

Do I have to be OVERWEIGHT.....to be an effective CEO?

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If you have a bottled water next to you as you're reading this post please pick it up I'd like to make a toast.....here's to you and **GOOD HEALTH!**

First, before anyone thinks this is going to be a post to either degrade or demean those that are overweight that will NOT be my intention.....however I will be stressing repeatedly the importance having good health.

My mother teased me some time ago (she will say she doesn't remember this) "Andre', you'll never make it to a CEO.....because you're way too skinny and people will think that's your priority (WOW!!!). Now don't get me wrong my mother use to tell me all the time how I'll be the 1st black president, so while her confidence in me was a little grandiose this latest statement to me was a little surprising. It wasn't really so much she thought I was too skinny to be a CEO, but the fact that I would be perceived as someone more focused on appearance rather than being a CEO. If you can imagine a person who basically analyzes wet paint on a wall, then you can imagine my mind racing when she broke that thinking down to me (I analyze EVERYTHING!). Is this really true? You can be too fit for a leadership position? Now, all the reports out there say to the contrary that people do want and expect their leaders to be fit because it's a sign of personal discipline. Here's a quote from Leslie Kwoh of CEO.com:

"Being fit matters."

"New research suggests that a few extra pounds or a slightly larger waistline affects an executive's perceived leadership ability as well as stamina on the job. While marathon training and predawn workouts aren't explicitly part of a senior manager's job description, leadership experts and executive recruiters say that staying trim is now virtually required for anyone on track for the corner office. Because the demands of leadership can be quite strenuous, the physical aspects are just as important as everything else," says Sharon McDowell-Larsen, an exercise physiologist who runs an executive-fitness program for the nonprofit Center for Creative Leadership.

On the other hand because there's always another side to this "Buffet", here's a quote from Lisa Quast contributor to Forbes Magazine:

*"The research study, co-authored by Mark Roehling, Michigan State University professor, and Patricia Roehling, professor of psychology at Hope College in Holland, Michigan, found that only 5 percent of male and female CEOs at top U.S. companies were obese with a body mass index (BMI) over 30. This is much lower than the U.S. average percentage of obese men and women, which is currently at 36% (men) and 38% (women) for the same age group. **However, the most shocking study finding was***



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that “between 45 percent and 61 percent of top male CEOs are overweight (BMI between 25 and 29)” but “only 5 percent – 22 percent of top female CEOs were overweight.” Stated the researchers, “This reflects a greater tolerance and possibly even a preference for a larger size among men but a smaller size among women.”

Uh oh, so let me get this correct if we had to make a decision on who we would accept as overweight that choice would be in favor of men NOT women? Notice the title to this post doesn't clarify overweight “Men” or “Women” CEO's....it just states “CEO”. The fact that I placed myself in that category by providing you my mother's opinion on what the perception of a skinny CEO might garner, perhaps we have something a bit more at play here. I think it's true, as a society we are more accepting of overweight CEO's who are men as opposed to women and that of course opens up a whole new can of “Organic Garbanzo Beans” in the gender issues of leadership....and I'm NOT opening that can. What my mother said to me however I just can't dismiss, although in every report I find more and more people are championing the fit CEO. The New Jersey Governor Chris Christie has taken a great deal of criticism about his weight to the point that there are some people who think he wouldn't last a full term as President because of his weight. Living just on the outskirts of Pennsylvania right up close to New Jersey I can tell you there are also people who feel that they can relate to Governor Christie because of his weight.....”He seems like a real guy”. We've also of course heard the skinny jokes about President Obama, the caricatures of a big head/skinny body are all over the internet.

So what's the answer? Do I have to be **OVERWEIGHT**.....to be an effective CEO? My answer personally is **ABSOLUTELY NOT**, nor would I make that unhealthy sacrifice to be a CEO. Appearance is **NOT** everything but what's inside you is, and if high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes works for you in your quest to be a CEO....then by all means enjoy that **“Krispy Kreme Bacon Cheeseburger”**

