

# Executive Summary - Top of Her Game Research Study

## Top of Her Game Research Study Executive Summary

Thank you for participating in our survey on helping women be more successful in business-to-business (B2B) sales.

As requested, we are sending you the Executive Summary from the *Top of Her Game* research study that you participated in this summer.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions that you may have regarding the results.

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## Results

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Executive Summary  
September 21, 2007

### Who We Surveyed

Our study surveyed 1,165 women with 653 completing the survey regarding the challenges they face, their best practices, their sales environment, and their success. These sales professionals are highly diverse selling all kinds of products for all sizes of companies to all sizes of customers. More than half (54%) have been selling for 10 years, while the same is true for 71% of professionals reporting that they significantly overachieve their sales goal—experience matters.

### Best Practices

Networking, peer coaching (help from colleagues), and reading books, magazines and e-newsletters were rated as the highest contributors to success and production. Networking was given a top box score (4 and 5 on a scale of 1 to 5) by 58% off all responders. What's interesting are the 3 lowest contributors: company training, sales manager coaching, and webinar/teleseminar participation. It is important to note that the lowest contributors also had significantly higher (11-17% vs. <1%-5%) not applicable (N/A) ratings, as well.

	Highest Contributor's Top Box Score	Lowest Contributor's Top Box Score
Networking	58.0%	
Peer coaching (help from colleagues)	56.9%	
Reading books, magazines and e-newsletters	50.0%	
Company training programs		35.9%
Sales manager coaching		35.8%
Webinar/teleseminar participation		21.9%

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In conjunction to identifying best practices, we wanted to know how often sales professionals engaged in these activities. The highest contributing factors above were also the activities most frequently engaged in. Delving into the data, we discovered that the top performing sales professionals carried out these activities significantly more often.

## Results

### Challenges

All respondents said the top challenges are getting customers to change now, dealing with no/delayed decisions, and pricing pressures from customers. However, these are much smaller issues for top performers – they are still the biggest issues, however they are significantly less important to top performers.

	Top Box Score - All Respondents	Top Box Score - Top Performers, <i>only</i>
Getting customers to change now	55.2%	46.4%
Dealing with no/delayed decisions	53.1%	39.2%
Pricing pressures from customers	42.0%	36.8%

### Other Challenges

Respondents were also asked what they felt were the biggest challenges women face in the sales profession that their male counterparts do not. The results were surprising. The top performers cited these topics:

Challenge	Percent of Respondents
Need to Prove Oneself, Especially in Highly Technical fields	27.8%
Good Old Boys Network	15.0%
Accessibility of Informal Networking Opportunities	13.5%
Sexual Harassment / Sexism	11.3%
Pay Equality	11.3%
Work / Life Balance	9.8%
Assertiveness viewed as positive in men and negative in women	4.5%
Opportunity to Advance to C-Level Management Positions	3.8%
Confidence	3.0%

## Conclusions

### Conclusions

There are significant differences between sales executives based on their self-rated performance. These differences are evident in how they rate the challenges they face, in what they believe contributes the most and the least to their success and production, and in how often they engage in these activities.

While the data does not prove causal relationship, there is significant anecdotal evidence that suggests such relationships do exist. The key learning for sales managers is to take the best practices of top performers and apply them to the rest of their sales force.

Next steps will include further research via focus groups and web surveys to delve deeper into the best practices and challenges facing women sales professionals today.

## Your Comments

We'd like to hear what you think. Please enter your comments below.

They will be sent to Lynn Schleeter, Director of the Center for Sales Innovation at the College of St. Catherine.