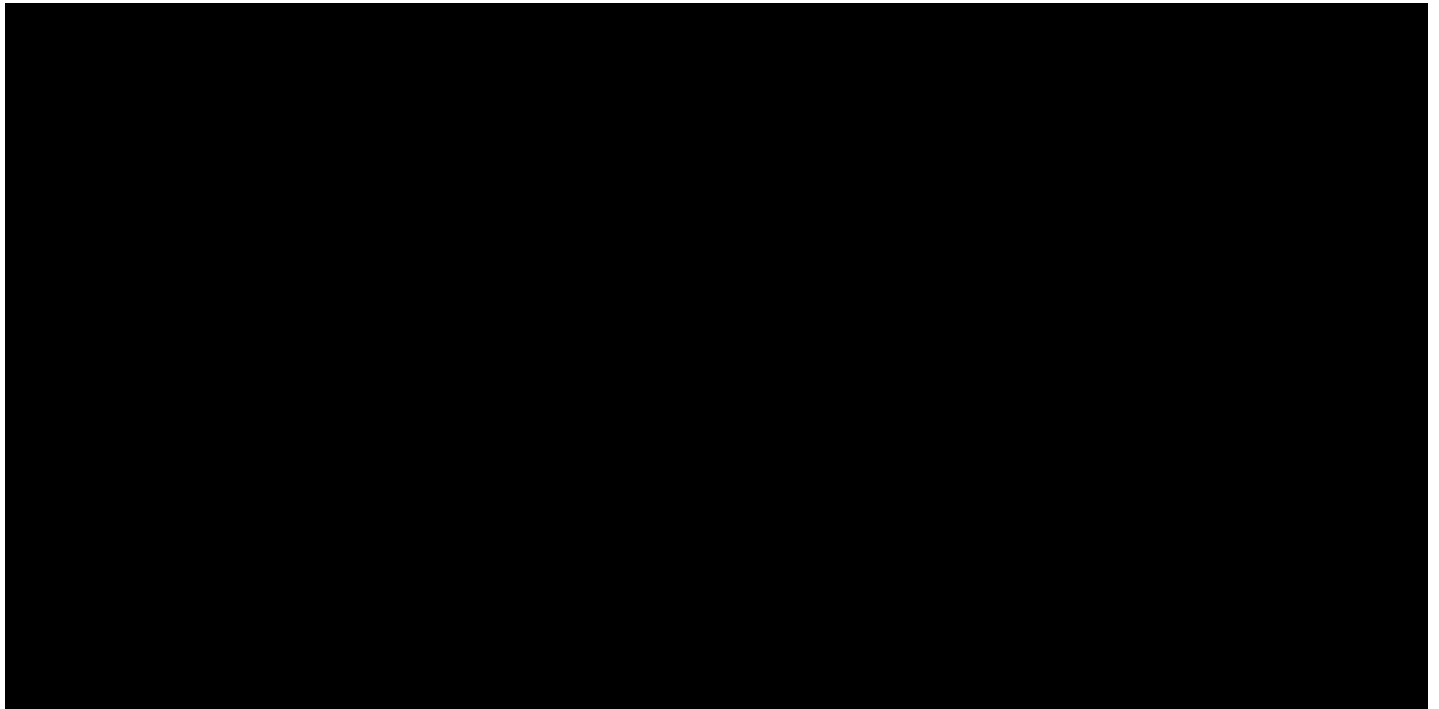


5 Ways to Sell to Women | Ariel Group

2 min read



There has been much written about the communication styles of men and women and how misunderstandings and misfires can ensue. What hasn't been said as much is that it is neither party's fault;

Here's what we know:

- Women account for 85% of all consumer spending decisions
- There are more men in the sales profession than women
- Women are far more likely to share positive AND negative sales experiences than men are (men will tell 3 people, women will tell 32)

Here's my somewhat leading question: What does this data say to you?

To me it says that there is a fair amount of cross-gender selling going on. There has been much written about the communication styles of men and women and how misunderstandings and misfires can ensue. What hasn't been said as much is that it is neither party's fault; men's and women's brains are actually hardwired differently.

My organization is full of women managers and leaders who talk to potential vendors on a regular basis. Here is what we've learned about the cross-gender selling experience along with some recommendations:

Assume she is the Decision Maker.

Women tend to be consultative in the buying process, so she may mention that she wants to run your conversation past a colleague or manager. Women don't just buy stuff, we "join brands" so we take these decisions very seriously. Avoid the pitfall of asking her to include any of these people on the next call; she may take that offer as asking to speak to her male boss. 'Nuf said.

"Say More about That."

This magical combination of words makes your potential buyer feel heard and tells her that you are interested in her business challenge. It also helps you stay present and listen when you are tempted to jump to solution early on in the conversation.

Listen to Build Relationship.

You've got the perfect solution to her problem. Once she stops talking, you are going to share that with her. Before you jump in, take a moment to share a strength or value that you are hearing. It can be as simple as, "I can hear that excellence is really important to you," and then let her respond. She will either confirm or correct you as a

address my issue.

Don't forget to breathe.

If you find your mind going in a million different directions while you are listening, take a deep inhale to come back to the present. I have to constantly remind myself of this as a coach, when ideas and solutions are coming at me like the asteroid field in Star Wars. Your buyer notices when you are present and asking really great questions.

What about you?

We would love to hear your best practices about cross-gender selling. And please, say more about that.

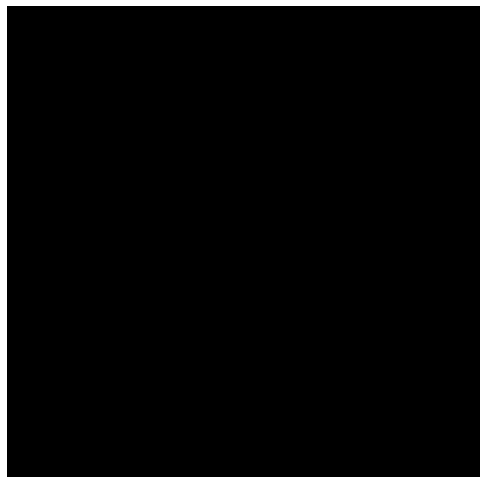


ebook

Virtual Presence Guide: How to Help Virtual Teams Create Authentic Connections

Download this guide to discover tips and best practices to help your teams be productive and engaged when working virtually.

[View Resource](#)



Kate Nugent has taught acting and improvisation for more than 15 years to youths and adults and has been a guest artist and teacher at many universities and theaters, including UMass Amherst, SUNY New Paltz, Boston University, and New World Theater. [Read more](#)

Do You Know How to Sell to Women Buyers? / Selling Power Blog

The consumer world decided years ago that female buyers need to be marketed and sold to differently from men. Based on research, companies like Lowe's (which you might assume would target male buyers) redesigned their stores in the early 2000s to be more visually appealing to women, because women make 80 percent of all home improvement purchasing decisions.

And what about the B2B buying space? DiscoverOrg recently partnered with leading sales linguist Steve Martin to examine, over the course of nine months, gender differences in B2B purchase decisions. We looked at the responses of more than 350 B2B professionals through four different surveys. Male and female buyers participating in the study answered questions that compared various aspects of their personality; how they interact with salespeople; how they behave in evaluation committees; and their opinions on real-world sales scenarios.

The study found there are, indeed, differences in the way men and women view salespeople and selling styles, evaluate and select vendors, choose products, and agree on what to pay for them. But how should this inform the way salespeople approach and engage with prospects?

To find the answer to this question we shared the survey results with three well-respected sales experts (Jill Konrath, Nancy Nardin, and Lori Richardson), who offered their perspective on the findings and provided some key recommendations for using this new information most effectively.

Value vs. Prestige in Vendor Selection

Perhaps most interestingly, the study found that men tend to choose the most expensive product from the best-known and most highly reputed vendor, while women are more willing to choose lesser-known vendors whose products have greater functionality and a lower price.

According to Nancy Nardin, this indicates that women, more driven by value over prestige, may be willing to give new and upstart vendors a chance to show they can deliver, while men could be a more difficult sell when the vendor doesn't have a longstanding track record or industry reputation. "I think [this study shows] that women look at things more on balance, and are more willing to take a risk," says Nardin.

Women Demand a Deal

Just as women can be known for their relentless pursuit to find the best deal on personal items, they are also determined to pay the lowest possible price for a product they purchase on behalf of their company. The study showed that, for a \$300,000 technology purchase expected to save their company \$1 million, most men expected to pay \$270,000, while women pushed to pay \$230,000 – almost 20 percent below their male counterparts.

Notes Lori Richardson: "It's interesting that the study shows women will offer less in a buying situation. It's smart – and women should take this strategy and apply it to our salaries, which continue to trend lower than our male counterparts."

The bottom line is that salespeople should be aware that women will push for the price they think is fair, so have a counter-strategy at the ready.

Vendor Selection by Committee

Another finding of the study: In purchasing decisions evaluated by a committee, men are more likely to push for a specific vendor if they believe that product will be most beneficial to the company. To get the outcome they want, men are more likely to use their political skills, whereas women more often try to put politics aside.

So how can a salesperson deal with a committee in which different members may have conflicting agendas? Says Jill Konrath, "If you look at B2B decisions today, a huge percentage stall out because it's so hard to get people to agree. There's a big opportunity for a salesperson to look at that phase of the decision and say, 'How can I help everyone to move forward?'" This requires understanding the organization at multiple levels, and knowing as many players as well as possible. Fortunately, this kind of data is now available at sales teams' fingertips through a variety of tools.

Selling Styles and Conflict Avoidance

The study also found that female buyers tend to work with salespeople who make them feel comfortable, and they generally prefer to avoid conflict. Nardin believes there are specific reasons for both: "Women are emotionally intelligent," she says, "and we're used to having to control situations in our everyday lives. But we don't want to have to do that with a salesperson. We want to be sold to by someone who we truly believe is concerned about meeting our long-term interests."

Nardin points out that 58 percent of the men surveyed said they avoid conflict, as well, compared to the 76 percent of female respondents. She commented: "I don't think anyone really likes conflict – and we don't want to deal with it in the workplace if we don't have to, because we deal a lot with it in life." In light of this, Richardson's advice to salespeople is: Make sure you truly add value, and don't be too pushy or aggressive.

So, while the data shows there may be differences in the way men and women engage throughout the purchasing process, perhaps most enlightening of all is that all our sales experts agreed that salespeople don't ever have the luxury of making blanket generalizations, and must strive to keep an open mind about differences in each sales prospect, regardless of gender. At the same time, sales professionals should try to inform their sales approach with as much hard data and facts as they can find, in order to make strategic decisions and – perhaps ironically – temper their own biases.

Because, as Konrath notes, when you're selling, "anything that sheds light on how people are different than you is always important."

Read the DiscoverOrg report, "8 Key Differences in Selling to Women & Men."

How to sell to a women

It's been known for many generations that women have a role to play in society. They are to dress the part, act the part and always make sure that their husband and children are well taken care of.

Since women don't earn as much as their husbands, it's crucial that they contribute in other ways like cooking, cleaning, raising children and other responsibilities that their husband would be way too tired to help with.

Scientifically speaking women don't have the same capabilities or rationale as men to be able to make big decisions. This is why they need their husbands to accompany them.

Here are 5 tips on how to sell to a women.

1. Speak slowly. If you speak too fast, she will surely get dizzy and not comprehend what you are saying.
□
2. Do not use big words. Keep it simple, she will not be interested in the details.
□
3. Repeatedly ask her questions about her husband. For example, what he does for a living and when he can return with you since he is the decision maker.
□
4. Spend as little time as possible with her. It's in a women's nature to "shop". She is not to be taken seriously as she is not a serious buyer. Keep it short and send her off with a brochure for her husband to read.
□
5. Flirt with her, if you have time, she'll love that. Women like to feel beautiful and if you don't pay attention to their appearance they may cry. They like to cry for no reason at least once a month.
□

This may sound ridiculous and even laughable but it's crazy to think that this is still happening.

If you have ever experienced prejudice like this, please share in the comments. This should not still be happening in 2017! Show your support by liking this article and sharing it if you believe women should be treated as equal in the buying process.

How To Sell To Women with Susan McVea

Susan McVea is the CEO of Susan McVea Consulting Inc. and speaker to Fortune 500 companies helping clients sell more than \$600 million in revenue through her sales and business leadership.

She is the founder of Sell With More Ease and Sales Mastery Society. She has been recognized as one of the top 10 of 200 leading sales people.

Susan has been featured in Entrepreneur, Business2Community, US News for her insights in sales, leadership and growing true wealth.

After growing an offline business to \$15M in 18 months, she started and grew her online business from scratch to 6 figures in 6 months while overcoming major chronic illness.

How to Sell to Women - Eleanor Beaton

Reading Time: 15 Minutes

In this blog post, we are exploring one of the most powerful forces driving the global economy: WOMEN BUYERS.

Whether you sell B2B or B2C, high-end furniture, SAAS, life coaching, or books,

Chances are that WOMEN are often making the decision to buy from you or not.

Knowing how to connect with, build trust with, and most importantly RESPECT women buyers is really important if you want to sell to them.

And trust me. You want to know how to sell to them. To US.

That's because women have a total projected global spending power of \$18 Trillion dollars, according to research conducted by global

consultancy EY.

That makes WOMEN the world's second-biggest economy, right in between the US and China.

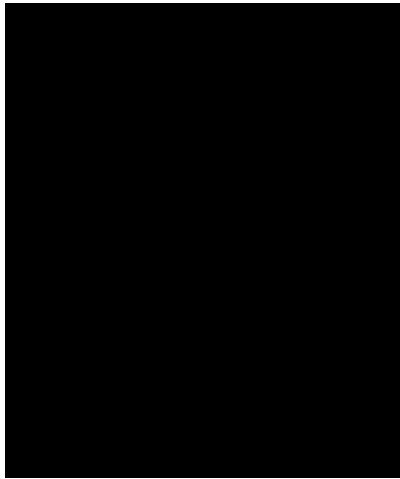
But before your eyes light up like dollar signs, understand... WE MAY HAVE A LOT OF MONEY, BUT WE AREN'T necessarily EASY TO sell to.

"Women are smart. We are really smart and especially as consumers. You know, we can read between the lines, and I think that's definitely something that I've learned throughout my experiences with beauty, even with Sephora."

That's Emaan Abbass. She's the founder of Ketish Beauty.

KETISH is an intimate wellness brand – their products include body oils that soothe period pain and feminine wipes.

Emaan's been covered in Vogue, Harper's Bazaar, she's even been on the cover of Cosmo.



You're going to be hearing a lot from her in this article. And that's because she has some powerful and practical ideas to help YOU create a brand and offers that women LOVE to buy and refer.

So if you are ready to grow your company by tapping into the \$18 trillion female consumer opportunity.

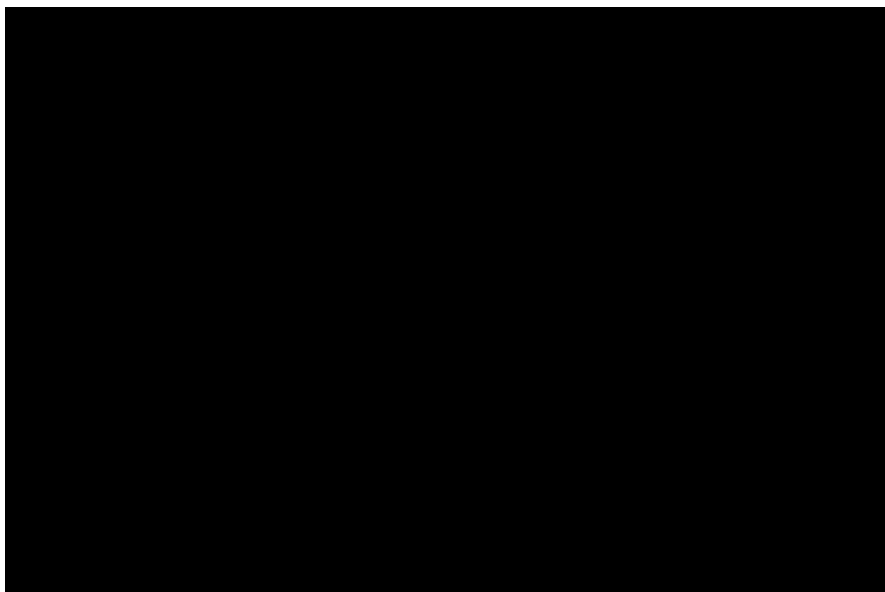
OR the trillions more that women leaders control through B2B corporate spend...

Keep reading.

The Women Helping Women Economy

Two years ago, a client of mine, thought leadership advisor Eva Jannotta coined a term...

The Women Helping Women Economy.



What Eva saw – and I confirm – was the rising number of women who were starting businesses offering products and services that were made BY women FOR women.

Whether you are a part of the Women Helping Women economy or not, women are key influencers and decision-makers in your sales funnel.

So I'm going to share 3 strategies to help you connect with, build trust with, and ultimately SELL to women buyers and decision-makers.

But first, let's take establish the massive opportunity that exists for you when you know how to sell to women.

How to Sell to Women: The Opportunity

According to global consultancy BCG, as early as next year, women will control roughly \$90 trillion in private wealth – that's more than a third of the world's wealth btw.

“As early as next year, women will control roughly \$90 trillion in private wealth.” – BCG

We control a huge amount of money, but we're still underserved.

I asked my LinkedIn community why they thought so many women are starting companies that sell exclusively to other women. I thought this answer from Anna Dewar Gully – who founded a strategy firm called Tidal Equality said:

“So many products and services are not designed with women in mind, and certainly not with their equity in mind, and yet women are the world's most powerful buyers.”

So let's do the math...

Women buyers and leaders control \$18 trillion worth of purchasing power and \$90 trillion worth of private wealth...

And as a group, we feel massively underserved and misunderstood by the very companies trying to sell to us.

Ladies, that's called one hell of a business opportunity. So let's discuss how to capitalize...by serving women buyers better.

How to Sell to Women Strategy Number 1: Be Authentic and Transparent

Ok, ok, I get it. “Transparency” and “authentic” are basically the most overused words on the planet...

But, transparency and authenticity are really, really important to women buyers in particular.

Remember what Emaan said earlier?

“Women are smart. We are really smart and especially as consumers. You know, we can read between the lines, and I think that's definitely something that I've learned throughout my experiences with beauty.”

So how do you demonstrate AUTHENTICITY and TRANSPARENCY to smart women buyers?

You start by showing them your genuine LOVE for what you do.

Emaan is a great example of this.

I don't know about you, but I can spend a LOT of time browsing the aisles of my neighbourhood drugstore and loading up on creams and potions and scrubs. I love product. But Emaan, well, she takes the love of beauty products to the next level.

“Well, man, I mean, I think I've been a lifelong product junkie. I remember when I was young, my mom would take me to Target or to the drug stores, and I would just comb through the aisles, especially in the beauty skincare department. And I just always had a love and a fascination for product, especially when it came to ingredients. It's just something that really fascinated me, and it's something that started at a very young age as I got older, I started to fall, really fall in love with brands and products that came out of mission-based brands because usually, a mission-based brand had products that were going to tie into that mission. And so I would just say that I always had a deep and sincere passion for products, effective products, products that people could trust, and that's something that fueled my interest.”

Did you notice how Emaan describes her relationship with what she sells? She called it a “deep and sincere passion for products people could trust”.

Through our entire interview, Emaan emphasized and reemphasized her legit love for trustworthy feminine products that are safe and nourishing for women to use on their bodies.

It was...inspiring, quite frankly. And Emaan's passion also contains a really powerful lesson about how to be AUTHENTIC as a company, a brand, and a leader.

And that lesson is to remember to LOVE what you do...and share that love wherever you can.

My question for YOU is, do YOU have a deep and sincere passion for what you sell?

- And are you sharing that love for what you do everyday
- On social media

- In your team meetings
- In your sales calls
- In your marketing collateral
- In media opportunities

Now, this might seem obvious like an obvious tip, but I talk to HUNDREDS of entrepreneurs each year, and very few – maybe 1 in 5 – really demonstrate the kind of deep and sincere passion Emaan is showing here.

It's not that they don't have it...it's that they're tired or overwhelmed and that interferes with

1. a) the ability to connect with the LOVE that had you start your business...and
2. b) the ability to SHARE that sincere enthusiasm with the world.

And this brings me to my second practical tip for demonstrating authenticity and transparency to women buyers.

Show us your deeper WHY

In addition to sharing your genuine LOVE, you need to show us your deeper WHY.

Women buyers want to know WHY what you sell matters. And we don't want a lecture, we want to connect with your story.

Here's Emaan sharing the story of why she started Ketish.

I feel like when people ask me this question, in retrospect, I feel like I've been working on Ketish my entire life. There are so many experiences that I have gone through as a woman, as an Egyptian woman, and a Middle Eastern woman that have led me to this point of creating Ketish.

And for those that don't know, Ketish is a feminine and intimate wellness brand. And when I was growing up, in our culture, the Middle Eastern culture, we didn't necessarily talk about feminine health and our bodies. The topic was quite taboo, and I always had a curiosity, I think because it was a forbidden fruit, I always had a curiosity about my body and pleasure and intimacy, and obviously that curiosity, it really changed at a certain point in my life.

I was twenty-one and I was diagnosed with cervical cancer. And that curiosity really transformed. It no longer was this passion out of curiosity, but it was more so like this, like, this is my life, and I have to learn about my body and what's going on. And in that experience, I realized that there weren't a ton of products that were on the market that were trustworthy and credible.

I remember going to the drugstore after a treatment that I had, and I remember picking up a bottle of feminine wash and I didn't understand any of the ingredients. And it really shocked me. It just made me feel like we were doing a disservice to women, along with the ingredient list. I just remember feeling embarrassed and ashamed with even taking this product to the register.

I wanted to create a brand that provided products that were not only credible and trustworthy, but also bold and empowering and something special, something that women felt good purchasing. And so that's ultimately what led me to create Ketish, and I really wanted to create a brand with products that I wish I had when I was going through my feminine health journey. That's what led me to create it."

Don't you just love her by the way? Her origin story is unique, powerful, AND universal.

I don't know about you, but I could totally relate to growing up and feeling like my body and my sexuality were taboo.

I haven't had a cervical cancer diagnosis, but I can 100% relate to the way Emaan's health crisis galvanized to action.

Emaan is willing to be transparent and share her story and that vulnerability opens up the space for us to connect with her and her brand.

The actionable takeaway for YOU is this:

Look for opportunities to share the personal WHY behind your business.

Brainstorm one or two personal experiences that planted the seed for the business you have today.

We call those origin stories, and they are powerful anchors that connect you to your audience.

Learning how to tell your story in a clear, compelling, and concise way can really help you connect with women buyers. To build your storytelling skills, download our free guide, [Selling with Story](#).

Now before we wrap up Strategy #1 – Be transparent and authentic...I want to share a powerful insight to really drive the teachings from this section home.

Sharing your sincere passion for what you do...and the personal why behind your company is especially important when you sell to women.

That's because when you share your passion and your story, you are equipping women buyers with the detailed fuel we need to spread the word about your brand.

Women tend to talk about what they buy, where they buy it, and whether or not they got a good deal. Typically, women discuss this topic with their

female friends more so than men do with their male friends.

Women drive word-of-mouth advertising and referrals. When you combine a great product with a great story...well, that's fuel on the fire of word-of-mouth advertising from women buyers.

How to Sell to Women Strategy Number 2: Lead With Your Mission

Studies have shown that women entrepreneurs are more likely to be positively perceived, get funding and other forms of critical business support — if they emphasize their social mission.*

I have consulted, interviewed, and connected with thousands of female founders over the last 10 years and the vast majority have had a clear social mission. ...

They just didn't always share it.

And that's the takeaway here. Leading with your social mission is a powerful way to connect with women buyers. Here's Emaan Abbass.

“You know, I think what I've learned in building this brand is that the world is changing, consumers are changing, they want to feel a connection to the products that they are purchasing. I remember years ago, you know, products like Nivea (not to call out anyone), I still use their products that have existed for years and years and years. You don't know who's making them and what ingredients are going into them. And I think the way we as consumers shop is different now. We want to feel a connection. We see money leaving our wallets and purchasing something, and we want to feel like what we are giving and what we are getting in exchange or in return is something of value.”

So practically speaking, how do you lead with mission?

Give it a third of your total air time.

The content on the Ketish website is AS devoted to tackling taboos and stereotypes about women's bodies and sexuality as it is to product descriptions.

There's a great lesson here. Review your marketing content and find places to share the mission BEHIND the products you offer.

As Emaan notes, women want to feel good about where our money is going. Give us the information we need to feel good about buying from you.

“Share the mission BEHIND the products you offer.”

How to Sell to Women Strategy Number 3: Co-create your offers with them.

Here's a joke that some of you will hate me for. But you'll have to admit it's kind of true.

What do women LOVE to freely give?

OUR ADVICE!

I actually think this is the most powerful insight of all when it comes to creating a company that women love to buy from and offerings we want to buy...

Involve women in the product creation process.

One of the big challenges that companies face when scaling is that leadership is no longer customer-facing.

But that doesn't just happen to big companies.

When we advise clients on things like marketing and growth strategy, our FIRST step is to consult with the company's customers or clients.

And I'm surprised how often business owners forget to do this.

And that's such a missed opportunity because when you involve your customers in your offer design, you give them the chance to get invested in its success.

Here's a practical example of how Emaan Abbass has involved her customers in the creation of the brand and its products from Day 1.

“And when we were creating this brand, we knew that we were going to have to relate to women. Women were going to have to see themselves in this brand in order to connect to us and in order to connect to our products. And so in building it, we've had hundreds of conversations with women from all over the world, and we really wanted to get a better understanding, especially in this space. It's quite untapped. We are based in the Middle East, so it's to launch a taboo brand out of the Middle East. We knew that we were going to have to talk to the people in our community and understand, you know, what is their experience with feminine wellness and feminine hygiene? And what has their education looked like? What are their needs? What do they desire from a brand like this? And that's helped to shape our mission. It's helped to shape the way in which we speak to our community, as well as shape the way that we develop and create products for the brand. It's all so intertwined. But what was really important to

us was to be able to hear directly from the women that we would be speaking to and weave that in all throughout the brand.

So I love this point and would like to stay on it for a moment because so many brands and companies and founders will say, we're talking to our customers. What does that look like practically so even for you as the founder? What does it mean for you to talk to customers? What is your interaction on a week-by-week basis with customers? This is a really important point that I want to dive into.

And it's honestly for me, and I feel very fortunate that we're still quite small and we're building and that I still have the time, but even as we grow, I want to make time for this. I connect directly with our community every day. So if someone DMs or writes a caption on our social, it's me responding. And it was really important for me to take that role as the founder, especially in these beginning stages. I feel like it's so important to connect directly to your community and to hear what they're saying and to hear what they're asking for and for them to feel like they have a connection with the brand and brand founder. It really just helps to heighten that experience and helps solidify the connection that a potential consumer or a person in our community has with the brand. So for me, I have direct contact through our social media. I also do something behind the scenes. User interviews, that we tend to do whenever we're creating something for the brand. So whether it be a new product or if we're looking to change something on the website or to test something with social, we have these user interviews where we actually pull people in that fit our community. It's women from all over the globe. We have one on one conversations with them where we show them our product or our website, or whatever it is that we want to test and we have a real conversation with them and we get their honest feedback. I love it because it's a way for me to learn from women that are going to be the end-user or the people that we are speaking to. I get to have their input and they get to see their input change things, which is, I think, really exciting. So there's a lot of different ways that we try to communicate. But for me, as a founder, it's really important to have that one on one interaction with my community."

All those customer conversations with Eman shaped not only the products they created but the way their market.

"Women tend to connect most with brands that are transparent and authentic, and with brands that they feel value the same things that they value at the core. And so for us, while we've been building this brand, it was really important for us to understand exactly what it is that women value, especially in this space, the feminine wellness space. It's transforming and it's really changing. Women have very different expectations of this space than what they used to have 5, 10, 20 years ago. So I think for us, it was really important to speak to our community and to understand exactly what it is that they wanted and they needed. What it is that was important to them, especially coming from not only product, but also how we speak to them, how we educate them and how we cover the overall topic of feminine health and feminine wellness. And so I think authenticity, transparency, relatability. Women being able to see themselves in a brand. When women come and see Ketish for the first time, it was important for me as a founder that women were able to see themselves even in the imagery.

And what that meant to us was that we were going to have real women in our campaigns. We weren't going to use a ton of models. We use models here and there. But a lot of the women that you see even in our brand imagery, are real women. There are people on our team, I'm there myself. It was really important that we didn't airbrush or edit our photos and that what women got was one hundred percent real. And I think that's been one of the best pieces of feedback that we've received is "wow, your brand is really raw and it's unedited, it's unfiltered". And we try to do that in every aspect of the brand, not just our imagery, but also when it comes to our product or product education. We're transparent, we're real, we're raw, and I think women are able to connect with that a lot."

Now some of you are probably thinking – "I work 1:1 with my clients all day – I have tons of interaction with them".

True, but I see a big distinction between working with clients delivering your service, and consulting with them so they can help you shape your marketing, your offerings and your processes.

I want to give you some practical examples of what "talking to customers" can look like

- Conduct 1:1 customer interviews
- Host small focus groups
- Assemble client intakes forms into a binder and read it regularly
- Hold completion calls when clients are finished their work with you
- Hold milestone debrief calls when clients reach specific milestones in their work with you
- Less ideal: surveys

The point here is that, if you want to build a company women love...make them active participants in what that company looks like.

So those are the top 3 strategies for selling to women!

How to Sell to Women recap

WOMEN BUYERS are one of the biggest drivers of economic growth on the planet.

Understanding how to connect with and build trust with women buyers and decision-makers is a powerful way to grow your sales and impact.

And you do this by

1. Demonstrating authenticity and transparency.
2. LEADing with your mission
3. Co-creating your offers, your marketing, and sales processes with the women you are selling to.

Here are 3 practical resources to help you put the learnings from this episode into action.

Selling to Women... It's Time to Get Scientific and Serious

I am doing research on selling to women...and this means reading a big pile of academic journal articles on selling. In this post, I will provide a very scant summary of what I've read so far and offer brief conclusions on what needs to be done to better understand how to sell to women.

One article really captured my imagination -- an article by Moncrieff et al (2002). These authors make a number of very interesting points, including the fact that much of what we know about managing salespeople is based on research from the 1970s. [Get the papers](#) [Turn a bit v](#)

How to Sell to the Self-Purchasing Woman - Rapaport

The in-store experience is crucial — as are marketing styles and having the right merchandise.

Approximately 20 years ago, the term “self-purchaser” became the new catchphrase in jewelry retail. Professional women with spending power realized they didn’t need a man to buy them jewelry; they could do it for themselves. They desired pieces that celebrated milestones in their lives. They also began gravitating toward more individualized styles that spoke to their personalities, rather than status pieces for keeping up with their peers.

In 2003, De Beers noticed this trend emerging and launched its most influential ad campaign since 1946’s “A Diamond Is Forever.” “Women of the World, Raise Your Right Hand” targeted women who were successful in their careers, and said it was okay to buy diamond right-hand rings — rings that weren’t connected to marriage, as the left hand was traditionally for wedding rings. All this culminated in self-purchasing becoming a huge segment of the market, with designers and retailers getting on board as more women bought expensive pieces for themselves.

Say it loud, say it proud

When selling to women, stores need to align their marketing with their mission.

Retailer Zaver & Mor in Berkeley, California, “is a space created by a woman, for women,” says owner Rada Sahney — and she projects that message in all her branding. “We celebrate female-owned small designers and choose pieces that are geared to women in every facet of their lives. Thus, our message is all about celebrating women in jewelry.”

At retailer Max’s in Minnesota’s Twin Cities, “our primary customer group is the female self-purchaser,” says owner Ellen Hertz. “Therefore, all marketing is geared toward women. We often use the taglines or hashtags ‘Own your style’ or ‘Let your style be your statement.’ Our message speaks to the feel-good vibe women get when they buy their own jewelry.”

Laura Freedman’s strategy relies on her own experience as a jewelry purchaser. “I think about how I would like it presented and what I would like to wear,” says the owner of Broken English, which has boutiques in New York and Santa Monica, California. “Our marketing, like the jewelry, is relatable and authentic — and speaks to the small and big memories and moments in a woman’s life, touching them on an emotional and visceral level.”

The feminine boutique

The in-store experience is a vital aspect of catering to self-purchasers — from the displays and décor to how well the salespeople know the product and treat the clients. There was a time when a woman walking into a traditional jewelry store would be ignored if she didn’t have a man in tow. But times have changed; jewelers have redesigned their shops and educated their staff to ensure that they offer the service a woman deserves.

Sari Brown, owner of LuxCouture, has created an environment that caters to female clients’ every need. Her store in Newton Highlands, Massachusetts, is different than the other interviewees’ in that it sells ready-to-wear accessories and fine jewelry.

“The shop is set up so we can style our customers from head to toe,” she says. “We are able to spend time asking about their personal styles and what jewelry they already have, [as well as] how we can help them add on and show them what pieces work best with different types of clothes.”

While jewelry-only stores cannot offer this type of service, they can create a venue that’s easygoing and pressure-free.

“Our store has been designed to feel casual, cozy and intimate,” says Sahney. “This creates a more inviting and approachable space for women to feel they can try, chat, have a drink or a sweet treat. We encourage a more one-on-one ‘girlfriend’ shopping experience versus a retailer-and-client environment.”

Hertz agrees that “for women, there is nothing like coming in and trying things on. When we reopened after the Covid-19 shutdown, I was truly stunned by how many women came in to buy something for themselves because they just wanted to feel good or buy something pretty.”

The right merchandise

Perhaps the most important aspect of selling to self-purchasers is carrying styles that will resonate with them.

Freedman offers a mix of meaningful charms and talismans, updated classics, accessibly priced trend-driven pieces, and one-of-a-kind miniature works of art. In the symbolic-jewelry category, Foundrae is one of her top-selling brands. Anita Ko fits the bill for a more daring take on the classics, while EF Collection features cool, current pieces that “won’t break the bank.” Silvia Furmanovich is one of Freedman’s artisan designers.

Hertz’s designers are all independents, and hers is a one-stop shop for some of the most creative talents in the business. Brands that have done well include Amali Jewelry, Erica Molinari, Annie Fensterstock and Rebecca Overmann.

Brown has seen success with modern takes on classic diamond jewelry, such as Jade Trau’s tennis necklaces and emerging brand Gemma Couture’s expandable diamond bracelets. She reports “less traction with the ‘neck mess,’ and more with elegantly layered, textured gold and

diamond necklaces that graduate. Stackable rings have given way to more statement styles — wearing a ring on every finger [or opting for] signets, wider bands, and gemstone rings.”

Story and styling

A big draw for the self-purchaser is a story — who the designer is, how the jewelry is made, what the pieces symbolize.

“Women love to hear all of the details and stories behind the jewels. The more they can relate, the better,” says Freedman. “They are also attracted to the conversation-starters: Silvia Furmanovich’s marquetry pieces and [Foundrae’s] language of tenets.”

Beyond that, says Brown, “women want to be educated about what they are purchasing. Knowing either the story behind the brand or the techniques used really [drives] home the perceived value of the jewelry, particularly from designers like Jade Trau and Andy Lif.”

Being an example yourself is helpful as well, notes Sahney. “Showing how the jewelry can be worn [and] how to mix designers or metals are all selling points. I wear a lot of mixed jewels and layers to encourage my customers to be more comfortable in doing the same.”

She also tries to make sure customers get the most out of the pieces they buy. “My goal is to help identify and curate my clients’ jewelry collections. Therefore, I emphasize the importance of finding pieces that they would reach for multiple times a week and [that can] translate from day to night or casual to formal.”

Permission to buy

“The challenges of selling to women have become minimal as long you research what’s out there, think ahead, and have your finger on the pulse of what women might want next,” says Freedman.

Women sometimes need to give themselves permission to buy a new piece when they think they have enough jewelry, observe Sahney and Brown.

“They will spend a great amount on handbags and shoes each season, but there is still a bit of mystique about jewelry,” Brown says.

“We have come so far,” adds Sahney. “We need to continue to empower women to celebrate themselves and embrace their desire to self-purchase.”

4 Absolute don’ts when courting the female buyer

- Never turn on the pressure. Share all the info you can. Allow clients to try on a piece as much as they feel comfortable doing. Chat about their existing collection and what the piece they are thinking about might work with, and then leave it to them to make the decision.
- Don’t assume they will buy immediately, even if they fall in love with the piece. Some women need to mull it over or go home and see what else they have before committing to a purchase.
- At a trunk show or event, don’t ignore women less involved in trying pieces out. Try to engage them in conversation and learn more about them as people. These women might be newcomers to buying for themselves and might need time to feel more comfortable with the process.
- If a woman pops by in sweats and no makeup, don’t write her off as not being serious or not having the spending power. This is a misconception that male jewelry store owners tend to make more than female ones. These women might be coming from dropping off their kids at school or from a dentist appointment or the gym. These are the women who may become your best customers over time.

Image: Model wears a selection of Stephen Webster jewelry, including a Magnipheasant ring in 18-karat gold and diamonds (left hand) and a Magnipheasant collar with black diamonds and Fuli Gemstones peridot in 18-karat gold. (Chloe Primrose for Fuli Gemstones x Stephen Webster)