A Feminist Exploration of Gender and Communication in the Professional Sales Workplace

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Preamble

As a Communications Studies major, I have many options upon graduation thanks to the broad nature of the degree. Although I may decide to go back to graduate school in a few years, I have decided to start my career straight out of graduation with a job in sales. For many years, the sales profession has been largely male-dominated, however recently there has been more and more women are taking on this career choice (Dawson, 1997). In order to better understand the implications of this change, I propose to conduct a critical analysis that addresses the roles of women in the sales profession. Primarily, I will engage in a feminist exploration of gender and communication in the professional workplace with regards to the sales profession. I want to begin by discussing why this topic is relevant to me. One of the main reasons I have chosen this topic is because gender and communication is something that I am passionate about. I enjoy studying how society has developed gender inequalities and learning about ways that we can change these to create a more equal society. I am also proposing this project because it deals directly with my career goals. I have accepted an offer to work in sales upon graduation and I am curious to know more about how and why it has been primarily a male dominated profession. On a more scholarly level, this project will allow me to apply the information I have learned from the communication discipline to an area of work I intend to pursue. I hope that by exploring this topic I can personally take an active role in improving the status of women in the sales profession. Also I hope that my project will help others to be aware of the inequalities so they can also help to correct this situation in their own ways.

Introduction

Since World War II a major change in the workplace has been the growing addition of women. In 1947, women took up twenty-eight percent of the labor force and according to the United Sates Department of Labor, women are projected to take up fifty-one percent of the labor force by 2018 (*Women's Bureau).* This change in the workforce means that women are now taking on careers that have been previously male-dominated, such as a career in professional sales. According to a study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, from 1971-1980 women's involvement increased "224 percent in wholesale-trade sales and 172 percent in manufacturing sales" (Gable & Reed, 1987, p.33). Sales is a growing field for women and many college graduates from business and communication related majors are choosing to embark on sales careers. The purpose of this paper is to investigate how gender and communication influence the selling profession.

Facilitating Factors

The first influx of women into the sales profession was aided by legal and social reasons. Legal action was taken "to help reduce discrimination by Tile VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (as amended, the Equal Opportunity Employment Act of 1972), Executive Order 11246 (Affirmative Action) and state civil rights legislation" (Fugate, Decker, & Brewer, 1988, p.33). Social reasons included the fact that the sales profession was predominately male and this profession not only appealed to women, but women wanted equal economic opportunity. Other facilitating factors included changes in education, demographics, arrangement of the labor force, and changes in managerial views toward women (Fugate, Decker, & Brewer, 1988). Organizations were also formed to help support women in selling occupations such as *The National Association of Business and Industrial Saleswomen* and the *National Association of*

Professional Saleswomen. The organization, *Catalyst*, is another group that works to support not only saleswomen, but all women in business workplaces. All of these changes facilitated women to enter into the sales profession in extraordinary numbers.

Inhibiting Factors

Along with the facilitating factors there also exists inhibiting factors for women in professional selling. Women today face sexual discrimination in more subtle ways than in the past. Fugate, Decker and Brewer state that in professional selling "men often attribute female success to luck and retain other sex-role orientations which make it difficult for women to compete for customers or with other salespersons" (1988, p. 34). Women can have a hard time finding their role in the selling setting and can feel low self-efficacy (Fugate, Decker, & Brewer, 1988). Studies have shown that "women systematically underestimate their own abilities" (Sandberg, 2010). Men will more often attribute their success to themselves, while women attribute their success to external factors (Sandberg, 2010). This affects the success of individuals because when one does not believe in his or her own self they are less likely to advocate for themselves and get promotions, raises, etc. What the data overwhelmingly shows is that "success and likeability are positively correlated for men and negatively correlated for women" (Sandberg, 2010). Sexism in the workplace is not as blatant as it used to be, however it is still prevalent.

Tokenism can come into play in the sales profession as women tend to be the minority. A woman tends to be scrutinized more "since her behavior and performance are usually viewed as both positive and negative reflections of all women" (Gable and Reed, 1987, p.35). Tokenism can also create barriers to advancement in the sales industry for three reasons: "1) exclusion from informal company networks, 2) lack of culture fit, and 3) lack of mentoring" (Briggs,

Jaramillo, & Weeks, 2012, p. 937). Exclusion from informal company networks is limiting to career advancement because researchers have noted that successful individuals in organizations are networked with others in the organization and the very top performing individuals are well connected in informal company networks (Briggs, Jaramillo, & Weeks, 2012). Briggs, Jaramillo, and Weeks discuss that "eighty-five percent of women executives consider networking with influential colleagues to be an important strategy for breaking the glass ceiling" (2012, p.938). When salespeople feel they do not fit into the company culture, this could limit their growth. When people feel a lack of fit with company culture they are less likely to be as dedicated to their job and may not work as hard as someone who fits with the culture (Briggs, Jaramillo, & Weeks, 2012). The last barrier to professional success in an organization due to tokenism is lack of mentoring. A mentoring relationship in sales is a "career-oriented relationship between a more senior salesperson or manager (mentor) and a junior or newly hired salesperson (protégé) initiated for the development of the protégé's understanding of his or her roles, the social and political nature of the organization, and the advancement of the protégé's career" (Briggs, Jaramillo, & Weeks, 2012, p.938). Mentors can have a great impact on their mentee's career progress. In male-dominated industries female workers tend to "be in particular need of sponsorship and legitimacy—two key attributes of powerful, connected, and visible mentors" (Ramaswami, Dreher, Bretz, & Wiethoff, 2010, p. 400). Ramaswami and colleagues found that females with male mentors were higher paid and more satisfied with their career progress. Overall tokenism can have a profound impact on one's career success and it is important to be aware of these issues to move upwardly in an organization.

Institutional stereotypes in the workplace can have suppressing effects on women. There are a number of gender stereotypes for women employees such as: sex object, mother, child,

iron maiden. The sex object stereotype "defines women in terms of their sex or sexuality" (Wood, 20011, p.227). This can be an assumption that women should conform to traditional and cultural views of femininity in terms of their appearance, body, and clothing. This is apparent in the workplace as women will receive more compliments on their appearances then men. If women are defined by their outer appearances then this opens the door for inappropriate communication and for women to be seen as less professional then men (Wood, 2011). When women are seen as mothers in the workplace this can decrease their credibility and people may classify them as undedicated professionals (Wood, 2011). The third stereotype of child in job-related situations involves women being seen as cute children and their opinions are not respected. This stereotype may inhibit women's opportunities making it harder for them to demonstrate abilities and advance professionally. The final stereotype defines women as manly. The iron maiden stereotype reinforces the idea that to be confident, ambitious, and competitive is to be unfeminine (Shuler, 2003). Each of these stereotypes defines women by their gender and discredits women as workers.

The way in which people are labeled in the workplace is important to study because people buy into these notions and it can be restricting for the group that is seen negatively. Stereotypes are inevitable as they are "habitual and unconscious" and therefore "people are often unaware of how stereotypes shape their perceptions and behavior (Bielby, 2000, p.122). They become a problem when they limit another person's success or opportunities. Whether conscious or not, "individuals translate ideas about gender into discriminatory behaviors through sex categorization and gender stereotyping" (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011, p. 765). Gender stereotypes in the workplace can lead to discriminatory behavior and inequality for women. Prejudice is likely to occur when people "hold a stereotype about a social group that is

incongruent with the attributes that are thought to be required for success" in positions of power in the workplace (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 574). When a person takes on an incongruent role in work, this inconsistency decreases their likability in the eyes of the person perceiving (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Typically, "prejudice toward female leaders follows from the incongruity that many people perceive between the characteristics of women and the requirements of leader roles" (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 574). Eagly and Karau (2002) found that women in leadership roles are seen less favorably in these roles as having leadership ability is more stereotypically male and they found that women's leadership behaviors and actions are seen less favorable to a male's because men are perceived to know how to lead better. Women struggle with prejudice and stereotypes when they take on professional leadership roles and it continues to be easier for males to be accepted and liked in these positions.

Women in sales can face the stereotype that one must possess masculine characteristics to do well and gain success in this career (Gable and Reed, 1987). Madeline Heilmann of New York University wrote in the *Journal of Social Issues* that men and women are thought to differ in achievement orientated traits and social and service orientated traits. Heilman states that men are often seen as aggressive, dominant, independent and assertive while women are seen as kind, helpful and concerned for others. Gender stereotypes can be detrimental to a women's success and advancement in an organization. Heilman writes that women can find it hard to enter into higher levels of companies because top management and executive level positions are almost always considered to require candidates with characteristically male traits. These positions "are thought to require an achievement-oriented aggressiveness and an emotional toughness that is distinctly male in character" (Heilman, 2001, p. 69). Research shows that when the same work is done by a man and a women, the man's work is seen as superior.

Heilman's study states that the more women are viewed in stereotypical terms, the more this will occur (2001). Sex stereotyping is an important concept to study when looking at women in the sales profession as it can "influence decisions concerning hiring practices and purchase decisions" (Frederick & McNeilly, 1988, p.43). Sex stereotyping can be broken into two categories: sex-characteristic stereotyping and sex-role stereotyping. Sex characteristic stereotyping refers to the idea that one sex has a characteristic that the other does not. For example that women are more creative than men. While sex-role stereotyping refers to the thought that one sex is better or worse in a certain role than the other sex. An example of this would be the thought that men are more efficient in selling to larger accounts then women (Frederick & McNeilly, 1988). Lane and Crane (2002) discuss how in sales, sex stereotyping referring to relationships is very prominent as women are considered "dolly-birds" if they are married and if they are single they are thought of as less committed. The "dolly-bird" stereotype refers to women being thought of as attractive and fashionable, but not intelligent or clever. Overall it is clear that gender stereotypes can hinder a women's success and growth within an organization.

On average women make eighty percent of a male's wages. This data does not come from different salaries from various job positions that men and women have; rather, it derives from a survey of salaries that men and women receive for the very same job position and the exact same job responsibilities. Even in jobs that are typically female-dominated, like nursing, teaching and office aid, men are earning more. One of the reasons female professionals are paid less money for the same work is gender stereotypes. A common stereotype that women face is that their husband supports them and therefore do not need equal pay. The male is seen as the breadwinner and female is seen as supplementing her husband's salary. Bruckmüller, Ryan,

Rink, and Haslam (2014) found that there is still a glass ceiling in organizations, yet women also face an assorted range of "barriers and challenges as they start to reach the top of organizations" (p.226). Particularly, their research shows that women are not as likely to gain leadership positions as men and when they do these positions tend to be more unstable and "associated with higher levels of stress and a greater risk of failure" (p.226). Bruckmüller, Ryan, Rink, and Haslam (2014) gave a few different reasons for why this is occurring. One reason is the gender stereotype that women can handle a crisis situation better than men and are better at people managing during a risky situation. The stereotype that men are considered better at leading ends up with more males in positions of power and the perception that bringing women into these positions would lead to unwanted change. Bruckmüller, Ryan, Rink, and Haslam (2014) strongly suggest that the only way gender equality progress will happen is with companies adjusting their policies and enforcing employees to adhere to the changes. Bruckmüller, Ryan, Rink, and Haslam (2014) state that the most important goal of these policies must be to "reduce both the stereotypic perception of female leaders as a category all themselves and the stereotypic definition of leadership itself as normatively male" (p. 227). Therefore, it is imperative that there is more gender diversification in leadership positions, not only to boost the amount of women in executive roles, but also as a way to make sure that women are being given the same opportunities as males.

Women also face a more difficult decision than men in their career concerning professional success and personal fulfillment. Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg discusses (2010) how in a study of senior married managers two-thirds of married men have children while only one-third of married women have children. From the moment women start thinking about having a child, they stop advocating for themselves at work, stop looking for new opportunities

and start leaning back from responsibilities (Sandberg, 2010). Women who have children and are working in sales tend to lose some of their competitive nature. Sales is a competitive profession and when one decides to not be as competitive this could be detrimental to their success (Nsiah, DeBeaumont, & Ryerson, 2013). Furthermore, in sales one's productivity is compared to the amount of time one spends devoted to the job. Motherhood can place demands on one's time. As a result, some mothers tend to devote less time to their profession than women who do not have children (Nsiah, DeBeaumont, & Ryerson, 2013). Sales emphasizes making relationships with clients which takes time and effort. Nsiah, DeBeaumont, and Ryerson's (2013) findings indicate that women working in sales earned five percent less per child than women without children. Their data also showed that compared to the highest paid mothers in managerial and professional positions, the highest paid women in sales earned seven percent less per child. Nsiah, DeBeaumont, and Ryerson's (2013) research shows that there are certain occupations that are not as friendly to mothers as others and the sales profession is at the top of this list.

Human Resources Issues

Techniques that have been previously used for selecting sales professionals may be discriminating against women. For instance, "job descriptions typically place a high priority on traits such as aggressiveness and confidence; traits frequently found in male salespersons and associated with male salespersons" (Fugate, Decker, & Brewer, 1988, p.36). However studies show that these traits are not what makes a person successful in sales. Rather it is traits such a being good at communication and being skilled in two-way advocacy which are rapidly becoming more important in selling and happen to be skills which women are more adept at then men (Fugate, Decker, & Brewer, 1988). Fugate, Decker, and Brewer (1988) suggest that

when assessing applicants it would be best if sales organizations adopted an assessment center process which would use "multiple job assessments, multiple work sample exercises, and multiple pooled assessments to make selection decisions" (p.37). This process would be exceptionally helpful in choosing candidates for sales as it has a male dominant history and using this assessment could reduce the gender bias. Currently selection is very subjective and could potentially favor men if the hiring manager is seeking masculine qualities.

Differences between Men and Women

Research has shown that there exists meaningful differences between male and female salespersons regarding their "attitudes and behaviors" (Moncrief, Babakus, Cravens, & Johnston, 2000, p. 246). Some research suggests that these should be taken into consideration for promotions and leadership positions. Furthermore, women are prone to more stressors in the workplace like sexual harassment and gender discrimination. Strutton, Pelton, and Lumpkin (1995) studied how salespeople differ in how they attempt to influence their costumers.They found that male salespeople more commonly than females used self-enhancement, favor-rendering, attitudinal conformity, and self-promotion. Many articles have said that there are significant differences between men and women working sales and that these differences should be addressed. However one research study suggested that "emphasizing gender differences in management processes and interpersonal relationships may be counterproductive" (Moncrief, Babakus, Cravens, & Johnston, 2000, p. 246). Moncrief, Babakus, Cravens, and Johnston (2000) discuss how companies that have special programs intended for women only can promote sexism. These authors researched a Fortune 500 organization with a gender balanced sales force and found no significant differences between genders. The literature seems to emphasize the fact that there are differences in the way male and female salespeople work.

Sales has been a career in which the amount of men exceeds the amount of women. However, in the past few years women are increasingly taking sales positions and studies predict an upsurge in women sales professionals and managers (Lagace & Twible, 1990). When looking into how this changes the sales profession, one might wonder if men and women differ in their ethical and moral decision making and if this affects the profession. Gender Socialization Theory states that there are certain overall traits that masculine and feminine personalities learn and keep from childhood. These differences in turn manipulate what people value and their career related interests. Much research has shown that men and women differ in moral reasoning concerning ethical dilemmas (Dawson, 1997). The sales profession in particular is susceptible to unethical behaviors as there is generally little direct supervision and salespeople "face role ambiguities or conflicts arising from interfaces with costumers, competitors, other departments, and the regulatory environment" (Dawson, 1992, p.21). Dawson found in 1992 that women generally adhere to higher ethical standards than men. A major finding was that as the ratio of men to women increases in the sales profession so will the level of ethical behaviors. Women tend to have more concern for the feelings of others and for personal relationships than men do. This way of thinking can potentially enhance "the ethical and moral climate of sales organizations in numerous ways" (Dawson, 1992, p.31). Dawson concludes (1992) that the more women involved in a sales organization, the more the organization will be ethically and morally enhanced.

Leadership

As differences occur between male and female salespeople concerning ethics, there exists the possibility that differences may exist concerning the way they respond to leadership styles. When researching leadership styles in the sales profession, "it is customary to look at

their personal traits and behavioral styles" (Comer, Jolson, & Dubinsky, 1995, p. 18). Comer, Jolson, and Dubinsky (1995) found that male and female salespeople respond very differently to leadership styles from female supervisors. The authors found that male salespeople respond better to a female leader when she adheres to feminine gender stereotypes. Comer, Jolson, and Dubinsky's study (1995) found that males prefer dealing with women in power when they can categorize this female into familiar relationships they have with helping women such as mother, sister, or wife. Female salespeople on the other hand, respond best to female leaders when they have a charismatic personality (Comer, Jolson, & Dubinsky, 1995). One reason the authors suggest this occurs is that women salespeople search for powerful women that they can emulate or look up to in consideration to their career. They have found that charismatic women are more often seen as mentors as well as more effective managers for women. Male salespeople do not respond in this way because they "may feel uncomfortable about identifying with, and desiring to emulate, a woman" (Comer, Jolson, & Dubinsky, 1995, p.25). This type of repudiation of the female manager's leading style by males may be most relevant inside the sales profession because most supervision happens when interacting with clients. The client may be more attracted to the women's magnetic personality style, thus making the male salesperson feel like his status was hurt in front of the client.

Men are often perceived as more effective than women in leadership roles, however a recent meta-analysis study shows that male and female leaders are perceived as equal in effectiveness (Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, & Woehr, 2014). The study was done by looking at forty-nine years of research that investigated gender and leadership effectiveness. One of the major reasons they found for why the research has previously said males were perceived as more effective related to whether or not the data was self-reported. Male leaders were

significantly more likely than women to rate themselves as effective leaders. When the researchers looked at ratings from other people on the leadership effectiveness of their supervisors, women supervisors were rated as significantly more effective leaders than men (Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, & Woehr, 2014). Paustian-Underdahl, Walker, and Woehr (2014) suggest that these findings demonstrate that stereotypes of women as effective leaders have shifted and that women are now seen as just as effective if not more so than men in leadership roles.

Efforts to Amend Gendered Inequality

One of the most important efforts to amend gendered inequality is the quota. A quota "specifies that a number or percentage of women or minorities must be admitted, hired, or promoted" (Wood, 2011, p.227). For example a company can require that thirty percent of promotions must be given to women. Another similar effort are goals. Goals are when a company states that they have an intention to "achieve representation of minorities or women" (Wood, 2011, p.228). For example a company can make it a goal to give thirty percent of promotions to women, but goals do not demand results and the company will not acquire a penalty if the goal is not met. Quotas and goals are supporting women in some ways, but they can also work against women. Companies can twist this so that quotas and goals are seen as the maximum amount of women that will be promoted (Wood, 2011). For example a company with a quota to give thirty percent of promotions to women may give only thirty percent of promotions to women even if more deserve it. Another way they work against women is that other employees may assume that women are not as qualified or capable for the job and they only got in because of their gender (Wood, 2011). However despite these problems, many

believe that quotas and goals enable women have a more equal opportunity to achieve their true potential in a company.

Some companies are adjusting the way that they approach policies concerning gender. A few large tech companies in Silicon Valley have made efforts to adjust and improve organizational policies concerning maternity and paternity leave. The present U.S. Family and Medical Leave Act ranks as one of the worst of developed countries and has not been amended in twenty years. The law currently gives new mothers twelve weeks of unpaid leave if they work for a large company and have worked there for more than a year (Fernandez & Schuppe, 2013). While developed countries like Sweden, Russia, and Denmark give new mothers a paid leave of at least a year and Canada gives new mothers fifty weeks paid leave while the United Sates still does not guarantee paid leave (Fernandez & Schuppe, 2013). Large companies like Google, Facebook, and Yahoo are amending their maternity and paternity leave policies to support new parents. Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer recently changed the company policy to allow new mothers sixteen weeks of paid leave with benefits and new fathers are allowed eight weeks of paid leave (Fernandez & Schuppe, 2013). This is a major improvement for female Yahoo employees who were previously only given up to eight weeks paid leave (Fernandez & Schuppe, 2013). Yahoo will also give new parents yahoo-brand baby gifts and five hundred dollars to spend on baby related expenses. Google has a similar policy which gives new mothers twenty-two weeks paid leave, fathers get seven weeks paid leave and new parents receive five hundred dollars to help with childcare costs. Facebook's policy allows new mothers, fathers, and same-sex couples four months of paid leave and four thousand dollars for each new child (Carrns, 2013). Companies such as Pinterest, Microsoft and Twitter have paid maternity leaves and offer mothers more time with their newborns.

Not only are these amended polices benefiting parents at these companies, but it will also attract more prospective employees and talent. Organizations that are supplying their companies with everything they need, such as daycare sites and free food at Google, are seen as more attractive to employees and especially women. Without having to worry about costs and quality of daycare, Google employees are less likely to be distracted at work (Fernandez & Schuppe, 2013). Another policy Google has amended to benefit women involves the hiring process. When Marissa Mayer worked for Google, she conducted an interview with a man and felt sick afterwards because she got the feeling he did not respect her because she was a woman. She had a fellow female employee interview the same man who also got this feeling. He was not hired and ever since then, Google has instated the policy that a female employee must be present during every interview (Rosin, 2012) They also ran an analysis on female recruits and found that they were more likely to accept the offer if they had spoken with a female employee during the hiring process. Thus Google makes sure that every female candidate talks to another woman (Rosin, 2012). What is important to note is that Google is concerned with the retention and well-being of female employees. Hopefully more companies will follow their example.

Suggestions

Gender stereotyping results in discrimination which unfairly presents challenges to women's success in the workplace. In the end it is the companies that suffer. The President of Catalyst Ilene H. Lang, stated that "developing and retaining the best talent is key to remaining competitive in the global business world…until we break the spell of stereotyping, companies will continue to sub-optimize women and lose a vital talent pool—one they, frankly cannot afford to ignore" (Catalyst, 2014). A study done by Catalyst, a leading business research organization, found that unless businesses implement solutions to decrease bias against females,

women in the workplace will continue to be undermined and misjudged, regardless of their talents or intelligence. Solutions that they suggest include: organizations should take actions to fight stereotyping by establishing "more rigorous and transparent performance evaluation processes" (Catalyst, 2014). Companies should put into action a system of checks and balances as protection against stereotyping and educate people in power like executives about the often unconscious power of stereotyping and about ways to decrease instinctive tendencies to use stereotyping. Finally, businesses should display the accomplishments of women leaders, especially those in traditionally male-dominated positions. These are a few solutions that are easy to implement and that have the potential to make a difference.

As discussed previously, differences in men's and women's ethical decision making in sales exist; therefore, this calls for the importance of teaching ethics in sales training. A study of undergraduate business students done by Donoho, Heinze, and Kondo (2012) found that "a large percentage of respondents might behave in an ethically problematic manner when confronted by ethical sales dilemmas" (p. 63). Therefore the teaching of ethical ways of dealing with questionable situations will increase the likelihood that sales associates will choose the morally correct way to handle the dilemma. Male sales professionals are more likely to hold relativistic positions when it comes to morals and this results in lower ethical decisions. Since men are more likely to make unethical decisions, one way to decrease this is by arguing for ethical behaviors through utilitarian reasons (Donoho, Heinze, & Kondo, 2012). Another way, according to Donoho, Heinze, and Kondo (2012), to advocate for ethical decision making in sales includes a four step process. The first step is to determine what actions could be taken in a particular situation and who would be affected by these actions. Step two is to determine from these actions which is most ethically correct. Step three is to assign priority to ethical behaviors

over other concerns such as economic. And the last step is to put your decision or behavior into action. By teaching this in business school and in sales training academies, this will increase the likelihood that, regardless of gender, people will make more ethical decisions.

Much of this paper has been covering the inequalities in business and workplace situation and what other researchers have discovered. What is important to note is that in the past few years, there has been forward movement for women. There are currently eighteen women who are CEOs of Fortune 500 companies which is a record number, but only just 3.6% of the whole. The past few years have seen high profile assignments of women such as Janet Yellen, the first female chair of the Federal Reserve; Mary Barra, General Motor's first female CEO; Marjorie Scardino on the board of Twitter. After the November 2012 elections there was a rise of women elected in senate (however still only twenty out of one hundred). The progress is positive, yet small and slow. This can be daunting for women starting out their career at the bottom of the ladder. Therefore, I have complied some advice and suggestions that women who have been in their careers and in business for a while would like to give to young women just starting out. I think that this advice is extremely helpful for women who are motivated to be successful in their careers, yet are feeling discouraged by the gender bias and injustice that exists in society.

Negotiating

- Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook and author of *Lean In*, states about women negotiating: "One option is to start by saying 'I know women don't always get paid as much as men.' Both men and women react negatively when women negotiate on their own behalf. Now, a man can just negotiate: 'I have a better offer. That's not enough to make my family's ends meet.' No one feels bad about

it. But when a woman does that, there's a backlash. How do you get out of the backlash? You have to make it not only about you. You can explain that negotiating skills are something you bring to the table—that's what I did with Mark [Zuckerberg]; I said, 'You realize you're hiring me to run our deal teams, so you want me to be good at this.' Or you can ground it in an outside fact that is tied to the community—'I know women are paid less, and I'm concerned about that.'" (Leive, 2014)

- Jennifer McClanahan-Flint, founder and chief strategist, Food on Our Table advises women to "Negotiate for more money. No matter how much you make, you are probably not making as much as you could. Your salary indicates the value of your contribution. Also, your competence is evaluated by how much money you make and this becomes critical when you want to leverage your experience for a promotion or a new job" (The New York Times, 2013)

Networking & Mentors

- Kate Endress, CEO and cofounder of *DITTO.com*, states "Early in my career, I received some great advice from a female colleague who told me to find the women I want to emulate and get to know them by asking them out for a cup of coffee. At first, I was a bit nervous to pick up the phone or write the email, because I knew these were busy women. In the past seven years, however, I have reached out at least once a month to female bosses, leaders and entrepreneurs. Only once to date has the recipient not been able to fit me in. I'm often touched at how openly and warmly they share experiences, both professionally and personally. It is through these meetings that I have honed in on my vision for the

kind of female leader, mother and wife I hope to someday become. Don't forget when you are networking – with men or women – to present yourself confidently. That starts with a strong handshake and good eye contact. Speak confidently about your business or your idea. You want advice and mentorship, but don't forget that you also have experience to offer and share" (Shah, 2012)

Find Your Passion

- Marissa Mayer, CEO of Yahoo, tells women who want to succeed to find their passion first. "If you can find something that you're really passionate about, whether you're a man or a woman comes a lot less into play. Passion is a gender-neutralizing force" (Hare, 2013).

Take Risks

- Marissa Mayer, CEO of Yahoo, tells women who want to follow in her footsteps to take risks. "I always did something I was a little not ready to do," she said a year ago while discussing her best decisions with NPR Correspondent Laura Sydell. "That feeling at the end of the day, where you're like, 'what have I gotten myself into?' I realized that sometimes when you have that feeling and you push through it, something really great happens." (Hare, 2013).
- "The most important factor in determining whether you will succeed isn't your gender, it's you," argues Angela Braly, CEO of WellPoint. "Be open to opportunity and take risks. In fact, take the worst, the messiest, the most challenging assignment you can find, and then take control" (Bussey, 2012).
- "You always have to do something that puts you in a zone you don't know," Virginia M. Rometty, CEO of IBM, stated to the audience at the 2011 *Fortune*

Most Powerful Women Summit, "Someone once told me growth and comfort do not coexist. And I think it's a really good thing to remember" (Leahey, 2012).

- Marla Kaplowitz, chief executive, MEC North America states "Have the confidence to take more risks early on, even if it means that you might trip along the way, because ultimately you will learn from those experiences. Ask for the big assignment, make that cross-country move if it means more opportunity for growth. Although I didn't start taking risks until later in my career, every risk I did take ultimately led to personal and professional development and the realization that ultimately it all works out, and is just part of your journey. I wish I had known that when I was just starting out as I probably would have taken even bigger risks, earlier in my career" (The New York Times, 2013)

Contribute

- Ora Shtull, executive coach, Ora Coaching Ltd. states "Don't just sit at the table; talk at the table! Make it a point to contribute at least once in every meeting you attend. If you're at a total loss for what you might contribute, make it a point to ask at least one question. At its best, it should be a strategic question. Most business discussions are about (1) problems and their negative impacts and (2) solutions and their positive payoffs. A strategic question is simply one about the problem or the solution: e.g. How bad is the problem? What's the downside if we do nothing? What do we stand to gain? What will we save? Have we evaluated alternative solutions? You don't need the answers." (The New York Times, 2013)

Conclusion

The preceding discussion has highlighted some implications for women working in sales as well as offering some advice to new female graduates from experienced and successful businesswomen. I have covered facilitating and inhibiting factors for women in sales, human resource issues, differences between men and women, leadership styles, efforts to redress gender inequality, and suggestions. From my research, one of the most significant findings was that of gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes can be very limiting on women progressing in their careers and this is likely to prevail in the industry unless something changes. Gender stereotyping is what I have pinpointed as the most pertinent element in this research that needs a solution.

Some recent studies "suggest that team collaboration is greatly improved by the presence of women in the group, and this effect is primarily explained by benefits to group processes" (Bear & Whoolley, 2011, p. 146). Similarily, Hoogendoorn, Oosterbeek, and Van Praag found that "teams with an equal gender mix perform better than male-dominated teams in terms of sales and profits" (2013, p. 1514). Not only women, but companies as well are benefiting from greater gender diversity. Dezsö and Ross investigated this in 2012 and found that "female representation in top management brings informational and social diversity benefits to the top management teams, enriches the behaviors exhibited by managers throughout the firm, and motivates women in middle management" (p. 1072). Overall the research overwhelming shows that the more women involved in decision making and in organizations the more the companies will benefit. An increasingly equal representation of men and women in business will not only bring more talent, but it will ultimately be profitable for companies.

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