

In my experience it is a unique situation when a former store manager is given the opportunity to offer up his thoughts on someone who had been president of the company they both served. The fact this opportunity has been given to me says much about Craig Womack and the relationship of trust and respect he fosters with those who have reported to him. I was with The Sharper Image from 1986 to early 2008 and for much of that time I had the privilege of working with Craig. My initial impression was that he had impressive communication skills. Persuasive and yet direct, precisely worded and carefully modulated to fit both situation and audience. This impression was confirmed for me many times over and along with it I came to regard him as a person of keen intelligence, ready wit and sound judgment. Forward thinking and yet practical in the best sense of the word, Craig was, for many of us, the steady, clear-eyed man at the helm, the one we could trust to keep us safe when others had turned our company into uncharted waters.

But perhaps the one situation that for me stands out the most during the time we both were at The Sharper Image was the time Craig and I were the only ones in an elevator taking us to the top floor of the Westin St. Francis hotel, on our way to a company gathering. I ventured to bring up the subject of what I felt was a failing experiment in extended hours at my store. Other members of upper management I had tried to discuss this with had essentially cut me off, unwilling to hear what I had to say. Craig asked me what I felt was the best thing for my store and the company and then he listened. A few questions later he reached a decision that helped my store regain some of the profitability it had lost during the past several months.

It made a tremendous difference to know that the man in whom I placed so much trust also trusted me. It is a leadership trait I have tried to emulate ever since.

Best,  
Alan Hutcheson  
The Container Store  
Scottsdale, Arizona