

Why Don't Women Close the Deal?

A look at why, even when women do everything right, they don't take home the prize.

Women are natural networkers and relationship builders. They share information openly and collaborate instinctively on almost anything. Yet, if they are so good at establishing relationships why don't they use these relationships for business gain? Of course some women do, but the majority of women tend to fall into a trap of leveraging their connections for personal needs but not for professional purposes. When asked why they do this, many women say they do not want to appear pushy or overly aggressive. As a woman I completely understand this reasoning, particularly for new connections.

However what doesn't seem logical is that women will nurture a relationship for years and still not feel comfortable making requests that are more business oriented, specifically for help and support that could significantly impact their professional careers.

What stops them?

The biggest obstacle is the fear of rejection, of hearing "no". So, is this a gender thing? If you look at men and how they make requests we might say yes, it's related to gender. Men make stronger and more powerful requests than women. They also are not as concerned about being turned down. If a man receives a "no" to his request, he tends to ask why, learn from it objectively, and then moves on. Women, on the other hand, tend to overanalyze the reply, internalize it, and take it personally.

Women also don't make requests because they feel they can't say "no". Their assumption is that other women also don't feel free to say "no". They are afraid that other women will say "yes" out of obligation, because that is exactly what she does, and she doesn't want to put that kind of pressure on her friends. Studies have shown that women spend an average of 6 hours a week doing things they do not want to do. The irony is that studies also show that women who do say "no" are actually perceived as more powerful and respected because their agreements are authentic.

Why don't women feel free to say "no"? Women don't want to offend others, and they want to please them.

How does that impact their ability to make requests?

- Women don't want to put pressure on someone to say "yes"
- They don't believe the other women's "yes" anyway

How can a woman learn to make clear requests?

First, be clear on what you are requesting. If you don't know what you want or how someone can help you, how can you expect the other person to decipher that for you? It will frustrate you and render your network ineffective. Figure out what you would like or have some ideas prior to the conversation. If you really don't know, then make sure you have set the conversation up as an exploratory discussion.



EXCEPTIONAL WOMEN'S COACHING

Second, authentically assure the women you are asking that it's OK to say "no". We are all grown-ups, and we have choice. If someone says yes to something when they meant no there is really nothing we can do about it. All we can do is not to act with that duplicity ourselves. Only say yes when you mean it, and say no just as authentically.

Third, recognize there are three components to every request. The person can say "yes", "no", or they can renegotiate.

- Yes is easy. If they say yes, thank them and expect them to fulfill the request.
- No is a little more challenging. Remember the person is NOT saying no to you. They are saying no to the request you made. My standard reply is, "Thanks for saying no. I'd like to ask why? Is there a perspective that would be useful for me?"
- Renegotiating is a wonderful reply. The person is willing and engaging with you, telling you exactly what would work for them. Now you get to answer their renegotiation with your own "yes", "no", or counter-renegotiation.

Now, you might be saying, "I am not a good negotiator". And I am saying that is just not true. You negotiate dozens of things every day. For example; you are driving and you want to cut into the next lane ... that's a negotiation. You call your significant other on the way home and ask him or her about dinner ... that's a negotiation. Someone asks you to take on another project at work ... that's an opportunity for negotiating. We negotiate big and small things all the time, all day long.

Fourth is simply karma. Be the person you want to encounter. If you want someone to be clear and direct with you and to say what they mean, guess what? That is exactly how you should be with others. If you promise you will do something for someone, then simply do it and close off with the person. If you don't want to do something, say no.

Fifth, please stop saying yes when you mean no! Yes means *yes* and *no* means *no*.

Finally, just ask. Let the other person choose for themselves their response.

If you ...

- Know what you want
- Make the ask
- Don't take the answer personally
- Are open to creatively negotiating a win-win agreement
- Follow the golden rule to do onto others as you would want them to do onto you
- Trust that people are responding honestly . . .

you are much more likely to get the outcome you want and to have a graceful time in the process. An old sales axiom is *power buys from power*. Powerful women make powerful requests.