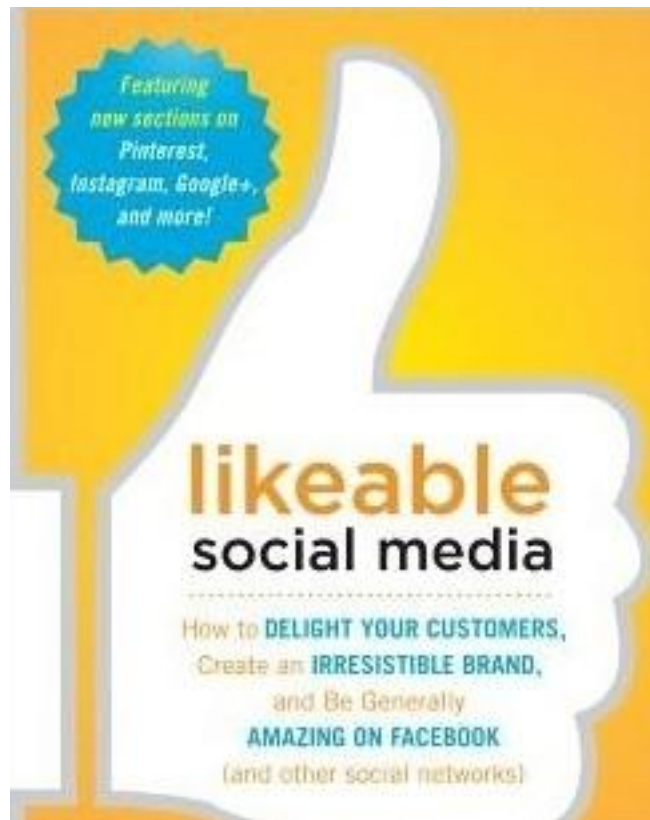


## Likeability an Issue?

Carrie Kerpen discusses the issue in Forbes:

I care more than just a little bit about likability in business. In fact, I strongly believe that if a business doesn't have likeable products, services, or business practices, this will be reflected in the (increasingly public) customer feedback and, ultimately, the viability of the company. In the end, businesses that can figure out how to be likeable, even when facing challenging times, will win.



But is the same true of people in business—specifically, women? In Sheryl Sandberg's book, *Lean*

*In*, she discusses how “success and likability are positively correlated for men and negatively correlated for women.” The higher on the corporate ladder a woman climbs, the less likeable she is perceived to be. In the case of a man, the opposite holds true. Sandberg presents a massive amount of data to support this fact. So massive, in fact, that when anyone attempts to compile data in order to prove a case to the contrary, her research team will come and put them right in their place, calling their conclusion “indefensible.”

It’s almost as if you are a woman in business who considers herself “likeable,” (or wants to be) you are an anti-feminist and don’t understand the plight of our gender today. Women in business shouldn’t feel bad about wanting to be liked. Success and likeability aren’t mutually exclusive—you can (and should) strive for both.

Regardless of your gender, being likeable doesn’t hinder success—in fact, it will get you far further in your career than the opposite. Here’s why:

**People want to work with (and for) likeable people:** [Psychology Today](#) has a great list of the most common reasons why people despise their bosses. Characteristics of terrible bosses include inauthenticity or dishonesty, and punishing first and asking questions later. Conversely, some qualities listed for [best bosses](#) are honesty and the ability to communicate well. As the leader of a company, you

are directly or indirectly managing many people—and they work harder for you when they like you.

**Tough decisions come easier from someone you like and trust:** In 2008, Tony Hsieh was forced to lay off 8% of his workforce. Instead of hiding behind the decision, Tony was public about it, [blogging and tweeting](#), and discussed the rationale for what was happening. As a leader, you are faced with tough decisions every day. But when you are transparent about those decisions, you act as a leader that people respect, trust, and yes, even like.

**It all started with being likeable:** If you are at the top of an organization (that you didn't start yourself), chances are, you got there because someone took a chance on you. Someone, early in your career, decided to invest in you and grow you. They likely did that because you were talented, or smart, or even fierce—but rest assured, they also found you likeable. People don't invest in those they don't like. They may continue to employ them because they produce results, but if someone is going to invest the time and effort into growing and mentoring you, they have to like you. I maintain that you wouldn't be where you are today if you weren't the least bit likeable.

As women in business, we are faced daily with media that tells us what to do to succeed: Be likeable! No, be ruthless and stoic! The reality is that if you embrace the characteristics of great leadership—if you listen, if you are trustworthy, if you communicate well, if you

have vision—then whether you realize it or not, you are, in fact, likeable.