

Women Who Sell Get Promoted

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It's no great revelation that women have exceptional selling instincts. In fact, [Tom Peters](#) [has said](#) that women make better salespeople than men. What we've found in coaching senior-level women, however, is a dichotomy of sorts: Women working in sales jobs are the best-in-class at what they do — and they love it. Yet, women in non-sales roles tell us they would prefer a trip to the dentist over selling.

Unfortunately, sales is just one of those things — like haggling and public speaking — that we avoid at our own peril. When we hear a woman say that sales is outside of her job description, we always beg to differ. Selling needs to be a part of every woman's career tool kit. After all, sales experience feeds the types of line jobs — where individuals have P&L accountability — that are a pipeline to the C-suite. And that is where women are at a disadvantage.

According to [McKinsey & Company](#), research of the largest US corporations shows that 62% of women are in staff jobs — positions that provide service and assistance but don't directly generate revenue. These roles very rarely lead to major jobs in senior management. In contrast, 65% of men on executive committees hold line jobs. This helps explain why the number of women CEOs in Fortune 500 companies appears stuck around 3%.

What this really calls for is a mind shift. We've seen some of the best salespeople in action — and they are women. Just ask IBM's [Ginni Rometty](#). As IBM's global sales leader before landing the Chief Executive role, Rometty lived and breathed sales. She was a leader of several important diversity initiatives at IBM as well — but it was likely Rometty's sales experience that opened the door to the C-suite.

And closing deals is eminently possible even if you, like Rometty, are not much of a golfer. One of our clients is always on the lookout for other types of social venues to host clients. After a night of dancing at a concert she said: "I knew these clients would be with me for life when we were jumping up and down together to Jimmy Buffett."

Selling is about making connections, using one's passion and gaining trust. As the consensus builders, the nurturers of relationships, and the well-networked passionate persuaders, women have all of the essential skills to bring in clients, money and monster deals. If you manage key relationships or even lead a team of customer-facing contributors, you can use the skills you are already comfortable with to become visible within your

company by bringing revenue and customers into the organization. We've heard this called "Dancing close to the revenue line."

Another women we know told us very recently about a major deal she closed. She won a new account and went on to grow the revenue significantly in year one. She said, "My company is paying a lot of attention to me now." No big surprise. Rainmakers get noticed — and promoted.

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