

Women in sales - are we equals?



By [Monika D'Agostino](#)

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Last week, on the train back from a business meeting in New York City, I started reading Sheryl Sandberg's book "Lean In".

I honestly didn't expect it to be a page turner but it turned out to be just that. Sheryl has a writing style that I as a professional woman can easily relate to. Her stories are insightful and I was stunned how many light bulbs went off in my head when she was pointing out over and over that we "women in business" haven't quite arrived.

Some examples that she featured were just simply eye opening and at some point I put the book down to reflect on my personal experience as a woman with many years in the business world. While I could relate to most of the examples that she was pinpointing, I also felt that my personal journey, while tough at times, never left me feeling that I was inferior to my male colleagues or that I was treated differently.

After some soul searching I asked myself the question whether it had something to do with the fact that I was in sales. Maybe, sales is an equalizer, I thought.

Is the business of sales an equalizer?

Most business practices cannot be measured in numbers only. In sales, that's all that matters. If you put numbers on the book and you sell, nobody (sadly) cares how you do it and you are simply measured by your accomplishments. It's your performance that counts.

When I was employed as a sales professional, I was usually the only girl on the team. While my male colleagues were a bit suspicious and cautious at first, they had no choice than to accept me once I started producing. They had to treat me with respect, because my managers were pleased with the results that I brought to the table and the ultimate judge is not your sales manager, but your prospects turned to clients. If you cannot convert sales it doesn't matter whether you sales manager likes you are not. As a matter of fact, it doesn't matter if anybody internally takes a liking to you personally or not as long as you keep closing business. It's really all about performance!

It was at that point where my light bulb went off. Sales is one of the few disciplines where women (when successful) are equal to their male counterparts. In sales we are part of the group, we have a seat at the table, we don't choose a chair in the back (just like Sheryl notes in her book). Our voices are heard when we bring results.

Removed from the politics?

I also remembered that it relieved me from having to play the political game. Many years ago I was travelling to San Francisco to attend a sales meeting and the first night after dinner the team ended up at the hotel bar for a nightcap. At first we were drinking wine and beer but then one of the junior sales people who wanted to impress our sales manager suggested to do shots. One of my fellow team members, who happened to be a guy and I just looked at each other and we had a common understanding of what we will do next.

Tim, a manly looking guy (Dwayne Johnson alias The Rock lookalike, anybody?) who is sensible, sensitive and also a good listener (which of course made him an excellent sales person) and I excused ourselves and went upstairs to our respective rooms. I myself decided to watch some mindless television show and Tim probably checked in with his wife who was at home with their small children.

The looks we got indicated that people thought we might have had something going on because we left at the same time. But Tim and I didn't care. We didn't have to play the socializing corporate game. We didn't need to impress our sales manager because we were both top performers.

The equality gap

Needless to say that women show results in every industry and every profession, albeit though, there are ways to put us down by questioning our style (women who are driven are often viewed as aggressive, but men aren't?), or our approach (women who are competitive are often viewed as you know what, but for guys that's what's expected?).

Are our results measured with the same parameters as men's results? In sales, my experience has been that none of that seems to matter as much as in other professions.

So, in closing, I am asking all my fellow sales women out there. Do you also feel sales is an equalizer or has been an equalizer for you?

ABOUT MONIKA D'AGOSTINO

Chief Consultative Sales Officer at Consultative Sales Academy - I work with highly motivated individuals and organisations to create success by utilizing a consultative sales approach. Contact details: website: www.consultativesalesacademy.net | Twitter @monikadago | LinkedIn

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