# Audio file

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# Transcript

Greg Reffner

Everybody this is Greg Reffner with [ABSTRAKT](https://abstrakt.ai) and we have Cynthia Barnes here today. We are on the abstract podcast and today's topic is helping women reach the top 1% in sales. So really excited to chat with you. Cynthia would love it if you maybe gave yourself a brief introduction. Tell us a little bit more about the [National Association of Women Sales Professionals](https://nawsp.org/)

Cynthia Barnes

Fantastic thank you so much for having me. Hello everyone, I am Cynthia Barnes, Founder and CEO of the National Association of Women Sales Professionals. We are a member-based organization of women who sell B2B services in male dominated industries and provides our members with primarily two things. Number one. Access to companies who are laser focused on the attraction. Hiring, developing and retaining them and also access to professional development, training and the support they need to reach the top 1%.

Greg Reffner

That's awesome, that's awesome. Now I had a couple different things here in terms of how I was going to do my agenda with you Cynthia, but I think I want to switch some things up real quick. I really want to dive into what the catalyst was for. The National Association of Women Sales Professionals. Like why did you start this? Why is this something that became, you know, a passion for you.

Cynthia Barnes

Well, back in 2016, I was in corporate America and I was thinking. A lot about legacy and how did I want people to?

Speak about me. When I was gone and I was on Facebook one day, the ultimate philosopher and I saw this meme, and the meme said, and I'm going to paraphrase and butcher it, but it what it meant to me was the true test of whether or not we are successful in life is not measured by how well we do. It's measured.

By how many others we helped do well, so I thought for the rest of my life. If I could do one thing, I would want to help other women in sales reach the top 1% like I did.

Greg Reffner

Nice, that's awesome. Yeah, I think, uh right, it's not, uh, what you did for others, it's how you made people feel. And if you can help people become successful and feel empowered and feel confident, right? That's a that's a sign of a life well lived.

I'm going to go off on a little bit of a tangent here, Cynthia, but since you started, have you ever you know or do women reach out to you? And hey, you made this impact on me. You've changed my life in this way. I'm sure you've gotten some of those messages and those phone calls.

Cynthia Barnes

I have and they mean more to me than the accolades. The LinkedIn influencer, the Salesforce Influencer awards. Those are great. But when a young woman reaches out to me and says hey, I'm a young black woman in sales, just got started and everywhere I turn I see sales leaders who and influencers who are in their word stalemate. Ellen Pale and to see a black woman succeeding in sales to be an author. To lead an Association tells me and these are their words that if I can see it, I can be it. And if Cynthia did it maybe I can too. That means the world to me because it's about creating the next generation of sales leaders and as we aspire to reach up, we must remember that we've got to reach back and help those following us

Greg Reffner

I can't imagine how you must feel when you get one of those messages. It's a I'm sure it probably still brings goosebumps to you right now when you get those messages about women who have said, hey, you've empowered me to be successful. So that's awesome. Well, the topic that we have today around helping women.

Cynthia Barnes

He does.

Greg Reffner

We stopped 1%, so that's a very large conversation and we have we probably don't have time to dive into elder intricacies of what we need to do as a as a sales kind of part within organizations. So, we'll maybe focus on a couple small things today, some tactical.

Greg Reffner

Things that kind of organizations can do, and then you know individual contributors what can women on the front lines of sales do to kind of start trending towards that direction right of reaching that 1%? So we'll take a couple tidbits today. If that still works for you.

Cynthia Barnes

Yes.

Greg Reffner

Perfect so when we met last week to start prepping for our podcast, the thing that kept coming up over and over again was to empower the women that you. That's so women are becoming an increasingly larger part of the workforce within sales organizations, and I think what I what I took away from our prep was that you know, let's focus on the on the women that we have first so tactically. How do organizations start to look at?

Greg Reffner

What they already have in place today and analyze that and plan around empowering the women that are already there on the team, contributing every single day.

Cynthia Barnes

A lot of companies reach out to in on a daily basis and say we want to attract and hire more women in sales and I always ask them what plans or what measures do you have in place to retain them. The ones that you have and the ones that you'd like to bring in and nine times out of 10 there's no response. There's no initiative. There's no plan. The key for organizations to retain the talent that they so desperately want is development. If you don't develop the staff that you have the team that you have.

Then they're going not going to stick and stay because there are large companies out there with large pocketbooks willing to poach your talent. Women don't leave companies because of pay, they leave because they don't see a pathway forward. They leave because they're not being developed. So the first thing I would say is if you don't have specific training in place that addresses the unique needs that women in sales face while amplifying the innate strengths that they have then give me a call.

Greg Reffner

I love that. Let's some let's dive into that a little bit more so for someone maybe listening who is like, wait, you know what are those unique needs? What are those things that I need to be thinking about that that might be different to empower the women that I already have to make sure they see that [career progression](https://abstrakt.ai/advancing-your-career-from-home/) that development road map. What are maybe one of those two things that that maybe we need to start thinking about that are a little bit unique for women on our sales team?

Cynthia Barnes

I would say there are there are. There's a plethora of them, but number one. Make sure that the career path that you have for individual contributors going into sales leadership is the same across the board. I did a panel discussion a couple of years ago and it was a roundtable discussion of male sales leaders and I asked them if a male individual contributor wants to ascend to sales leadership. What do you coach him on and they said things like P&L forecasting. You know the numbers side of the business and I said if a woman individual contributor wants to do the same? What do you coach her on?

Emotional intelligence and building relationships and the soft skills. And I said why the difference? And they looked around the table at each other, shrugged simultaneously and they said that's the way we've always done it. Now there's nothing wrong with coaching on the piano, the forecasting and the emotional.

Greg Reffner

Interesting.

Cynthia Barnes

Intelligence, but let's make it the same across the board because both sides need the same training. When you have separate training for women and for men that want to go into sales leadership, it puts.

Cynthia Barnes

Some at a disadvantage when you're not especially addressing the needs of the underrepresented population.

Greg Reffner

That's an interesting point that they would respond that way because if you ask my wife, she says that most men need to work on their emotional intelligence. Seems to be something that more men need to work on than I think women. So, I think that's an interesting point that they would kind of look at that as a separate kind of career path kind of hurdles or kind of key milestones to start looking at in terms of their career progression, uhm, is that the norm? Or is that more kind of the exception when it comes to sales organizations and kind of a division or different career progression? Rd Maps. I I, I guess I've never really even thought about that before.

Cynthia Barnes

There are more differences than there are similarities. And we try to impress upon our members that it's up to them to formulate a plan to speak up, to ask why not me when a promotion comes available and use and women need to speak up and say to their boss. I saw that this was posted. What about me?

Because nine times out of 10, your manager has thought about who he or she would like to place in that position. You may not even be on their radar. Nothing is worse than being passed over for promotion when no one even knows that you want that promotion.

As they say in the South, the closed mouth doesn't get fed, so women have got to speak up and say why not me? What about me and if the manager says you're not ready, we didn't pin you for this. Then follow up just like you would in a sales conversation. Dig a little deeper, peel back the layers of the onion and say then please help me.

Get to where I need to be. What are the pieces that I'm missing but make no mistake about it? Mr or Ms manager? I want leadership. Help me get there.

Greg Reffner

I like that and then as part of that conversation, I've always found that the kind of the third layer of that is. What do I need to do make it objective right, not subjective, right? It's objective key milestones that are measurable, right? So you know, are they specific? Are they measurable, or they attainable or realistic? And what's the timeline and if I do those right then I get that promotion and so it's not just a speak up it say hey, what do I need to do? Great, let's write those things down so it becomes almost like a mutual action plan where manager and sales reps start to work together collectively towards that shared goal of progressing that next step in their career. I was going to jump in fast.

And say a, you know an empty mouth, or a closed mouth never gets fed. I stole that from you last week. I think I've used that probably five or six times over the past week, so I'll send you a quarter every time that I say that from now on.

So, speak up and so that kind of leads me into the next thing that I want to talk about is. You know what do we need to do as organizations to create an environment where women feel like they can be empowered, and they have the confidence to speak up and say I want that promotion? I want that challenge because I I've talked with females that are on sales.

Teams and they feel like you know it's the boys Club. I can't speak up like there's not any opportunities for me to speak up. So as an organization, what do we do to create environments that that foster that confidence to stand up and say I want this, give me a chance.

Cynthia Barnes

I think there is huge. Power in the community of they, and when women band together, impossible becomes possible. So, if you're a woman on a sales team and you think I have no voice, I can't affect change. I can't make any suggestions then get a buddy.

And say it together, get energy, become part of your energy and brainstorm and come up with a plan.

Then you don't want to be that squeaky wheel.

Cynthia Barnes

By any means you don't want to just come off half cocked, you actually want to come up with a plan that says, here's what I want. What committees can I volunteer for? What can I lead? What can I implement? You can be a leader on your team without a title, and when people look to see who's.

Cynthia Barnes

Affecting change within the organization on every single level. I don't care if you're the janitor, I don't care if you're the CEO. Everyone has a voice plays.

You may not feel as if you do, but you do start speaking up. No matter how scared you are, no matter how much you're afraid of being called names or whatever, speak up.

Greg Reffner

Yeah.

Cynthia Barnes

The respect will follow.

Greg Reffner

Yeah, Manager and leader as much as they should be synonymous with one another, often not synonymous with one another, right? Just because you have a title doesn't make you a leader and you don't need the title to be a leader. So I want to maybe clarify a little bit so you know, thinking.

About kind of banding together. Get a buddy, come join committees, but I really would go back to like an organizational level like.

If I'm leading a sales team, or if I'm leading a company, what are maybe one or two things that I should be thinking about to create environments that women feel empowered to speak up right? What it what do I make sure that I not do to suppress that that desire for them to grow in their career and speak up.

Cynthia Barnes

Take a sales meeting for example. There are your participants that are always going to speak up and have something to say as a sales manager, why not look to the women on your team and specifically ask them Sarah? What are your thoughts on this? Julie, how do you feel about this? They will get more comfortable vocalizing and you also create a safe environment for them to say something you are actually inviting them to the conversation. See the difference between Inclusion and equity is the sense of belonging.

You can invite someone to the table, but if you don't offer them anything to eat, they don't feel included. So as a sales manager, include your people, ask them questions.

In sales they always say we have two ears and one mouth for a reason. The same thing goes for leadership. Listen more than you talk. Your team will tell you everything that's right and everything that's wrong but you have to ask the right questions just like you do in sales to elicit the right responses. Or the ones that are going to make a difference and move the needle.

Greg Reffner

I don't want to talk about that, just for a second because I've coached sales teams and sometimes what I'll do is I might just pose a question to the group without specifically maybe targeting somebody kind of a. You know, maybe there's eight reps sitting around the table, just kind of pose a question.

I myself have always felt a little I don't ever want to put anybody on the spot, but something you just said made me kind of rethink that a little bit. Or you kind of gave the example. I think you said, you know, Julie, what do you think about that you know? And so, without putting somebody on this spot in a larger group setting like that, you know as a sales leader, should I target questions directly at maybe the women that I know that maybe want to progress their career. So I almost, you know, show my vote of confidence that I'm leaning on their opinion first is does that make sense at all? Am I making sense and what I'm trying to ask for? Kind of your guide it's on.

Cynthia Barnes

It does and you don't have to single anybody out. You can make it big part of the bigger conversation you can pose the question, get some feedback and say, hey you know what Julie? I'd love your thoughts on that to come out the box with a question and say Julie, this is directed at you because that might make it weird. But if you pose the question to the group, get a couple of people input and then if you notice that certain people aren't speaking up, then say Julie, I'd love your thoughts on that.

Greg Reffner

Got it, yeah?

Cynthia Barnes

You look like you've got something important to say. I I want to hear it.

Greg Reffner

Yeah, I love that. I love that that's a that's a huge takeaway that I'm a takeaway. Make sure I'm conscious of next time I'm in that situation, so that's great so switching gears a little bit here at some point we all struggle with a form of impostor syndrome. But understanding how that impacts females in the B2B world is important. I want to first like touch on how do we create environments where the the risk of people having that impostor syndrome is mitigated. But Secondly, what are we doing to absolutely make sure we're doing everything we can to instill confidence along the way so that that that begins to form building blocks to alleviate that impostor syndrome? So kind of two questions there. Breaking the sales Golden rule of only asking one question at a time.

Cynthia Barnes

So the impostor syndrome for those of you who don't know is that syndrome that says if they found out who I really am, they would know that I'm not qualified. It pairs with the inner critic. That little voice in your head that says. You're too young, you're too old, you're not smart enough you're not bright enough you're not tall enough you're too short that they go hand in hand companies can help those with the impostor syndrome. First of all you have to identify it.

Cynthia Barnes

Then you have to give them tips and tactics on how to manage it. Because the impostor syndrome affects everyone from the CEO to the janitor, and everyone in between, there is a famous NASA astronomer and she talked about the impostor syndrome and for women, imagine if every president we ever had was a woman. Imagine if every CEO wasn't a 6 foot guy but it was a woman. Imagine if all of the teachers you had in college, high school elementary were women, then we wouldn't go through. Women wouldn't go through a life of thinking I don't fit in. I don't belong because everyone I see in a position of power is of the opposite gender and hardly anyone looks like me so companies can start by making sure that their leadership team is 50/50 women.

We can provide training that addresses the impostor syndrome and says, here's how you overcome it.

Yeah, those are my 22 best tips.

Greg Reffner

I love that. So starting to create more diverse leadership teams, and I think that's so key, especially in today's world where points of view and tapping into different components or viewpoints on the world, right? That's really where we see growth as a company. That's where we see maturation as a company. When we start to embrace different perspectives and different views on what's going on in the world or what's going on in specific vertical, you know, we all come with different perspective.

On those things and having a strong healthy mix and a diverse leadership team kind of starts to build the foundation and culture down through the rest of the company that this is what our company is going to look like. We're going to have a diverse leadership team. We're going to have diverse sales teams. We're going to have diverse customer success teams, right? It's not kind of a 1 size fits all organization, so I absolutely love that and I think most people that have had some form of success struggle with impostor syndrome. So I think if the companies made that a regular part of their on boarding, it might be something that wasn't maybe so taboo to talk about.

Right, I think if we brought it forward, so that's awesome. UM, final thing I want to talk about, which probably is one of the I think one of the most important things. I want your perspective on Cynthia is microaggressions.

Greg Reffner

You know, I I look at probably a really bad example. But like Glengarry Glen Ross, famous sales, maybe there's some aggression or negative tone associated with kind of those sales managers and the tactics they use, and it seems to be prevalent with largely male driven Sales teams and you know, I think getting rid of microaggressions is something that I don't know if we'll be able to do, but I'm really curious. Kind of what your perspective on you know sales leaders. What they can do to help squash microaggressions along the way? Like how do we identify these? Call these out and really stop them from becoming a problem that lead to some of the things that we've talked about the past 20 minutes.

With our women on our sales teams that tend to kind of maybe push them out or maybe make them not speak up. So I love your perspective on that.

Cynthia Barnes

Microaggressions are a huge barrier for women in sales and underrepresented populations, and I'll give you a couple of examples of microaggressions that happen in day-to-day life. The first one would be, let's say you have an Indian doctor and someone who is not of Indian descent sees the Indian doctor and says you've accomplished so much. I'll bet your people are proud.

That's a form of micro aggression.

If a woman walks, she's a Latina woman is walking home and she gets stopped by the police and they say, hey, we've had a couple of break-ins. Do you live here? That's a form of micro aggression. If two women are in line and one of them orders a burger and the other one says to her, Are you sure that that burger is a good choice? Those are all forms of microaggressions that happen on a day-to-day basis. No one is immune to them. Unfortunately, we don't know how to identify a microaggression because it's such a common thing. We know that it feels icky, but on the average day a woman will go through 30 to 40 microaggressions against her.

And not even know that they're being hurled at her. It just feels off, and at the end of the day, she's got to do some self-soothing. Whether it's taking a bath, talking to a loved one, grabbing a glass of wine, Olivia Pope in her feelings with popcorn and red wine, we've got to do all these things because it's like 1000 cuts every single day. And then the next day we have to go back and endure it again.

What if we learned, first of all, what is a microaggression? How do I deal with it?

And how do I help others identify them to kind of like if I see something, say something, it takes a village of people to recognize you know what? That wasn't cool, and the biggest microaggression that women in sales face in the workforce Is talking to someone saying you know what? I don't like the way the manager did XYZ or said XYZ and someone will respond? You know what? That's just the way he is.

That is huge. That is so disrespectful because we have to remember that an individual's feelings are their facts.

If they are off, put by someone that said something you don't have the right to come back and say that's just how they are. That totally negates the fact that that person had an emotional response, so we've got to do some training. Greg, we've got to help people, men and women identify what is a microaggression. Are you guilty of delivering microaggressions, how do you stop it? And then how do you help someone else see it so that she doesn't go through a life of being affected by microaggressions?

Greg Reffner

Yeah, so the last kind of two topics here said yeah, I mean, it seems like training and education around impostor syndrome. Training and education or microaggressions I bet you the vast majority of sales leaders people don't even know when they're when they're using a microaggression or they don't even recognize when one being used against him. It's kind of just become the, I don't want to say the accepted Norm, but kind of has just become the way things are and we have an opportunity to change that and so it goes back to see something, say something and more education. So from an organizational level you know what are we doing to educate people on the words we're using and how people could feel when those words are used against them, and ultimately, what does that mean for us as an organization? Are we able to retain the right people? If we continue to allow this behavior to start, probably not because they're not going to want to be a part of that anymore, and it's everyone's responsibility to kind of squash those things before they before they become a real problem.

Cynthia Barnes

Right?

Greg Reffner

So cool, well Cynthia, I have taken a lot of things away from our call today. One, I think that really stood out to me. It's something that I never even thought of is just having the same type of career progression for everybody. You know, let's focus on the same trainings, the same tactics, the same goals for progressing your career and making them objective, not subjective. Where if you're a female, you're going to focus on this. Your Male you're going to focus on this. No best person for the role gets the job. And here's the criteria for the job, right?

The second one is something that I've never heard before, and I'm definitely going to keep in top. My mind is the difference between inclusion and equity is a sense of belonging. So what are we doing to help our females and our women and our sales teams feel like they belong within an organization? How are we getting them to speak up and really participate in company? Wide decisions making them feel empowered to do so.

And then finally kind of going back to our last couple topics really, as part of employee onboarding. Should we start thinking about training and education around impostor syndrome and microaggressions and how to identify them? How to deal with them? What's the escalation path if they're not dealt with on time and as an organization?

How do we build an environment where everyone kind of holds each other responsible?

Or these things and having to build everybody up to avoid these things. So I really appreciate that. And I think our listeners are going to take away some really key things that they can maybe start to think about within their organization. So this has been super awesome. I appreciate it.

Cynthia Barnes

My pleasure, my pleasure.

Greg Reffner

So if any of our listeners want to get in touch with you, Cynthia or learn more about the National Associated Association of Women sales professionals, what's the best way to do so?

Cynthia Barnes

You can find me on [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/in/cynthiabarnes/) and you can learn more about at https://nawsp.org.

Greg Reffner

Perfect awesome, well thank you again for your time Cynthia. It's been a pleasure having you on our podcast and keep a keep empowering those women to kick some \*\*\* I'm excited with what you're doing.

Cynthia Barnes

Thank you so much for having me the pleasure's been all mine.

Greg Reffner

Goodbye!