**Under Everyone’s Hard Shell is Someone Who Wants to be Appreciated**

By Karla Robertson, The Executive’s NeuroCoach™

Yes, we've all had them. The nasty, bullying, foul-mouthed, clueless, defensive, all-knowing, narcissistic, alpha-male or -female boss. They were on their best behavior during the interview and you probably didn't ask the key questions that might have unearthed their true "Mr./Ms. Hyde" personality. You accepted the job and now you are in some kind of Hell. It almost feels like you should get "combat pay" just for getting through a week.

I had to work with one of these types once upon a time in my career...actually several times, but I'm thinking of one in particular. He was a senior level person, not my boss in this case, who was hired to assess risk and put in charge of making decisions that affected my clients' business. His chosen approach was to focus on and look for what was wrong in a transaction and how he could find what he KNEW was fraudulent in each case. By God, he was going to find it because, as he explained to me, we salespeople “were all liars who didn't care about quality and threw s--- over the wall and expected it to be done.” Wow...I felt soooo appreciated and respected since I was one of the aforementioned salespeople.

Well, it didn't take long for him to level his gun sights at one of my cases and fire off the first round of why this deal would not be done based on what he was sure was a pack of lies on the application. While he wasn't my boss, he still had a direct impact on my business and client base. So, I had four choices and these are the 4 choices any of us has no matter what we are facing in life that we don't like:

* Try to change the situation
* Find a way to cope with the situation
* Shift the way you think about the situation
* Leave the situation

While some of these are intertwined, that's it. These are your choices. What to do…what to do?

I chose a combo platter of 1, 2 & 3. I decided he wasn't going away anytime soon and neither was I. So, I needed to take another snapshot of the situation and of this individual. I recalled this quote by Dostoyevsky: "Nothing is easier than to denounce the evil-doer; Nothing is more difficult than to understand him." So, my way of coping was to think differently about him and take a shot at understanding where his thinking was coming from that was driving his behavior and approach. So, I made an appointment to meet with him.

At our first meeting in his office, he initially was pushed back from his desk, leaning back in his chair with one leg crossed over his other leg so his ankle was resting on his knee, and his hands were clasped behind his head with his elbows winged out. (a power pose) Yeah, this was a clear status play. Talking silent note of this behavior, I proceeded to explain that I was there to learn from him and understand where his stance and perspective were coming from. Perhaps I would learn something that would shift my sales approach and help me have more in-depth dialog with my clients. He was, at first, wary but then began to share and I began to listen and ask questions. I came to understand him. Then came the pivot point: he began asking me questions about my background, approach, thoughts, etc. and he came to understand me. The power pose turned into a leaning in and moving up to the desk, hands on the desk.

To make a somewhat long story short, we ended up forging a very respectful and productive relationship and learned from each other in the process. I took into the field what I learned from him which was powerfully helpful and he also began to shift his perspective to make deals happen instead of trying to find what was wrong with them. In other words, we began to trust each other and work with each other. This trust had a ripple effect to the rest of the sales force and things began to turn around. We became each other's trusted colleague.

Sometimes, what difficult people really need is to be heard and understood...you know...just like you and me.