals down the line. The key to maintaining these relationships is often small things that make a big difference. Channel your energy into delighting and serving your buyer. The question that should constantly be on your mind should be “How can I help them?” When communicating with your client, hone in on ideas or ways that could benefit them. This makes your prospect feel considered, and it makes you seem trustworthy, a very rare feat in today's world.

Being considerate is pivotal; it's very often the key in growing relationships that blossom into a profitable sale. People don't often remember you—but they will remember how you made them feel. Ask as many questions as are needed to understand your prospect, what they value, what they do, and why they do it. This will make you a smarter salesperson, and make it much easier when it comes to focusing in on things that matter most to them.

Listen intently at all times. This shows that you sincerely care and are appreciative of what your client says. Being “heard” is very important in a buyer/seller relationship. Ultimately people buy from people they feel are competent, genuine, and trustworthy. You establish this through effective listening.

Think about the kind of people you choose to do business with or the people you enjoy working with in your field. Ask yourself why they appeal to you. Is it their work ethic? Is it their attention to detail? Is it their incredible listening skills? Whatever it is that makes them pleasant to work with, try to channel these qualities into your own work habits. Building off of peers that inspire you to be a better salesperson will only benefit you as you work on perfecting your communication skills.

By the same token, take note of the things you don’t enjoy in your work environment or in other sellers. Being pushy, aggressive, or bossy rarely ends in a profitable sale, or a strong rapport with a client. The sooner you are able to determine what works for you and your client, the closer you are to becoming a well-rounded and successful salesperson.

How to Build Personal Rapport with Every Type of Client

How many times have you heard the saying: “Communication is key”? Very often I’m sure and for good reason. By seeking ways to improve your communication skills, you are also learning how to master the art of relationship building with clients. This is a crucial lesson in sales and a key to the secret to success: being able to adapt your communication style with your clients’ styles.

It’s important to understand your own communication style as well as the receiver’s to effectively build personal rapport. There are three important strategies you must follow to essentially customize your communication style and apply it to fit other’s personalities. Once you master these tactics, you will then be able to easily build rapport and customer loyalty.

1. Identify Your Communication Style

The first step towards identifying your communication style is to ask yourself a series of questions to get a clear understanding of how you are most comfortable

communicating with others. As you answer each of the following questions, think about how you communicate on a daily basis, such as with your boss, clients and co-workers.

- How do I influence others?
- How do I handle challenging situations?
- How do I change my approach when dealing with different behavior styles?
- Am I able to recognize different behavior styles?

After you've answered each question, you will have a much better idea of how you've been able to build a rapport with your colleagues. Use this information to learn how you can apply similar or better approaches when communicating with clients.

2. Adapt Your Communication Style

In order to adapt to different people's communication styles you must first understand their personality. Do not use a one-size-fits-all approach for sales calls and pitches, as this is a ticket to losing many sales opportunities.

Try to determine your clients' behavior styles before your sales presentation. You can do so by researching online, asking a friend or colleague that has interacted with them or reaching out to him or her prior to your sales pitch.

You can use the list of behavior styles below and response suggestions as a guide for your sales call.

- **Direct, Strong-Willed, Ambitious:** Be clear, specific, brief and to the point
- **Friendly and Enthusiastic:** Create a warm environment, and refrain from drowning them in details, unless they ask for them
- **Predictable, Steady, and Relaxed:** Present yourself softly, non-threateningly, and logically
- **Perfectionist, Conservative:** Prepare your presentation in advance, stick to business and don't exaggerate.

3. Uphold Your Personal Rapport

By maintaining personal rapport with your client, you're solidifying your business relationship. A great way to create a trusting relationship is by doing small things that make a big difference. Such as checking in with clients from time to time and sending them helpful tips. They'll appreciate you finding ways that could make their lives easier.

Don't just stop with this list of tips, it's important to continue to seek ways to improve your communication skills. With all of your knowledge, you will soon gain the confidence to adapt your communication style more easily and successfully.

Self-Analysis: Drive More Sales by Finding Your Strengths & Weaknesses

One of the key tools that leaders in many types of businesses regularly create to help drive their strategies and tactics is a SWOT analysis. As you probably know, the typical SWOT analysis is a grid broken up into four quadrants to identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that the leader is working with within their industry or trade. The SWOT grid can be viewed as a series of positive, neutral and negative traits that must be identified and addressed in order to meet the agreed upon business goals.

Successful sales professionals know the best strategies to close deals and grow their book of business in any sales environment. The immediate benefits of becoming a sales pro include better commissions and bonuses and generating new clients from current customer referrals. But you're also setting yourself up for growth in the long term by crushing your sales quota and eventually becoming the undisputed sales champion of your company.

Its important to analyze your core strengths and weaknesses in a series of key touch points in the cycle of making a sale. Those touch points include:

Prospecting

Potential customers are identified and detailed background information is gathered.

First Impression

Your first chance to display sincere interest in the prospect and their needs, gain positive acceptance and develop mutual respect and rapport.

Qualifying

Discovering what the prospect will buy, when they will buy and under what conditions (price, quantity and/or length of agreement) they will buy.

Demonstration

Your opportunity to present and position your product or service as the best option for what the customer is looking for.

Influence

Build value and trust with the customer and overcome possible second-guessing and delays in sealing the deal.

Close

Making the official sales offer, dealing with objections and negotiations and completing the transaction to mutual satisfaction.

The sales road-map is laid out for you.

Now is the time to determine whether you are ready to navigate this industry that can be littered with roadblocks and detours. If you'd like to analyze your Sales SWOT and take the online Sales Skills Index assessment, email us at info@stephaniechung.com.

What's Keeping Sales Leaders Up At Night?

The pace and competition within the sales industry never lets up. Sales pros and team leaders may have reached their quarterly quota a month early and their minds immediately flash forward to the next sales quarter goals. The breakneck speed of a successful salesperson can lead to stress and self-doubt when you encounter new challenges, some of which may be completely out of your control. Below are four scenarios that you need to watch out because if these issues are not addressed, they could lead to some sleepless nights and lost sales.

Competitive Pricing

Sales professionals should constantly study their competitors and determine whether your product/service is being offered elsewhere at a better price and/or with more flexible financing options. It's difficult to stay a step ahead in the sales race if you miss the starting gun.

Obsolete Product Offering

Getting undersold by your sales nemesis is one thing, but it can be downright disastrous if your product/service is outdated and obsolete. Keep a close relationship with your company's product management team to ensure you know when the next thing big thing will be ready for sale.

Ineffective Sales Pitching/Techniques

A new product offering is much less effective when paired with a stale sales pitch. Conduct a candid self-assessment of the trusted sales messaging you've used to close the deal in the past and compare notes with your colleagues to find some new best practices that customers are responding to in a positive way.

Limited Ceiling for Growth

A successful sales pro keeps close tabs on how much potential growth exists within their current role and/or company. Now could be the perfect time to test the market for a better chance at a promotion and increased compensation. This might also mark your chance to expand your skill set to make yourself more attractive and marketable to a new firm.

The main theme that all of these situations have in common is preparation. The more advanced planning and time you put into your professional sales career, the more flexibility you will have when one or all four of

these scenarios tries to block your career path. If you're ready to take your sales techniques to the next level, contact Stephanie Chung at info@stephaniechung.com.

Embracing the Suck: How to Master Change

Can you name one thing all successful people have in common? The answer is: Failures. We have all encountered failures at some point in our lives. Failure is what continues to give us reason to learn and grow. Some people, however, need the occasional reminder to “embrace the suck” and that’s okay!

With my father in the military, my family moved around a lot, making me the “new” kid everywhere I went and leading me to become a change master. In 2008, I was diagnosed with breast cancer; it was a brutal disease that opened my eyes to a beautiful life. Later, after finally being cancer-free, I was laid off from the job I loved for 14 years. I thought I had hit rock bottom but I fought through those challenges and transformed pain into motivation.

My personal and professional struggles taught me many lessons, the most important one being: Turning failures and changes into opportunity. Want to learn from your own failures? Here are three important ways you can learn to “embrace the suck” and change your life for the better.

#1: Seek Excellence

When I lived on military bases, I was surrounded by people who were in tip-top shape; always running in perfect formation and challenging each other mentally. It can feel chaotic when we're thrown into a "change" situation, but by being surrounded by excellence, you can choose to step up your own standards to be stronger, faster and better.

#2: Be Confident

Keep in mind none of us were created to fit in – we were created to stand out. Don't completely focus on trying to fit to a new environment; you should instead embrace your unique gifts, talents and purpose. By doing so, others can see your confidence and pride in who you truly are as an individual and a professional.

#3: Focus and Fight

When mastering change, sometimes we must resist the urge to flee. There will be times you may want to give up, but remember: Your mission, whether it is overcoming a layoff, a disease or something else, requires your full attention. Life is one big journey and sometimes you need to look inside and ask if you're pushing yourself enough.

I could not be more grateful for where and who I am today, and it's all because of the failures and difficult challenges I have encountered. There is always room to grow personally and professionally; it's just a matter of embracing life in all of its glory, failures and all, and learning from these stepping stones to the next big thing.

The CEO Guide to the Art of Handling Pressure

Five Tips to Improve Leadership

Chief Executive Officers around the world have many things in common: the need for high achievement, remarkable problem solving skills, the desire to lead and a diligent work ethic are just a few. With the immense number of responsibilities these CEOs shoulder, it's difficult to comprehend how they handle the high expectations and day-to-day pressures of the job, the least of which include meeting strict deadlines, satisfying employees and clients, and leading back-to-back meetings.

Many business leaders rely heavily on their seasoned entrepreneurial skills, earned through decades of experience, to work effectively and conscientiously. But novice CEOs quickly learn how challenging it is to manage numerous duties, paying close attention to each one in order to achieve results they can be proud of. Developing such expert-level management skills requires years of patience and practice, not to mention plenty of trial and error.

These tips can help prepare CEOs to lead a company while maintaining high productivity and efficient work habits. CEOs who apply these principles on a daily basis will soon notice an improvement in both their work and their well-being.

Prioritize Worthy Tasks

CEOs should consider their hourly pay rate when prioritizing their to-do list. Someone who earns \$400 per hour must determine which tasks are worth the time to complete at that dollar amount. This way, leaders can focus their resources on the high value activities, rather than getting bogged down in the smaller tasks, to make sure they devote their best efforts to the top priorities.

Maintain Pre-Vacation Tenacity

Many people can relate to the feeling of working tirelessly to tie up loose ends before a vacation. The last day before a trip usually requires hyper focus and, frequently, delegation of tasks to accomplish everything before takeoff. CEOs who apply this rate of energy and level of focus on a daily basis will feel satisfied at the end of the day, having completed all of their tasks as carefully and efficiently as possible.

Focus on the Vision

Though children seem to have no limits to their imagination, as people get older, they forget to dream big. But it is the CEO's job, as the "visionary" leader of the company, to think of the future of the business. Therefore, it is crucial to take a minute and step away from a stressful situation to let imagination flow. It can be inspiring to CEOs to open their minds to the big picture and envision the many possibilities that exist for the business. By taking time to focus on the vision, CEOs can advance the company's innovative and creative work further than they'd ever thought possible.

Take Risks

Unlike surgeons, most CEOs don't deal with life-or-death situations — no one is likely to die as a result of a business decision. This means business leaders are free — and, in fact, obligated — to take risks. Though they may result in negative outcomes occasionally, risky decisions are the best way to push the boundaries and enable a company to exceed expectations.

Be Present at Home

To create brilliant and thoughtful work, CEOs should engage in their personal lives just as much, if not more, than their work lives. Despite the demands of the job, CEOs must focus on spending quality time with family

and being present in their personal lives. This positive change will lead to a happier, more fulfilling life, thus inspiring more creative work.

As a CEO, it is very difficult to balance the countless pulls and responsibilities of a successful work and home life. By developing the powerful habits that can help them make the most of their valuable time, CEOs will become more adept at juggling every facet of the job, and better poised to make tough business decisions, achieve professional and personal goals and, most importantly, lead more fulfilling lives.

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