

# Essentials For C-Suite Selling

A BOARDROOM INSIDERS EBOOK FOR SALES AND MARKETING PROS

**BOARDROOM INSIDERS** 

## **Table of Contents**

# C-LEVEL EXECUTIVE INTELLIGENCE AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

The ONLY business intelligence tool designed exclusively for C-Suite sales, marketing, and recruiting.

#### Table of Contents

The C-Suite: Why You Need To Be There	3
Executive Insight Is Critical	5
It Takes More Than Just LinkedIn	6
Research Essentials For C-Suite Selling	8
The Do's and Don'ts of C-Level Engagement	10
How to Manage Your Fear in the C-Suite	11
Five Tips For More Effective C-Level Events	12
What Is An Executive Profile?	15
Fortune 500 Executive Profile	15
The Editorial Process	32
About Boardroom Insiders	33

## The C-Suite: Why You Need To Be There



Most sales leaders aspire for all of their key account managers to have relationships in the C-suite.

Whether or not they control the purse strings, CXOs are important influencers. Making them aware of how your company is helping drive their business forward is a nobrainer. When budgets get cut, if you have not demonstrated how your offer lines up with their priorities, you could find your business in jeopardy.

Plus, even with all the technology and tools that salespeople have at their disposal, sales is still about trust. Building and nurturing relationships at the highest level within your key accounts gives you an edge over the competition that will be hard to replicate.



*"When I look at our largest transactions...every transaction was done with the CEO... that's why we're really selling more enterprise software than Oracle or SAP."* 

Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff on the company's "all time high" number of large, enterprise deals.

## The C-Suite: Why You Need To Be There

But the truth is, only a small percentage of top performers have mastered the art of C-suite engagement. Time and again, sales leaders say that the ability to establish trust with executive-level customers is one of the key attributes that separate average salespeople ("B performers") from high-performing sales pros ("A performers"). The difference between the two can be summed up as follows:

<b>A Performer:</b> Someone C-Level Executives Welcome	<b>B Performer:</b> Someone C-Level Executives Avoid
• Prepared: high sales readiness and confidence	<ul> <li>Unprepared: low sales readiness and confidence</li> </ul>
<ul> <li>High business acumen: can have a business conversation</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Low business acumen: speaks like a product jockey</li> </ul>
<ul> <li>Confident they are selling to the right person</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>HOPES they are selling to the right person</li> </ul>
• Comes off as a knowledgable peer to consult with	<ul> <li>Comes off as a pushy salesperson</li> </ul>
Sells larger, more holistic solutions	<ul> <li>Plugs holes with small, one-off product sales</li> </ul>
<ul> <li>Speaks the customer's company language</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Speaks about their own company nonstop</li> </ul>
Strong customer loyalty	<ul> <li>No customer loyalty</li> </ul>
<ul> <li>Strong and clear competitive advantage</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>No competitive advantage</li> </ul>
Shorter sales cycle	• Longer sales cycle

#### **Executive Insight Is Critical**

Doing your homework on your customers is always the first step to relationship building — especially when approaching executive decision makers. One of the most successful business people of all time, Warren Buffett, takes a very simple and disciplined approach to dealmaking.

According to Tom Searcy's book, "How to Close a Deal Like Warren Buffett--Lessons from the World's Greatest Dealmaker," Buffett uses basic research and insight to "sell" his deals, often winning out over competitors offering better terms.

#### For Buffett, it all comes down to this:

**Profile Your Buyers** — We sell to people — and people care irrational for different reasons. It's not enough to know the facts, have the best ROI or most effective solution. If you do not understand the individual motivators of all of the members of the buyer's group, he says, you are flying without the right instruments.

**Do your homework** — When Warren takes a meeting, he doesn't ask about industry, market, competitors or advantages. He already knows them. He believes asking these questions demonstrates a lack of preparation.

Buffett thinks about all the angles, including whom —not just what — he is selling.



"When sellers call on me, I want to know that they're listening, that they have a point of view, and to hear some recommendations and *ideas in the context of my* business. If they don't relate it to me, they've lost credibility and set their sales cycle back...Of course, I'm going to have looked at as much information as I can get <u>my hands on ... If y</u>ou want to engage with a customer, what better way than to show them you're interested in their business?"

James (Jim) Steele President & Chief Revenue Officer Yext, Inc.

## It Takes More Than LinkedIn

#### We love LinkedIn and believe it to be an essential business tool.

However, if you are an enterprise sales or marketing pro focused on C suite selling, LinkedIn is not a silver bullet. It simply does not provide the insight required to engage a Fortune 500 key decision maker.

In fact, LinkedIn can give you a false sense of security going into important meetings. You think you have done your due diligence by looking at a few LinkedIn profiles, but halfway through the meeting it can become painfully apparent that you don't know what you don't know.



#### Here are a few more important things that LinkedIn profiles don't always tell you:

What the executives company or division does. While some people include this information in their profiles, many do not.

**Functional Responsibilities.** Many people just include their titles without saying what they are actually responsible for. So if you are looking for the person responsible for digitization how do you know you have the right person? A title doesn't always tell the story.

#### It Takes More Than LinkedIn

**Personal attributes, interests, and passions.** While some executives post their hobbies and interests, most do not.

**The CXO's current strategy/ objectives/ priorities:** Has the company announced a sweeping cost-cutting initiative? Are they consolidating vendors? Do they have a blank check for cyber security? These are three examples of real initiatives at real companies. How helpful would it be to know these things going into a meeting? And how dangerous would it be to go in not knowing these things?

**What the person has said.** Senior executives give interviews and some participate in quarterly earnings calls. Do you know what they are talking about? There is no better way to get an executive's attention than to use his own words. This shows not only that you have done your homework, it demonstrates a level of interest and due diligence that most vendors lack. Are you going to get this from a LinkedIn profile?

**Current operating environment:** Has Has there been an executive shakeup? A reorg? Layoffs? An IPO? A product recall? A merger? A new boss who plans to shake things up? All of these things could impact your deal, so you should know about

We love LinkedIn. But it's just a starting point. If you really want to make a favorable impression with deep insight into an executive's priorities, challenges, and interests, you'll need more than LinkedIn.

While LinkedIn tells you who to call on, we tell you what they want to talk about.

While LinkedIn is one of the dozens of sources we use to prepare Boardroom Insiders Executive Profiles, we research everything above that LinkedIn is missing.

LinkedIn is an essential tool, but the profiles are unpredictable, limited in strategic insight, and biased. Boardroom Insiders is rich with strategic insight, unbiased, and provides the full professional story of the key decision maker you are calling on.

#### Top sales pros unanimously agree that customer intelligence is a critical element of their sales reps.

But faced with a digital avalanche of info and so little time to consume it, how much is the right amount? Too little (e.g., a quick glance at the company's website) and you feel unprepared. Too much (an inch thick stack of reports and articles) and you're headed down the proverbial rabbit hole--and there goes your weekend.

Here's a simple formula that came out of speaking with hundreds of enterprise sales pros over the past several years. These top performers say they want to know three things when preparing for an important sales call--a formula we like to call "The Funnel:"



**Industry Intelligence:** What are the main issues in the customers industry today?

**Company Intelligence:** How are these issues impacting this particular customer — and how is the customer responding?

**Executive Intelligence:** What are the areas of focus for the executive(s)you are targeting (e.g. CIO, COO, CFO)? How are they driving the company strategy?

Top sales pros tell us they leverage company-provided tools such as Factiva, Hoover's, OneSource and others to get their industry and company intelligence.

But when it comes to executive intelligence, they typically gather their own information through Google searches--and sometimes they don't get to it at all.

For "A" performers, knowing the priorities of a decision maker is a must-have. And making an executive sales call without knowing their careabouts, likes and dislikes can be like walking into a minefield. We've heard horror stories: for example, a jargonspouting sales rep fumbled his way through a meeting with a leading technology executive who had repeatedly told the industry press how much she hates jargon. Highly irritated with his approach, she cut the meeting short. Ouch!

We created Boardroom Insiders to prevent this from happening. We help you avoid sales gaffes by filling the critical executive intelligence gap. Companies like DXC Technology, DellEMC, VMware, Citrix, CA Technologies, Box Inc., Medallia, and Atos, hire us to provide information that helps them close bigger deals, faster.

Whether you do your own homework or get it from us, understanding the careabouts of the people to whom you are selling is a no-brainer.

## The Do's and Don'ts Of C-Level Engagement

The **FIRST** thing to remember if you are trying to engage a C-Level executive is that they are unimaginably busy. They are also surrounded by people (gatekeepers, in sales-speak) whose sole function is to filter out any "noise" unrelated to the executive's top business priorities.

The **SECOND** thing to remember is that you are "noise" until you prove otherwise.

Following these simple do's and don'ts will help you rise above the noise and demonstrate worthiness, increasing your chances of successfully getting the attention of a C-Level executive.

Do	Don't
<b>Be Relevant and Specific.</b> Cite on thing about this person's business that you can help them with. This shows you care enough to have done your homework.	<b>Give a Generic Product Pitch.</b> As enamored as you may be with what you are selling, no one cares until you have made it relevant to <i>them</i> .
<b>Be Brief.</b> Say what you have to say in as few, well-crafted words as possible. Pique their interest and leave them wanting more, not less.	<b>Send a Long Email.</b> We live in a mobile era. If someone has to scroll endlessly through your email on their phone, you have lost them.
<b>Be Authentic.</b> Communicate in your own true voice, using simple, jargon-free language.	<b>Use Cheap Tactics.</b> Don't try to trick them with "face" personalization like a subject line that says you are "following up on our conversation" that never happened.
<b>Be Generous.</b> Offer to share one specific thing that they would find valuable, such as how another customer solved a problem similar to one they are facing.	<b>Be Arrogant.</b> Don't brag about your product/ business/ service — if you can't connect it to their business, they don't care.
<b>Be Clear.</b> Deliver a simple and clear call-to- action that does not require too much of their time; a 10-minute phone conversation, permission to send more information, or a referral to one of their lieutenants.	Ask For Too Much. Asking for a one-hour, in-person meeting in the first communication is too much, given the demands on a C-Level executive's time. Better to show them your value, then let them set the pace.

## How to Manage Your Fear in the C-Suite

We've all been there. You have a big opportunity on the table with a major account. You know that if only you could get the C-Level executive's endorsement, you could seal the deal.

Then the call comes: The executive has agreed to meet with you.

That's when the fear sets in. You've been waiting months to get this meeting but now every time you think about it, you get a queasy feeling in your gut. If you are like most of us, this fear comes from three places. See if you recognize this internal dialogue:



**Lack of Knowledge:** Who is this person? What do they care about? Why did they agree to meet with me? What are they expecting from me?

2 Lack of Confidence: This is intimidating! My boss expects me to "have a business conversation" but I don't feel prepared. How can I connect the dots between this person and what I am selling?

3

**This is Your Only Shot:** This is a rare opportunity. If I don't immediately demonstrate value, the meeting could get cut short — and I won't get a second chance. The fate of the account rests on this one meeting!



## Five Tips for More Effective C-Level Events



#### In this day in age, face-to-face meetings are becoming a rarity.

This can be an obstacle to building loyalty and relationships with important customers. Companies often use events--such as industry trade shows, sports sponsorships, and user conferences--to get face-to-face with their biggest accounts. Given the cost of sponsorships and events, it is important to make the most of these opportunities.

A small investment in executive insight can go a long way in maximizing return on event investments. Knowing something about your customers before they arrive--and engaging them before they get to the event--speeds up the "ice breaking" and helps you get down to business faster.

With this in mind, we offer five tips for using executive insight to make your customer events more effective.

#### Five Tips for More Effective C-Level Events

**Get the right people to attend your event** You can avoid the last minute "get butts in seats" scramble by proactively making a wish list of the top companies — and individuals — you want at your event. Write them a personal email well in advance that directly connects your event with something they care about.

Example: "I recently read that you were looking to build a private cloud this year. We will have several customers there presenting their private cloud stories, a few of whom are from your industry..."



Use insight on desired attendees to drive content strategy and speaker selection. Once you know who you want at the event (see Tip 1, above), research what they care about and who they know. Let this insight guide your topics and speaker selection.

Example: One customer learned that their target attendees (CIOs) were struggling with how to work effectively with CMOs. They used our database to find one executive who had held both CIO and CMO roles at Fortune 100 companies--the executive equivalent of a needle in a haystack! He was the perfect person to deliver their event keynote.

3

**Tell customers what they have in common:** One of the biggest reasons people go to events is to network with their peers. If you can tell them who else is in the room and what they have in common, you help support and facilitate networking, which attendees appreciate.

Example: During their opening keynote, one customer showed graphics and statistics about the audience in the room--where they come from, top colleges attended, top hobbies, top concerns, and initiatives, etc. as well as key quotes and photos of select attendees. They collected the information from our profile database as well as from a pre-event survey.

4

**Use insight for customer matchmaking:** Use specific insight to help set up meetings between customers who share similar initiatives and challenges. This will help establish you as a credible, valuable partner who understands their business--and it will give them more incentive to attend your event.

## Five Tips for More Effective C-Level Events



Example: "I know you are in the midst of a major customer service initiative and I thought you might benefit from a meeting on-site with Customer X, who has some interesting experience in this area..."

5

**Create a customized, VIP experience for key accounts:** Huge industry trade shows put a lot of demands on an executive's time. Avoid the temptation to push your customers to every single activity your company is doing; instead, learn about what they are focused on and design a thoughtful, relevant, customized experience.

Example: One customer offers a VIP booth tour for key accounts at all of their most important industry trade shows. Sometimes they even do it during off hours when no one else is in the booth so they can have customized digital signage, special presentations, demos, executive meetings, and refreshments.

### What is an Executive Profile?

An executive profile is a document that includes 6-8 hours of research performed by experienced researchers uncovering decision maker's:

- Personal Attributes and Interests
- Business Focus Issues
- Business Challenges
- Biographical Highlights
- Board and Organizational Memberships
- Social Media Links

*The Boardroom Insiders database contains over 16,000 profiles on VP's and C-Level executives.* 



#### Andrea Riley

CMO, Ally Financial Inc. (Formerly known as GMAC Financial Services)

#### **Executive Summary**

Andrea Riley serves as the Chief Marketing Officer for Ally Financial Inc., a leading automotive financial services once owned by General Motors and known as GMAC. She joined the Detroit-based firm in February 2006 and was named to her present position in 2015. As CMO, Riley is responsible for overseeing the Company's marketing and advertising strategies and ensuring they support the overall objectives of the organization. She is also responsible for market research initiatives and brand management. Before joining Ally Financial, Riley spent 20 years at Campbell Ewald Advertising, which she joined fresh out of college in 1988. She held various positions with the integrated marketing communications

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#### Executive Summary

What makes this person unique?

## **Executive Profile**

agency, with offices in Detroit, Los Angeles and New York. She led the agency's Chevrolet account, the youngest Account Director in the 90year history of the account. She launched the massive American

Revolution campaign and support months.

**Personal Attributes and Interests** 

Personal Attributes and Interests

Hobbies, Likes/ Dislikes, Management Style, Personal Anecdotes, and Quotes

- She graduated from the Stevenson High School in 1983.
- Riley played four years of varsity soccer while at Michigan State University.
- She is active in the advertising and marketing community and was inducted into the AAF Advertising Hall of Achievement in 2006 for extraordinary accomplishments for those under 40.
- She was named one of the Top Women in Remarketing by Auto Remarketing Magazine.
- She was named to Forbes' list of the "50 Most Influential CMOs" in 2014 and again in 2015.
- In November 2015, she was selected by Automotive News as one of the "100 Leading Women in the North American Auto Industry."
- She is active with the Detroit Chapter of the Women's Leadership Network at Ally Financial and holds a seat on the American Financial Services Association (AFSA) Marketing Committee.
- Her favorite quotes are "You can sleep when you die" and "Good is the enemy of great."
- Riley, who is Greek, has two sons and is very close to her family. "I have a big extended family. We're very loud and like to eat a lot of good food," she said.
- During an interview with Automotive News, when asked what attracted her to the auto industry, Riley said, "I've always wanted to work in the auto industry. I've loved the car culture growing up in Detroit. I like working on big brands. The auto industry is a big brand kind of an industry. So it was a natural marriage of my love of cars and my love of working on a big, iconic, well-known brand."

- Speaking of her first automotive job and big break, she said, "In 1987, I worked at Campbell Ewald advertising... My first big break was when Campbell Ewald pulled me up into what was considered the big leagues, which was the national advertising account group for Chevy. But my biggest break was transitioning from the agency to the client side and coming to Ally. Having the opportunity to come here and help create the Ally brand and move the company from its captive roots to becoming a true marketplace competitor; to launching and helping build out Ally Bank; launching the brand, the brand standards, the guidelines, all the ways that we were going to create this brand from the ground up."
- The major challenge she faces in her career is "trying to balance a schedule at work that's extremely rigorous with being at the things that were meaningful to my children and to me and my family," she said.
  "I've always had the kind of job where I had to travel extensively. So trying to figure out what would become "normal" in our household with me being gone at least a couple of days a week."
- Ally people have been the biggest influence on her career, she said. "One is Tim Russi, president of auto finance for Ally Financial. He took me under his wing, taught me a lot about the auto finance part of the business, but he also taught me a lot about business — the art of making a deal, the rigor that's necessary to balance between spend and ROI. The second is my boss Di Morais, who is CEO of Ally Bank. She's always been a sounding board for me. She's just been somebody that I've been able to watch, and I admire her ability to have such an amazing command over her business while balancing having three kids and a husband and being a very involved mom. The third is Jeff Brown, who is CEO of Ally Financial. He has placed an amazing amount of trust in me and given me significant opportunity to create value in the short time he's been CEO at this company. He's also been great in terms of refocusing me on the importance of working hard but playing hard," she added.

- In order to encourage women to enter the auto industry, she said, "We need more awareness in general, not just among women but among millennials as well, of all the opportunities in the auto industry. In general, the media tends to focus on the same people in the automotive industry for all their sources of information, whether it's interviews or speaker roles at conventions or just reaching out to for a point of view, and it typically tends to be men. There needs to be a broader swath of subject-matter experts who are highlighted and who we're reaching out to as an industry that is much more inclusive of women and diversity so we can overcome the perception that the automotive industry is just an industry for men. Every convention you go to, it's the same seven speakers. Every time you pick up the newspaper, it's the same seven to 10 people that everyone is going to for a point of view. People think, "It's an industry for those people. It's not an industry for me."
- Commenting on her weekend activity, she said, "Taking the boat out. There's a calming effect of being on the water. It's always a bonus when I get off the water and get to drive my Porsche home really fast. It's a way to completely forget about everything, put your phone away and not think about work or anything else." When she was asked whether she is able to maintain friendship, she said, "I try to spend as much time as possible. You get to a certain time in your life and in your career, and you have to do serious time allocation.Your primary allocation is probably to work. My next allocation is to spend as much time as I can with my kids and being at their events. But I think it's very important to spend time with friends. I have a close group of girlfriends, many of whom are in the automotive industry. We all have high-pressure jobs, and it's just nice to get together and share war stories and laugh and feel like there are other people in it with you."
- About her one thing that most people don't know, she said, "I'm a worrier. I come across confident and direct in my point of view, and I am capable of dealing with conflict. But at the core of it, I really don't like drama and conflict. I worry about the way things are affecting

### **Executive Profile**

people or the way things will affect my family or the way decisions that I've made will affect our company or our business. I don't sleep through the night ever."

She said, "If I had it to do all over again, I'd ... have moved to New York and spent a couple of years working in a big town, doing the same thing but getting a different point of view. I got married right when I got out of college to my high school sweetheart. We never got out of Michigan. We lived in the town we grew up in. Fortunately, I've gotten to travel, so I've gotten to see a lot of the world. But I wish I had taken the opportunity to go away to a big city and just been on my own for a little while and really experience a different way of living and thinking and different points of view."

#### **Current Focus**

- **Company Snapshot:** Ally Financial Inc., prior to May 2010 known as GMAC Inc. (an acronym for General Motors Acceptance Corporation), is a bank holding company headquartered in Detroit. The company provides a range of financial services including auto financing, corporate financing, insurance, and online banking. Ally is one of the top auto lenders in the U.S. by volume. The company was founded in 1919 by General Motors Corporation as the General Motors Acceptance Corporation (GMAC) as a provider of financing to automotive customers. Over the following years, the business has expanded to include insurance, online banking, mortgage operations, and commercial finance. On May 15, 2009, GMAC's banking unit changed its name to Ally Bank. On May 10, 2010, GMAC Inc. announced that it rebranded itself as Ally Financial Inc. In April 2014, the Company became a public company via an initial public offering.
- **Primary Responsibilities:** As CMO, Riley is responsible for overseeing the Company's marketing and advertising strategies and ensuring they support the overall objectives of the organization. She is also responsible for market research initiatives and brand management.

#### Current Focus

What is top of mind for this person?

#### **Executive Profile**

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- The Ally Brand: "The brand is positioned around this idea of being a relentless ally for our customers," Riley told Siegel+Gale in a February 2017 interview. "We offer financial services products that are integral to our customer's lives and financial wellbeing. We empower our customers financially."
- Customer First Approach: According to a December 2017 American Banker article, as new competitors emerge, Ally is drilling down on its customer-first approach. When Ally Bank launched in 2008 there were few things like it - a digital-only bank that could deliver the same financial products as banks with branches. Fast forward to today and Ally-like banking services are more common. In order to compete with companies like Chase, Wells Fargo, PayPal and the many fintech startups, Ally is banking on its commitment to customer centricity that's been so deeply ingrained in its culture from the very beginning. "The big learning that has persisted over the last nine years is the need to drive everything we do based on our knowledge of customer needs, pain points, trends, getting ahead of them or staying right there with them," said Diane Morais, President of consumer and commercial banking products at Ally Bank. To do that Ally is focusing on growing some of its newer products in 2018 – Ally Invest, its wealth management offering and Ally Home, its direct to consumer mortgage offering — and doubling down on its investment in innovative technologies, according to Morais, who said the bank has an "advanced agenda" and is currently in conversations with fintech startups and participating in labs. Morais said Ally hasn't yet made any formal investments in new fintech companies, yet. The bank is more interested in delivering on its promise to solve consumer pain points and put their interests ahead of their need to innovate by launching the next new thing. Everything Ally has built or integrated into its banking offering is meant to address consumer pain points in banking, Morais said. "Financial services is a difficult category in which to create new products," Morais said. "There's not a lot of innovation that happens in

20

the product, the experience, the application." But while financial products can only be so innovative, Riley said marketing has changed more in the last year than it has changed in the entirety of her career. The power of who owns the brand has shifted from the marketer to consumers; the technology to allow consumers to reach the brand whenever and wherever they want is available — often on multiple screens at a time; and consumers' demand for more personalized and quicker experience is a pace that seems impossible to keep up with, Riley said. "That's where we focus in on: how we can affect most people at the best time with right messages, instead of chasing," she said.

- Accomplishments: Riley joined Ally Financial in 2008 and was charged with the rebrand development and deployment for the Company. The result was the award-winning launch of Ally. She has been instrumental in the development and launch of the Ally brand as well as the transformation of the auto business from a captive to a marketplace competitor. She oversees all brand, deposits, auto, social, research and cross-sell marketing. Ally's award-winning marketing work has been instrumental with Ally being named a "Top 25 Up and Coming Brand" and helping Ally quickly become a leading online bank and top auto finance company.
- Business Model: "We've got a pretty interesting business model because when we launched eight years ago, we made a decision that we would not have any brick-and-mortar outlets," Riley told Brand Channel in an August 2017 interview. "So we are 100 percent online. We took a bet that people were going to start to transact digitally, whether it was over a phone, a tablet or a laptop, and luckily that was the right bet. You see more and more of the financial services category scrambling to move to that digital orientation, but for Ally, it really is how our brand was born and how our brand continues to operate today."
- Brand Pillars: Riley says that "Do It Right" is "one of our brand pillars.

#### **Executive Profile**

It has been since we launched the brand eight years ago," she told Brand Channel in August 2017. "And our brand pillars are pretty simple. The first one is obsess over the customer. The second one is to tirelessly innovate. And the third one is do it right. We kind of had this "A-ha!" moment where we said let's adopt that mantra of "do it right" as the tagline as well. And we felt like it's a bold promise and it's something that a lot of other brands, especially in the financial services category, can't really go out and say. But to your point, you would have to be able to back it up if you go out and say something like "do it right" and you aren't putting the customer at the center of everything - it's a surefire way to make a blunder and have that blow up in your face. Well, there's a number of different things parts to this approach. One, with the exception of the TV, all the rest of the work, the online video, all of the print assets, all of our online assets, et cetera, do feature our own employees. We did an internal casting call, and people had to share their stories of how they're doing it right for our customers. And then we sat and we selected the 100 best, whether they were really small things to really big things on how people are doing right by our customers. And those are the people that ended up in the execution." She added, "The second thing that we've done internally is we spend a whole week doing what we called "Do It Right" week. We went on the road and talked to the employees about the importance of the campaign, the importance of living up to the promise, how we've pulled that through into the way that we think about the different benefits and human resource related things that we have. As well as how we pull that through every day into being a purpose-driven company and the importance of giving back to the communities in which we ork and live. Our CEO talks about brand as a weapon, and the only way you can have a strong brand is with that strong focus on making sure the associate base brings it to life."

• Empowering Customers: In an effort to empower customers, Riley told Siegel+Gale in a February 2017 interview, "We invest in tools that

#### **Executive Profile**

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make the financial process easier for customers. For example, we have 24/7 customer service. On our website, we list call wait times for our call centers. We have a tool on our website called the dejargonator. Financial terms can be hard for people to understand, so if you come across a term that's confusing, you can hover your mouse over it and we'll explain it in plain English."

- Do It Right Campaign: "There was a lot of success in the launch of the "Do It Right" campaign, it worked on a lot of levels," Riley told Brand Channel in an August 2017 interview. "One, it really started to establish Ally as a digital financial services company, broadening our product offerings and connecting the dots for consumers around all the new things that Ally was in the process of launching. Two, it really worked to help humanize our brand. That was something that we thought was really important. Our people, for us, are our key differentiator in the marketplace, because as a very customer-centric company, showing our people doing anything for the customer really starts to resonate and create an emotional connection. And third, it really continues our approach around clever wit and being disruptive in the marketplace. We've always done a lot of things to be disruptive with our advertising approach, and this continued on that path. So it's a refresh of those earlier ads with a new format, which is this idea that we'll do anything-seriously, anything-for you and your finances." The "Do It Right" campaign was Ally's first enterprise brand campaign and launched in September 2016 with a collection of punchy television and online video ads focused on customer centricity. The campaign helped to unify the Ally brand as the company expanded its product offerings. The campaign resulted in a 9 percent increase in brand awareness for the Company.
- Seriously Anything: In August 2017, the Company released the next series of ads in its Do It Right brand campaign, which focus on going the extra mile to help customers. The new series, called "Seriously Anything" includes five new online video and TV spots. Several ads

highlight Ally's newly launched products-including Ally CashBack Credit Card, Ally Home loans, and Ally Invest - while all reflect the Company's relentless focus on helping customers achieve financial wellbeing. "Nearly one year after the launch of 'Do It Right', we're taking our brand promise one step further with fresh ads that demonstrate that our team will do 'Seriously Anything' to help our customers," said Riley. "The new ads portray Ally associates going above and beyond the call of duty to support customers as they make important financial decisions, like buying homes, investing money and saving. All of the ads feature our signature humor and wit, but the underlying message is that we take serving customers and doing right by them extremely seriously." The new ad series includes one enterprise brand commercial and four product- specific commercials that highlight Ally's wide assortment of digital financial services including award- winning online banking products and new Ally Home loan offerings from Ally, online brokerage and wealth management from Ally Invest and the Ally CashBack Credit Card.

• Hardest Working Dollar: The Company launched its "Hardest Working Dollar" campaign in June 2017, circulating 7,500 \$1 bills that could be worth anywhere between \$100 to \$10,000, reported the Charlotte Business Journal. The dollar bills will be spent at convenience stores, coffee shops and gas stations, where cash is widely disseminated. This will introduce the dollar bills into circulation, where it will end up in the hands of consumers. "We're really trying to bring to life this idea of how Ally is very relentless about customers' financial well-being and as part of that, we've launched a series of what we call disruptor tactics," said Riley. "Those disruptor tactics are meant to go into the market every couple months with something new and different that entertains and engages consumers in a way that gets them to start to think about their financial well-being differently and really helps them start to think about a savings mindset." The goal of Ally's campaign is to bring in more customers while making consumers more

aware of spending habits. The company wants to encourage consumers to make healthier financial decisions by demonstrating that every dollar spent could be worth more in the future. This is especially true for millennials – a customer base that Ally wants to grow. "Campaigns like 'Hardest Working Dollar' are really aimed at bringing in new people that may not have considered the brand previously or don't know the brand and engaging them in a fun way," said Riley. She added that the Company has plans to launch another disruptor campaign in the fourth quarter.

- Simplicity: "We launched our brand amid the great recession seven years ago. When we launched, we said the world doesn't need another bank, it needs a better bank. Our ongoing promise is to solve customer pain points, many of which revolve around complexity in financial services sector. Simplicity is at the core of everything this brand was built on," Riley told Siegel+Gale in a February 2017 interview. "Creating simple experiences can be expensive. For example, when we launched many people expressed that they didn't like offshore call centers. So we made all our call centers domestic." She says the benefits of simplification have been exceptional. "The benefit has been tremendous growth in a short amount of time. We have over a million customers, \$62 billion in deposits in 7 years. Another significant benefit is our brand has become the hallmark for customer service. We like to say we created emotion in a category that was emotionless by delivering a simple, pain-free, intuitive experience to our customers.
- Keeping a Sense of Humor: "Clever wit has always been a big part of our brand personality, and it's allowed us to really be disruptive in the marketplace because it's not been an approach that many other financial services companies have taken, historically or even currently," Riley told Brand Channel in an August 2017 interview. "We're in a category that spends ferociously, and we really don't spend on those same levels, so we have to break through in unique ways. Humor is universal. I believe great humor appeals to everybody, whether you're

#### **Executive Profile**

#### BOARDROOM INSIDERS

really young or whether you're a little bit older or someplace in between. This idea of creating that emotional connection through the humor has always been something that's been part of our brand."

- **Streamlining:** "Our customers likely have accounts with multiple banks. You might have your checking account at a large bank, and your savings with us. We're also the largest auto lender in the country," Riley told Siegel+Gale in a February 2017 interview. "We've streamline processes. Instead of heavy governance and multiple layers of approvals, we've designed an efficient workflow whereby plans are set at the beginning of each year and people have the autonomy to move things forward. I also practice what I preach by maintaining my own work-life balance, reminding the team that life comes first and work second. Colleagues have the option to work from home."
- Focus in 2017: When asked by Forbes about what would command her attention in 2017, Riley replied, "For me, at Ally, our focus is on personalization of content creation, and that will command our attention and investment. That is, understanding, at a customer-level, personas, needs, wants and preferences and delivering them in a meaningful way through the channels they prefer to be communicated in. With the proliferation of marketing messaging, and the explosion of one-to-one capabilities from literally every digital and social media company as well as the explosion of mobile, it's critical we focus on omni-channel messaging that resonates and captures the attention of inundated consumers. On a separate note, an area I believe will command a lot of attention, but not largest investment, next year is virtual reality and the use of VR to bring to life our brands, new experiences and value propositions. The possibilities with VR are limitless and only hampered by low adoption rates of the product, but that will ramp [up] significantly with several entrants in the market and how the power of the tool is harnessed by balancing entertainment with information. This will be a fascinating medium for marketers to play with."

- Establishing Relationships: Ally is now a non-captive lender and competing for business accordingly, reported Wards Auto in 2016. "We felt it was important to establish a relationship with people on a more regular basis," says Riley, explaining the reasoning behind what's called the Ally Customer Touchpoint Experience. "As an independent in the marketplace, that's important for us to do." The program is an automated set of marketing tools, including digital versions, intended to connect with customers throughout the full cycle of their lease contract or auto loan. Ally has designed it so that dealers can join in with their marketing messages. "Basically, we've built out systematic touch points," Riley tells Wards Auto. "It is customer messaging at a regular cadence," says Riley. Those messages range from a dealer including information about "fun" things such as local entertainment events to a video walk-around showing a customer how to inspect a lease car for potential damage and wear and tear before turning it in. "We are providing them with services, information and deals they wouldn't necessarily get had we not been talking to them. We use everything from pure information to soft information."
- **Responsible Spending App:** The Company has been "testing an app called "Splurge Alert," which is targeted at helping consumers control their spending by sending them "splurge alerts" when they are in geographic proximity to stores where they have a history of overspending. The app also has a feature that allows it to alert friends so they can intervene," reported PYMNTS.com in 2016. "The intent of this fun and insightful tool is to raise awareness for consumers about spending habits that may be keeping them from attaining their savings goals," said Riley.
- **Revving Up Customer Engagement:** When Ally Financial was a captive lender for General Motors, the Company didn't have much interaction with borrowers during the course of their car loans and vehicle ownership, Wards Auto observed in 2016. "We tended to only talk to customers when we put them on and off the books," Riley told

the publication. "If we talked to them in between, it typically wasn't a good conversation, because it usually was about a delinguency." That's changed, especially because Ally is now a non-captive lender and competing for business accordingly. "We felt it was important to establish a relationship with people on a more regular basis," says Riley, explaining the reasoning behind what's called the Ally Customer Touchpoint Experience. "As an independent in the marketplace, that's important for us to do." The program is an automated set of marketing tools, including digital versions, intended to connect with customers throughout the full cycle of their lease contract or auto loan. Ally has designed it so that dealers can join in with their marketing messages. "Basically, we've built out systematic touch points," Riley told WardsAuto. Customized tools that are co-branded with dealerships include: Customized messages on billing statements. These could be coupons for service and messages about upcoming specials at the dealership. Targeted landing pages. This includes personalized URLs with customer account information, dealer information, pictures of cars and account management tools like a mileage calculator. Customized emails. Toward the end of the contract, customers receive emails with specifics on their car, incentives, dealership maps and contract information to encourage a visit/contact. These emails have a 68% open rate, Riley says. Digital coupons intended to get customers back to the dealership for service work. "Service messages perform exceptionally well," Riley says. "It is customer messaging at a regular cadence," Riley tells WardsAuto. Those messages range from a dealer including information about "fun" things such as local entertainment events to a video walk-around showing a customer how to inspect a lease car for potential damage and wear and tear before turning it in. That helps lessees understand their financial responsibility for things such as deep scratches on a lease vehicle. "We don't like to surprise our customers," Riley says. She adds: "We are providing them with services, information and deals they wouldn't necessarily get had we

28

#### **Executive Profile**

#### BOARDROOM INSIDERS

not been talking to them. We use everything from pure information to soft information." Conventional wisdom is that captive lenders representing a particular auto brand have a leg up on independent companies when it comes to customer retention. But Riley says Ally is debunking that. "A non-captive that provides a robust customer experience has a higher loyalty rate than a captive.

• The Smell Test: Ally featured a "New Car Smell" exhibit at the 2016 North American International Auto Show at Cobo Center in Detroit, Automotive News reported. Visitors could sample eight fragrances concocted by the Ally team to match different kinds of cars and drivers. The cappuccino, hairspray, lipstick and yoga mat mixture matches the city compact car. Bonfire, axle grease, flannel, and beard is the aroma for pickup trucks, and baby wipes, stain remover, crayon, and regret make up the family wagon fragrance. Consumers could also invent a virtual scent on an iPad app at the booth or online. Participants could pick from scents such as "grass" for an eco-friendly car or "furious" for road rage to create their dream fragrance. Next, to the scent station, Ally set up the Auto Alley digital design experience. Visitors could design a car on a touch screen by selecting a vehicle, paint, designs, and patterns with the Detroit skyline or the city's popular Joe Louis fist sculpture as the backdrop. Designs could be shared on social media, and participants were entered in a drawing for a trip to Cancun, Mexico. "Ally's interactive displays and consumer outreach efforts were light and fun, and they don't have much to do with the auto show or with auto finance in general," the article said. "On the surface, it seems like auto lenders don't have a place at the auto show. But Ally showed it can make its mark in a lighthearted way." The auto show "brings together thousands of auto professionals, car enthusiasts and consumers who are all excited about new cars," Riley said in an email. "As a leader in auto finance, Ally hopes to be a part of that energy and hosting interactive booth experiences like these helps to build and strengthen our connections with our dealers, partners, and consumers."

#### **Executive Profile**

#### BOARDROOM INSIDERS

According to the article, "Since Ally continues its booth through the public show days, the activities gave Ally a way to engage potential customers. The scent station and car design tool put Ally's name on consumers' minds. The auto show is geared toward the flashy vehicles and big reveals. It was innovative of Ally to throw itself into the mix with something completely different."

• Renews Sponsorship: Ally Financial has renewed its exclusive sponsorship of the TIME Dealer of the Year program through 2021, according to Auto Remarketing. The TIME Dealer of the Year is an annual program that aims to recognize and honor franchised dealers around the country who make outstanding charitable contributions to their communities. "We continue to be impressed and inspired by the tremendous efforts of the TIME Dealer of the Year nominees," said Tim Russi, President of auto finance at Ally. "In recognition of these dealers' dedication to their communities, Ally is proud to have committed more than \$315,000 in charitable grants over the past four years to further amplify their local efforts." The 2016 TIME Dealer of the Year winner and finalists were selected by a panel composed of faculty from the Tauber Institute for Global Operations at the University of Michigan. The panel chose the finalists from each of the four National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) regions, and from those four finalists, the judges then selected the national winner. Ally further recognizes each TIME Dealer of the Year nominee with a \$1,000 grant to the gualified nonprofit organization of their choosing, and provides additional grants for the finalists and winner. The ATAE who nominates the annual TIME Dealer of the Year winner will also receive a \$5,000 donation to the charity of their choice. "The TIME Dealer of the Year award is one of the automobile industry's most prestigious accolades and we are honored to continue to be a part of it," Riley said. "Automotive dealers play an integral role in their communities and we're proud to recognize their efforts on a national stage."

### **Executive Profile**

#### **Biographical Highlights**

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Academic Studies, Career Path, etc.

- Born circa 1965 in Livonia, Michigan.
- Riley earned a Bachelor's degree in Advertising from Michigan State University in 1987.
- Fresh out college, she joined Campbell Ewald in 1988 and over the next 18 years held the following positions:
  - Various Positions
  - Account Director (2002 2007)
  - Executive Vice President and Director, Business Development (2007 2008)
- Riley joined Ally Financial Inc. (prior to May 2010, GMAC Financial Services) in 2008 and has since held the following positions:
  - Chief Marketing Officer, Finance and Insurance Businesses (2008 2015)
  - CMO (2015 Present)

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Boardroom Insiders founder, Sharon Gillenwater, was working as a marketing consultant to a variety of Silicon Valley companies when she noticed a pain point that they all seemed to share: the need to be more relevant to their customers, especially executive-level decision makers with the power to approve or nix their deals. Sharon set out to solve this problem by founding Boardroom Insiders in 2009, and today provides expertise in C-Level engagement strategy as a value-add for Boardroom Insiders customers.

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