

# The power of women in marketing

By V PRADEEP KUMAR

Let's look at the following examples from a highly competitive service industry: Mother of a young child takes up a frontline sales job and performs at an average of 135 per cent of her targets while beautifully balancing her work and home responsibilities.

A divorcee woman with high personal stress levels still manages to perform around 110 per cent of her targets. Another young woman travels all the way to Middle East from Karnataka to work and finance her son's medical expenses and also sponsor her husband. She manages to perform above average in the office despite breaking down often due to high personal stress levels.

A woman continues to work even in advanced pregnancy managing her delicate situation while continuing to perform above 100 per cent. A young woman barely in her twenties starts performing even before the company could finish a full training session. The above situations are not fictitious nor are these stories narrated to me by professionals from other industries. These are live examples from companies where I have worked; and incidentally I was responsible for recruiting each one of them.

In my long career spanning about 27 years out of which 15 have been in service industries, one thing has re-



**Women are better communicators than men.**

peatedly impressed me - That's the power of women and their relatively higher success as compared to men, especially in front line marketing and sales functions.

We have a bouquet of well known brands delivering a strong ROI, but we operate in a highly competitive publishing industry. The personality and communication skills of a sales person are of paramount importance in building an instant rapport with a buyer and creating the right environ-

ment for an effective sales process. We have always had a healthy mix of men and women working together in sales teams with similar job profiles, responsibilities and KRA's.

Given the same resources and all other factors remaining more or less the same, the performance trends indicate the following:

- Experienced women generally performed much better than equally experienced men.
- Inexperienced women performed much better than inexperienced men.
- Often newly recruited persons of either sex, performed better than experienced
- Often inexperienced women outperformed even experienced men.
- Proportion of women in a typical list of top ten performers, is heavily tilted in favour of women.

In a highly professional organisational environment, such performance trends while benefiting the organisation can be very disturbing to the well established stalwarts within. Competition is an essential ingredient for the continued success of consumerism in a world which is becoming smaller.

And the effect of this has trickled down deep inside organisations where a sales person is as good as he or she is today and cannot rest comfortably on the basis of past laurels. The above trends also shatter the myths associated with several training aspects all of which seek to estab-

lish a direct correlation between performance on the one side and experience and training on the other.

To understand why women perform better in sales careers, it's necessary to probe deep inside the psyche of men and women. For time immemorial, we all believed that men and women have similar skills, aptitudes and hence justified equal opportunities to perform to their potentials.

However, recent studies and research indicate that men and women are actually different and their evolution over millions of years is related to the typical functions which they have been performing such as hunting for men and nurturing for women. Some of the startling facts of the studies are:

- Women are better communicators than men.
- Women have communication receptors both in their left and right hemisphere of their brains, where as men have only in the left.
- Women can speak as well as hear simultaneously whereas men can only do one thing at a time.
- An average woman speaks per day nearly three times more than an average man.
- Women are also quicker in identifying body language and hence buying signals.
- Men talk direct and to the point, while women tend to talk indirect and emotional, which helps in building a relationship with a buyer. Because of

this, they also find it easier to 'break the ice' in a typical first meeting with customers.

■ Women are also adept in multitasking where as men are focused on one task at a time. A typical example of a profession demanding multitasking is that of secretaries who can competently keep handling calls, format letters, interaction with her boss and many such functions.

■ An average woman is 3 per cent more intelligent than an average man. While one may argue that this is marginal, combined with a higher communication skill, this makes all the difference.

■ In today's world, the power of networking is immense and I have also seen women better at networking skills as compared to men. Because of their superior relationship skills, they get far more referral clients.

■ Women are generally more persistent and determined-a prerequisite for a successful sales career.

The following six steps constitute a typical sales call:

- Preparation
- Approach
- Fact Finding [also known as probing]
- Presentation
- Overcoming Objections
- Recommendation and Closing (with over a dozen closing techniques)

By nature of their gifted and in-born talent and skills, women find it relatively easier in approach, fact

finding and overcoming objections. In respect of other three steps, training can play a big role in improving the skill sets and hence the logical reasons for higher success of women in sales and marketing careers.

It's no wonder that in careers, where communication skill is critical, we find significantly a larger proportion of women.

Examples include service industries such as teaching, banking, retailing, front offices, secretarial, tele-sales, call centres and BPO sectors, airlines (excluding cockpit crew) and many others. In sales and marketing, however, the proportion is far lower, but growing rapidly.

Considering that women are better communicators, what lessons do we as employers draw?

- In an interview process, factor this higher communication and other skills appropriately so that the selection process is more objective.
- Employ more women in all jobs requiring interaction with customers.
- Where it is possible, a great combination is to have a man and a woman work together. This will have a magical effect with the client handled logically as well as emotionally.
- Finally, organisations need to be unbiased, objective and should be equal opportunity employers.

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