

Power Poses: Tweaking Your Body Language For Greater Sales Success

Enterprises invest heavily in sales training, sales tools and marketing, CRM, sales related travel, events, and more. Why not make sure the sales people are standing up straight and literally putting themselves into the best positions to succeed?

Among the many things sales people need to succeed are:

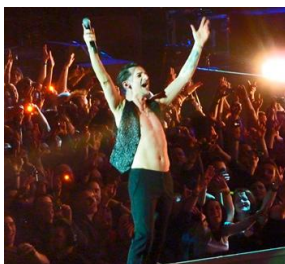
- Customer and product knowledge
- Value propositions that resonate
- Good questions to ask
- Proven sales tools

These are the basic tools that should be in any salesperson's toolbox. A strong and effective product marketing team should provide these to the sales team as a matter of course. Another one of the pillars of success in sales is self-confidence. Numerous studies of sales organizations have linked high self-confidence with better sales performance.

A sales person who is feeling confident can better resist the urge to discount to get an order, walk away from an unqualified prospect, or call on a new prospect. All of these actions translate to greater sales success.

What if someone told you that one way to increase sales was to change how you stand or sit?

Breakthrough research from Professor Amy Cuddy at Harvard Business School (along with coauthors Dana Carney at Berkeley and Andy Yap at Columbia) proves that body language and body positioning directly impact self-confidence and feelings of power.



Professor Cuddy, a social psychologist at HBS, had a total of about 50 subjects in two randomly assigned groups assume what she calls *high power poses* during an experiment. These positions are familiar to anyone who has watched a victorious sprinter cross the finish line, Mick Jagger preen onstage, or Oprah Winfrey captivate an audience.

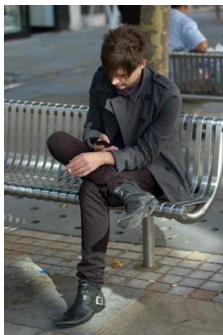
Arms are spread wide, shoulders back, chin is up, and the person looks as expansive as possible.

In the experiment, subjects also had to assume *low power poses*. In these positions the person gets really small. Arms are crossed or by the sides, head is down, shoulders are rounded and eye contact is averted. Often, the person looks sad or depressed.

Cuddy discovered that the group that assumed the high power poses had significantly higher levels of the dominance hormone testosterone and lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol than the group that assumed low power poses.

This is significant because people with higher levels of testosterone and lower levels of cortisol are:

- More willing to take risks (such as making cold calls)
- More likely to seek out challenges (such as selling a new product)
- Better at performing well in unusually stressful situations (like sales calls)



Similarly, the low power poses group had elevated cortisol and lower testosterone, a combination that had a negative impact on their confidence and risk taking. Amazingly, these changes in hormone levels occurred after only two minutes of assuming a low power or high power pose.

Since I help my clients identify and overcome roadblocks to revenue growth, I find this research fascinating. It seems to me to have enormous implications for sales organizations and those who are concerned about revenue generation.

I am not implying that simply changing one's posture is all that is needed to grow revenues. However, in today's ultra-competitive environment, organizations should consider any new techniques that can give them an edge.

What do salespeople typically do when they wait in a prospect's lobby? They sit and check their smartphone. Head is down, arms are by their sides, and they get really small. This is a classic low power pose. This is exactly the opposite of what they should do.

Within minutes, their testosterone is likely to have dropped, and their cortisol is likely to have risen. And their feelings of power and confidence are shot--which is just what you don't want to have happen. In contrast, Professor Cuddy's research indicates that a salesperson (or anyone about to go into a stressful situation) should assume a high power pose for at least

two minutes. Rather than hunch over an iPhone, a salesperson should find a private place to spread their arms and pull their shoulders back.

Perhaps savvy sales leaders should include power posing in their sales process and teach their sales team members to use this technique. Enterprises invest heavily in sales training, sales tools and marketing, CRM, sales related travel, events, and more. Why not make sure the sales people are standing up straight and literally putting themselves into the best positions to succeed?

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