

Richard W. Mueller
Vice President Planning, Allocation and Replenishment
The Sports Authority
Available at 720.891.5907

In thinking of Craig and what he means to me in business, career and personal relationships, I am presenting some of the key strengths and traits that I believe he entails and demonstrates in his life.

First, a brief overview of our working relationship while with The Sharper Image. During a span that was over 10 years from 1986 to 1997 we worked together. Craig as President and COO; my positions ranged from District Manager, Regional Manager and VP of Merchandise Planning. I reported directly to him for 7 years during that time period. When Craig joined the company he brought strong leadership and immediate impact and success to an organization that was in much need of it due to its rapid expansion and unique culture. Along with many others I saw both professional and personal growth during that time period. He was, without a doubt, a mentor to me.

His strengths (to me) are outlined below:

- Goals. He commands both the understanding of the top down and bottoms up needs of the business. This is relative to insure that the company establishes appropriate “big”, “long term” goals along with the need of the detail infrastructure to achieve the goals. His has a very clear strength in establishing these goals.
- Communication. Along with his ability in establishing very clear goals for sales, growth, expense control and operations comes the need for communication and delivering them to the company. With Craig, no one was uncertain about the company goals or their individual part in them and their responsibility to achieve them. And the goals worked!
- Training. In order for people to be successful they must have the necessary skill set for their function. With the right people in place, he insured that training was developed, implemented and monitored for all associates to have a chance for success. This inevitably allows for a company’s success.
- Growth of People. When a foundation of clear goals, training and commitment to excellence is in place, then people can grow. One of the most proud statistics with The Sharper Image was the internal promotion rate of corporate and store management positions; it was 80%.
- Leadership. This is the greatest of his attributes. He has a presence with the people that he works with. His knowledge of the business establishes trust. His ability to effectively deliver the needed message keeps an organization moving and breeds success. He recognizes when flexibility is needed to achieve goals and he has the ability to manage complex operations over many areas.

There are clearly many more things that I could say about Craig and his strengths, to me the ones outlined above are the most important that I have learned from him. I do count him as both a professional and personal friend. He has never hesitated to be supportive, yet challenging in our relationship with the intent to help improve my life. Many of my own leadership traits and direction have been developed from my time working with him and seeing the successes that come from them.

References do not come readily for me, but I am delighted to be able to give one for Craig. I am available for a direct conversation upon request.

Sincerely

Richard W. Mueller