

TRANSCRIPT:

PENNY POWER TALKS TO VINIT SHAH ABOUT WHY MAINTAINING A FOCUS ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IS MORE IMPORTANT NOW THAN IT'S EVER BEEN

Penny Power:

Wow. Amazing. I'm really excited because I'm having a chance to have a phenomenal conversation with a subject that's really close to my heart. And that's the subject of sales and I'm with Vinit Shah. Who's the founder of the London School of Selling... or the London School of Sales, I should say. And he's the founder of this incredible e-learning portal and provides consulting and coaching and support predominantly for sales managers. But I'm really wanting to do this conversation because we're in a very turbulent world at the moment. And everybody's got to wake up with that personal responsibility for what my future is and having gone into sales when I was 19, I can't thank the world enough or the universe for the fact that I really respect, study and understand sales. I don't think there's a person in this world who doesn't need to understand how to sell themselves. It might get wrapped up in subjects like personal branding and all sorts of ways that people will say that they're going to create a following on social media.

Penny Power:

But it's really interesting when I work with my clients how few of them actually know how to sell. You've got a lot of people who are in management positions. You've got a lot of people in owning their own business. You've got a lot of people who want to have a career in sales, but I think there's something got lost over the last few years through social media. And that is the art of selling. So I think talking about that today with Vinit is going to be relevant for anybody. Who's got a few minutes in their life now to sit down and have a coffee or a cup of tea and just absorb themselves in the subject of sales, which to me is a very, very exciting subject. So welcome Vinit. Thank you. Lovely to see you. Thank you. Tell me a little bit more about why you created the London School of Sales.

Vinit Shah:

So, London school of sales is... I've spent my entire career in sales. So, over 25 years in sales. I never refer to myself as being a sales person. I looked after customers, I found solutions, but I never ever considered myself to be in sales. And that probably didn't happen until I graduated and joined my first organisation as a client administrator. I love sales. It's provided me with an amazing opportunity. And in this particular country, sales just doesn't have the respect that it has in say somewhere like America. It's not necessarily a profession that you go out there and want to be a salesperson in the same way that maybe you want to be an accountant or lawyer or a doctor or a pharmacist. And then funnily enough, I believe that sales, there are certain skills in sales that you won't get in those other more traditional professions. In sales, you learn about communication. You learn about resilience. You learn about adaptability because everything is constantly changing. And that's what really kind of draws me to sales because I'm drawn to that. I don't like the mundane. I like things to be different. I like to be learning because I'm constantly meeting interesting people. Every time I walk into a client's organisation and they're telling me about their business, their world, wow that's phenomenal.

Penny Power:

Yeah. And you're absolutely right in the way that you describe it. Because I look back to my first field sales role when I was 21 and I was selling a product for a company called One-To-One owned by Pacific Telesis. And it was a modem in a box with a number. And it was... There was the beginnings of email. And I didn't understand it. I'm talking about 1985. Okay. So, I didn't understand what I was selling, but I was given a company car and told to go all over the Southwest region and go and visit computer dealers. And my lesson in Salesforce, I arrived at this really nice guy down in South Hampton road, a computer dealer. And, in my boot were a hundred of these boxes and I had to sell them. And if I sold 50, I hit my target for the month.

Penny Power:

And up from then onwards, it really ratcheted it up. I had my own flat then. I owned a flat and had a lot of bills to pay. So I was quite motivated, but I walked into this guy's office to sell this thing with this box. And he said, could you explain what it is? And I said it's fantastic, everybody wanting them. And he said, what is it? I said, I don't really understand it. And he went, really? And I said, I'm just... I don't know whether you can help me to understand it? And he said, yeah of course. And he sat down and he took it apart and explained it all to me. And he basically sold it to himself. And at the end of it, I said, John, it's incredible how much you love this. How many do you want? And he said, well, I think I'll take 50. And this taught me that the more you listen and the more you let your customer convince themselves of why they want something, the better it is. And that just comes back to you. You have to be brilliant at listening. Don't you? Asking questions and be brilliant at listening.

Vinit Shah:

Well, it's... salespeople have to be world-class listeners. The best salespeople are, and they're able to... On the back of that, listening, ask very deliberate questions, that's the true art of sales. And, it's not just actually, you've got a script and you're asking these questions because you want the answers to. It's making that conversation flow so that the customer doesn't actually think that they're being sold to, but we're actually helping them. We're helping them fix their problems, their challenges, and make their world better for them. That's ultimately what sales is.

Penny Power:

Yeah. Yeah. Now I know your heart really beats for the sales being created to predominantly really helped the management of whether they're managing a small team or a large team. So tell me more about that. What are the challenges that those sales managers are facing?

Vinit Shah:

So, when I came up with the idea of London School of Sales. Having spent my entire career in sales, having seen firsthand the challenges that sales teams face, I wanted to give back, I wanted to do something for the industry to try and actually give people things that they were missing. I came across a really interesting stat and that stat is that between 40 and 60% of sales managers fail within the first 18 months that's just a jaw-dropping statistic between 40 and 60%. Now-

Penny Power:

What constitutes fail, sorry. Is that fail to hit their numbers with their team? [Vinit Shah: No, they leave.] Oh I see. Oh my goodness. Right.

Vinit Shah:

And what was interesting was that typically most businesses... Most organisations will look at excellent salespeople and they will be the ones... The ones that are top performing, they will be the ones that are promoted into sales management roles. The challenge is that companies, once after promoting them, don't give them the tools that they need to succeed. Now, these guys, before taking on this role, they were fantastic at what they were doing. They were at the top of their game. They had all of the training and the development they needed to actually be top sales people in their respective businesses. However, the world of management is completely different when you're all of a sudden now having to manage a team you're having to actually sell to that team. You're having to persuade individuals in your team to carry out the work that you need to be done.

Vinit Shah:

Those skills just aren't taught by businesses to their sales managers. And partly the challenge is, that the individuals that work above them, aren't trained in coaching to be able to effectively deliver those messages. They don't know how to motivate their teams. They don't know how to actually sell an idea to their teams. And that's ultimately what I was really passionate about changing. I thought, wow, that statistic is jaw-dropping. There are the stats there, because sales teams typically will lose 25% of their team on average every year. And that's either because people leave or they're dismissed from their position. And funnily enough, all of these statistics that I was looking at when I started thinking about creating the London School of Sales just made me actually realise how much of a need there was for something like the London School of Sales.

Vinit Shah:

We don't focus on the traditional selling skills because there are lots and lots of good companies that already do that. And more than anything, companies already know what selling skills their people want based on their sales cycles, based on the type of product, the industry, et cetera, that they're operating in. The thing that we found that actually is really needed is that softer behavioral side. Understanding your customers, treating your own staff with empathy and compassion, because naturally what happens is, when someone in the business is going through turmoil in their personal life, it has a knock on effect on their work life. The better you're able to, as a manager, understand what that person is going through and actually help them support them, put your arm around their shoulder, the quicker they're going to get through that. The quicker that relationship is going to be built, that trust is going to be there. And you know what, they're going to help you. They're going to work with you. And that is what really drives me. That's why the London School of Sales exists. It's to help people have that understanding and that depth of understanding just beyond the top line skills that everyone sees.

Penny Power:

Yeah. I get that. And actually, I really enjoyed doing your questionnaire that you've got, which I'd love to share now, and I'll share it in my post when I share this video. What's the URL for it, because this is a really holistic look at how you are as a manager, managing life, isn't it really? So what, what's the URL for that again?

Vinit Shah:

Oh, so it's LSOS.co And then from there, you can go to the assessment page, we're going to change that and the name might change, but it's LSOS.co. And there's a kind of assessment that you can take from the main homepage. Yeah, again, the idea for that came up after actually our initial conversation where you developed your health check, and I thought this is an incredible way for people to understand the areas that they probably need to focus their attention on for their own self development. That's... Essentially, we're looking just actually to help people understand elements that maybe they need to enhance as part of their own self development work they're doing.

Penny Power:

Yeah. Oh, it's brilliant because you've got, so what is really interesting the moment we talked early on about taking personal responsibility for a lot of people, working at home, taking out some time to develop your skills and things. And I'm really interested in the fact that you develop this as an e-learning system and it's phenomenal. You've taken me through it. What did you feel was missing before you created that?

Vinit Shah:

So most sales training happens in a classroom environment. The challenge is that, unless an individual needs that training in that moment, the likelihood that they're going to actually ingest that training, they're going to actually take it all in is low.

Penny Power:

Yeah, yeah.

Vinit Shah:

The time that training has the most impact is when someone is going through that challenge, that's the first thing. Then the second thing is that we all have our own unique learning style. So all of the training within London, school of sales, the e-learning has been developed using the principles of VARK. So VARK stands for Video, Audio, Reading, Writing, and Kinesthetic, essentially think of it this way. You may, in certain instances, like to read something and actually ingest that information because you feel comfortable reading to try and understand. Other individuals may prefer to watch a video and others will, may even prefer to actually learn by doing the exercise themselves and then realising actually where their understanding is lacking and then going through that activity again. So we have developed all of the training using the principles of VARK. It isn't just a case of, you've got a guy with a PowerPoint presentation and they're just speaking over it.

Vinit Shah:

It's really interactive. And the other thing is we encourage people to actually learn at their pace because we want you to take some of the learnings and apply it to your current working environment. There's a huge trend within the younger generation, which is micro learning. They want to be able to learn on demand when they need it. So it's great to have a program that actually developing from that they can always come back to and say, okay, I went through that exercise, let me go through it again, because I'm actually going through those challenges now. And that's... The feedback we've had is that's exactly how people are using it.

Penny Power:

That's incredibly powerful. So I love, you've got a lot of statistics and a lot of study, a lot of experience, and you've developed this amazing portal. And I'm really proud to be associated with you on this, Vinit and as I said, right, at the beginning, we will have to learn how to either manage salespeople or be our own salesperson. So, let's just remember what do they... Where do they go again, to be able to see this give us the URL again?

Vinit Shah:

LSOS.co

Penny Power:

Brilliant. Well, thank you very much Vinit. Is there anything, or any closing thoughts that I haven't included when we were chatting that you think might be helpful?

Vinit Shah:

I think we've covered everything. What I would say is that... I think that everyone has the ability to learn, to grow and to develop. And what I would recommend to any sales manager is, do not leave it to someone else, your manager, or anyone else in your organisation to identify the training that you need. You're best placed to do that. You know the things you're good at, you know the things that maybe you're lacking and so go out and actually identify what those things are and find the solutions for yourself. Don't abdicate that responsibility to your manager or to anyone else. And, London School of Sales wants to help, we would love to know what your challenges are and maybe we can actually even help to find a solution for you. So, thank you.

Penny Power:

Thank you. I think that's a powerful comment at the end, and we all have to take our personal responsibility for our future. And if you're in sales management, you've got a lot of pressure on you now. And I think this is a phenomenal way to really hone your skills and get that support that you need. So thank you very much Vinit.

Vinit Shah:

Thank you, Penny. Appreciate it.

Are you ready to take responsibility for your future? Take our quick **LSOS Skills Scan** to get started: <https://www.lsos.co/skills-scan/>