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How to Become a Top Performing CEO
Award-Winner Lenann McGookey Gardner Shares Her Secrets

Albuquerque, NM – International [sales and marketing expert Lenann McGookey Gardner](#), recently recognized with the Top Performing CEO Award from her state's business journal, [New Mexico Business Weekly](#), shares her secrets on how to exceed career and business goals.

“Being a top performing CEO means exceeding the goals you have for your business, and doing that in such a way that it's sustainable – building for the future, not burning your bridges as you go,” explained Gardner. “We're at a little over 200% of last year's revenue year-to-date – and 2009 was a GOOD year for our firm. We got there by focusing on selling and having an anti-recessionary strategy.”

Gardner went after business in industries that were beneficiaries of the recession, rather than her more typical customer base, which was negatively affected by the downturn. For example, Gardner did quite a bit of work with a homeopathic medicine company – when people lack health insurance and therefore choose not to visit a doctor, they may choose to self-medicate using homeopathics from health food stores.

Here are some tips from Gardner on how to become a top performing CEO.

Make selling a priority

“Look at how much of your TIME you're putting into selling,” says Gardner. “Most people give much more lip service than action to selling. We know that time spent face-to-face or phone-to-phone with those who are in a position to buy what you are selling is strongly positively correlated with success in selling – so get more face-time and phone-time with prospects in whatever way you can.”

Exceed business goals

“During a time of economic uncertainty, you want to go beyond your sales targets. I teach selling for a living, so I had better be able to DO it for our own firm,” says Gardner. “But I've learned that there are lots of leaders who are ‘taking their eyes off the ball’ during this economic downturn. It's almost as if, if they don't focus on selling, they'll be able to say, ‘Well, the downturn happened, so that's why we missed our targets!’”

Don't just do what you're good at

You may have natural leadership QUALITIES, but none of the great leaders are just winging it. They're learning more all the time, and they're challenging themselves to FOCUS. Not just to do more of what they're already good at, but to do the things they're

less good at – or to get some help with those things – so their overall approach to their business is balanced, and growth is maximized.

Trim your “To Do” list

“When you make time for selling, you’ll probably have to decide which of your many activities should go onto your ‘Do Not Do List.’ Most of us have extensive ‘To Do’ lists, but we don’t acknowledge that when we beef up an activity like selling, we have to STOP doing some other things. Get clear about what those things are, and either delegate them or let them go,” says Gardner.

Embrace positive thinking

Being a top performing CEO involves positive thinking combined with positive action. “I know too many leaders who are just wondering what will happen next. Will the economy turn around? When? How strongly? Will this be a good year or a bad one? What’s coming in 2011?” says Gardner. “You’re the leader; you have to express optimism and positivity, not all your doubts, to get others enthused. Don’t overspend or act imprudently, but be positive and active, not doubtful and afraid.”

Get some support

“The Executive Coaching aspect of my business has grown because leaders know: it can be lonely at the top. If you’re expressing optimism and positivity to your team, to whom do you express your doubts?” asked Gardner. She suggests, “Get some coaching if you want a business peer who will listen to you, hear you out, support you in your plans, add ideas to your strategies, and be a caring friend with whom you can bounce ideas around safely.”

Lenann McGookey Gardner has worked with professionals from over 45 countries around the world and in 32 U.S. states, to help them massively [improve sales results](#). She is an award-winning salesperson, marketing executive, and executive coach. She is a Harvard MBA and a past #1 top salesperson worldwide at a unit of Xerox Corporation.

In addition to the *NM Business Weekly*’s 2010 Top Performing CEO Award, Gardner was recognized with the American Marketing Association’s state Professional Services “Marketer of the Year” award. She offers valuable selling tips through the blog at her website, www.YouCanSell.com. She also offers [executive coaching](#) through www.YouCanLeadCoaching.com.

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Contact: Gail Rubin
Phone: 505.265.7215
Email: Gail_Rubin@comcast.net