

Six Priceless Lessons I Learned From My CEO



A presentation
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PRICELESS LEADERSHIP™

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My Story

It's not easy being an ambitious woman trying to move up the ladder to that executive seat in the beautiful mahogany table boardroom. Women have proven to be effective leaders—even though we don't always lead the same way as men. Why then, are so many of us unable to reach executive rank in the first place? Achieving the goal of getting more women into the top hierarchy requires awareness, commitment, and leadership from senior executives (both genders) making those hiring decisions to change the model.

At the age of 35, I was recruited by a CEO to be an officer of a publicly traded company whose stock value dropped below SEC minimums and obviously, was in big trouble. I was hired to perform a divisional turn-around miracle. I accepted this challenge primarily because the CEO did a good sales job, but most importantly, he believed that gender should not be an issue in running a business. It's all about "skills, abilities, and talent," he would say.

I'd like to share with you the opportunity I was given; the hard work it took to stay there; and the lessons I learned along the way.

My Six Priceless Lessons:

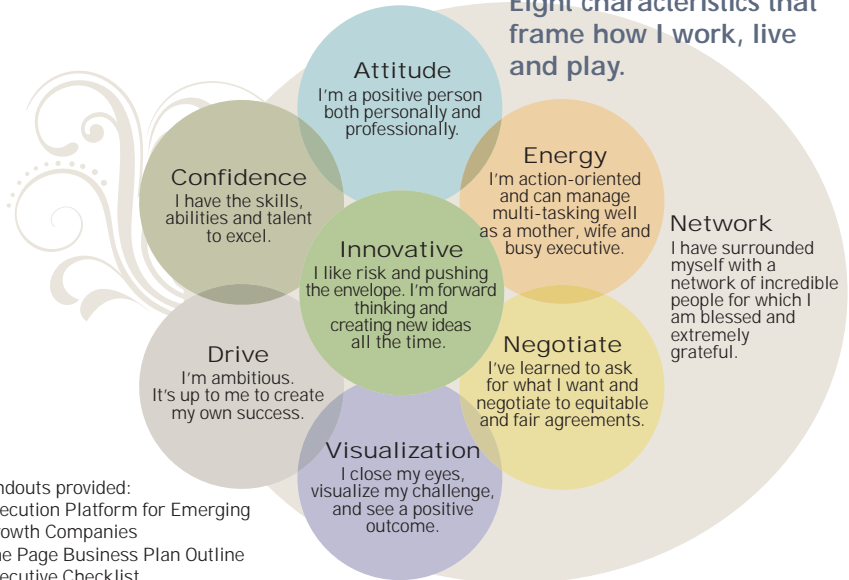
- 1 **FLEXIBILITY** is second only to **INTEGRITY**. Create a mindset that change is the way we operate our business. The capability to change course quickly when necessary might mean your company's survival.
- 2 Always get the **FACTS** – it is easy to make a bad decision based on "false" assumptions; it's challenging to make the right decision even with the best data.
- 3 This isn't a popularity contest – learn to make those tough decisions regardless of whether you are liked at the end of the day. It's more important to be **RESPECTED** in the workplace.
- 4 Hiring the right **TALENT** will make your job easier – don't be insecure about hiring people smarter than you. If your group can't achieve – neither will you.
- 5 Attunement to the CEO's agenda – knowing what his/her expectations are (not what you think they are, or should be) is the key to your retention. Ensure you have **ALIGNMENT** with your boss.
- 6 Despite the complexity and clutter of day-to-day activities, you must **FOCUS** on your company's strategic thrust and making money for all stockholders – employees, customers and investors.

My POV & Personal Tips to Greater Business Success and a Happier Life!

- 1 Avoid office gossip and politics – you should be too busy for this!
- 2 Support/Collaborate with your fellow women colleagues instead of competing with them. Women can be harsh to other women – don't fall into this category. Remember: "Kindness is Power"
- 3 One of my favorite sayings: "Your reputation is like money – hard to get and easy to lose!"
- 4 If you don't like yourself, why should anyone else?
- 5 Be positive, engaging, motivating and inspiring – Otherwise, you'll attract the opposite... negative people with a lot of baggage.
- 6 Ask for what you want and say "NO" to what you don't want. So often we do things and get into situations we know we should have said no to, and regret it afterwards. Avoid living a life of regrets.
- 7 Use the word "we" instead of "I" and experience the power of defusing a negative situation.
- 8 You can't change people, so quit trying – it's exhausting.
- 9 Use powerful words like "thank you," "can I help you," "what's your opinion on this" and "I'm sorry" when needed.

My Secret Sauce to Success:

Eight characteristics that frame how I work, live and play.



Handouts provided:

- Execution Platform for Emerging Growth Companies
- One Page Business Plan Outline
- Executive Checklist

Cathy Caserza Light is an Organizational Architect & Sr. Advisor to Boards and CEOs. She left corporate America in 1998 and has since founded three bay area companies – Business Builders LLC., Assessment Leaders, and HR Leaders. Cathy is passionate about “priceless” leadership and specializes in creating the right strategies, culture, and processes for startup and emerging growth companies to achieve business and workforce success. She is recognized as a successful entrepreneur and marketing executive with global experience in a cross-section of markets and industries. She is a nationally recognized speaker engaging and motivating her audiences on topics such as: Driving Innovation, Building a High-Performance Team; 21st Century Leadership; Using Assessments to Improve Hiring and Organizational Performance, and How to Create Stakeholder Value.

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