

How to Sell Like a CEO, When You're Not!

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Carly Fiorina was CEO of the Hewlett Packard organization for over 5 years. Fiorina was a charismatic leader and was extremely successful in rallying the board around her ideas and her strategies. Despite several missed profit expectations and an 8% drop in stock value in 2004, the board continued to be committed and sold on Carly's plan. Why was this?

Fiorina was a strong and powerful communicator. When she spoke she commanded attention. As a result her message was received and her ideas were sold. As a sales person, how many times have you walked into a meeting thinking, "I better do my best performance... this is going to be a hard sale." I am sure this is what Fiorina was thinking every time she met with her board members as a spokesperson for a struggling company and an unpopular strategy. However, she was able to communicate in a way that resulted in continuous buy-in as well as confidence in her and her thinking.

As salespeople it is our responsibility to convince, persuade and sell. How do we do this? Following are three areas that must be assessed to ensure you are effective and will close the sale.

#1. Need Oriented

Have you assessed your audience's needs? Your introduction and main points during your sale should all be directed towards your audience's needs. Capture them up front by hitting those hot buttons and keep them reeled in with main points that reiterate how you can fill a need and by the conclusion you've got them hook, line and sinker. How many times have you bought something that you "really" didn't need? We've all done it. For some reason, however, that item is filling a need at that time or a need that you didn't think you had, but was uncovered by the sales person. Determine the need of your audience and convey the ways in which you can fill that need.

#2. Differentiation

You know that your product, service, or idea is meeting a need with the audience, but what differentiates you from your competitors? What differentiates you

is the way you communicate your message. Carly Fiorina had passion. When she spoke, people listened. She had conviction. If you believe in your message, so will your audience. Incorporate a story or example that will grab their attention and ensure that they remember you over the competitor.

#3. Confidence/Conviction

Last but not least, can you imagine Carly Fiorina fidgety, nervous or anything but poised? No, I am sure she approached clients, employees and her board with conviction, looking them straight in the eye, standing up straight and looking like a real CEO. When you approach a client, their impression of you is made before you even open your mouth. If your arms are crossed, you are viewed as stern and unapproachable. If you're fidgety, you're viewed as unconfident and untrustworthy. Your posture must be strong and confident. If you are not perceived as confident, your audience will not trust in you or your message, and the sale will not be made. Believe what you say and look the part. Hands should be to the side, not fidgeting or closed. Shoulders should be back. Sit or stand up straight. This is the easiest way to exude confidence and to make the lasting first impression.

Although Carly Fiorina has been recently let go from the Hewlett Packard organization, her legacy continues. Fiorina was the first woman to head a Dow 30 company and the first outsider to head up the struggling Hewlett Packard organization. She may no longer be at the helm of Hewlett Packard, but there is not doubt she will land on her feet. Fiorina began as a sales executive and has mastered the skill of selling herself and her ideas. For over 5 years she continued to sell her strategy to a board who had differing views, but who backed her anyways. One consistent message that you continue to hear about Ms. Fiorina is her ability to communicate. She was and continues to be a strong, charismatic and memorable business communicator. No matter what line of business you are in, to stand out from the crowd and really sell your ideas, you must prove yourself by being a communicator that addresses needs, differentiates himself and exudes confidence.

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