# Audio file

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Transcript

00:00:00 Greg Reffner

Welcome everybody. This is Greg with the Abstrakt Podcast, real time sales, coaching software. And we are here today with Keith Lubner from Sales Gravy. I kind of have the jitters I'm really excited to meet with Keith and the Sales Gravy team. Because when I went to my first sales manager, I asked him, “What's the best way to get into sales leadership?”

00:00:27 Greg Reffner

And he went through his library of books he had on his desk and he handed me a copy of, ***People Follow*** ***You.*** And he said, "You learn this book and become this book and you will become a sales leader that everybody wants to follow, and you'll never have a problem hitting your goals." And that really resonated with me.

00:00:47 Greg Reffner

And I bring myself bringing back to reading that book about once a year to remind myself of some of those principles. So here we have Keith Lubner, Executive Vice President, head of training at Sales Gravy. The company that literally is writing the book on sales training. So really excited to have you Keith, please introduce yourself.

00:01:05 Keith Lubner

Well, thanks, Greg. And it's been a while, but I always love hearing that story with the ***People Follow*** ***You.*** I think, it's so true. It's very simplistic and it's not complex and it gets right to the heart of how we need to be leaders. So, it's so good to hear that story about you, but I'm happy to be here. We've known each other for a number of years.

00:00:26 Keith Lubner

I run the consulting and training side on Sales Gravy. I've been in the Channel for over 30 years as you know, just for your viewers or your listeners, I've had a couple Channel consulting companies, I've built three of them. In fact, I just dated myself. I've been around the block a little bit too long, I think, but really enjoying myself joining forces with Jeb five, six years ago. And we've been just taken off and going like gangbusters over the last several years, so good to be here.

00:01: 56 Greg Reffner

Cool. Well, the first time we did a podcast together, you had just wrapped up a training with, I think it was UPS and you were telling me about this large conference room of people and things have changed a little bit over the past year in terms of how you're presenting. So, I'd love to know just the quick cliff notes version. What are the big changes you guys are seeing in the sales training industry? How are you guys adapting? Maybe we'll start there.

00:02:27 Keith Lubner

Okay. So, you did go back a couple of years there, I think.

00:02:30 Greg Reffner

Couple. Yes.

00:02:30 Keith Lubner

I remember that moment vividly, actually. I remember that moment vividly. One of the stories that I use in a lot of keynotes came from that day and that morning, cab ride. I remember it vividly, and very fondly. So, it's a good story. It's not a tragic story by any means.

00:02:52 Keith Lubner

So, what we're seeing, the past years has been just crazy, but here's the thing that people need to remember and it's this. There's always going to be these moments in history, and there always have been moments of history of chaos, upheaval change, disruption. You can go as far back in history as you want.

00:03:16 Keith Lubner

Let's just go back early part of the 20th century, flu pandemic, World War I, World War II. All these other conflicts, and we're not even touching on all these other pandemics that were occurring, that we're not even aware of, 2008, 2009, the economic meltdown. Before that 9/11, there's always something happening. There's always a disruption. And the thing that everybody has to remember is on the backside of every single disruption, there's always innovation and something good happening, always.

00:03:52 Greg Reffner

Love that.

00:03:52 Keith Lubner

If you look at each disruption, World War 1, 2, you name it. I almost say 3, that was weird 1 and 2. There’re always great companies that are born and then always great things that people do or skills that people learn. Now is one of those times for salespeople, undoubtedly now is one of those times. Because we recognize a year ago when there was a shift. Right away, Jeb wrote this book called, ***Virtual Selling*** and it went straight to number one. And there was a reason for it because of what I just said on the backside.

00:04:27 Keith Lubner

If you learn some new skills around how you can, and we use this term a lot, blend, blend, traditional ways of selling phone, email, all of that text into virtual selling, getting on video and what your setup needs to look like. And the technology you need to leverage within your setup. If you blend the two of them, that combination is going to get you to be more efficient, more effective, and more productive in the end.

00:04:57 Keith Lubner

And the ultra-high performers that we're talking to, that we train day in and day out, they're leveraging this and their pipelines are bigger. They're closing more opportunities. They're happier individuals. And it's all because they took the moment to decide, I need to adapt. I need to change. This is not something that I want to cower and let the waves of history hit me and then pound me down.

00:05:23 Keith Lubner

This is what I need to learn to surf those waves. And by learning to surf the waves and getting new skillsets, they're now on the forefront. And they're going to be the people that are knocking doors down from for years and years to come.

00:05:37 Greg Reffner

I love that. I love that. Diamonds are forged through pressure. The times we're in are foreseeing change and people that adapt and overcome that change, come out on top. And I think that's a great reminder that through every one of these bad periods of recent human history, there have been positive things that come out of that.

00:06:00 Greg Reffner

And focusing on that, I think is a good reminder for us all to have some good takeaways over the past year. So, let's dive into that a little bit. Over the past year, you guys adapted your sales training model. I'd love to know, what's the number one topic that keeps coming up that you guys keep coming back to you and keep helping companies with, what does that seem to be?

00:06:25 Keith Lubner

Well, there's a couple of them and obviously pipeline is one. I get this question all the time. "How can I get better at prospecting, developing business, increasing my pipeline?" A lot of people struggle around that, but we get the question of, and we got it last March. We got it last March, I remember this, I got off the plane on March 15th.

00:06:54 Keith Lubner

It was the last flight I took, last flight I took in 2020 and I had flown those first three months. I had flown probably 25,000 miles, those first three months. So, I got off the plane on March 15th. And my phone that week was ringing off the hook.

00:07:12 Keith Lubner

We saw the pandemic coming, but we didn't see it coming as dramatically as so. We didn't see like the rush on toilet paper, we didn't see things like that. And we didn't see the dramatic effects of the mask and all of that. We thought something, was going to happen, but we didn't think how disruptive it would be.

00:07:31 Keith Lubner

So, my phone was ringing off the hook. Jeb's phone was ringing off the hook, as you can imagine, with some other folks. And we were getting the same question, "Keith, what do I do now? How do I do it? Should I prospect and will I turn people off if I do prospect, I'm a senior sales person, how do I now exist?" Because being a senior salesperson and people were saying this, I was brilliant. They would say, I was brilliant in person.

00:07:59 Keith Lubner

Now I get to move into this virtual world. I don't know what to do. They were brilliant in person because they were brilliant at connecting to people. So, at the core level, we still have to connect to people no matter what technology we have out there is doing, we still have to connect to people. We still have to connect on an emotional level because at the end of the day, people buy from people. It's an emotional connection you have with people.

00:08:26 Keith Lubner

So, they were struggling with, how do I do that more effectively as it relates to everything in the sales process, prospecting, running through, to negotiation, how do I conduct an effective meeting, everything they were all now confused. How do I do this now as relates to this world?

00:08:47 Keith Lubner

Technology is great. Technology enables us effectively to do these things, but we have to think of technology exactly what I just said as an enabler to the human-to-human connection. And as an enabler to shrinking sales cycles down. And as an enabler to all that, we can't look at technology as a replacement for all of that.

00:09:13 Greg Reffner

That's a good point.

00:09:13 Keith Lubner

We're getting that question left and right, Greg. Left and right, we were getting that question.

00:09:17 Greg Reffner

And so, did you see like an influx of companies trying to figure out, how do we keep this human connection? How do I bring my outside reps and my inside reps? But then were there any types of questions around, what technology, how do I use technology?

00:09:33 Greg Reffner

I know a lot about what Sales Gravy talks about is it's human-to-human selling, but technology almost becomes like a mandatory thing, a mandatory component of the sales process. Are companies coming to you guys trying to figure out, how do we use technology? Where does that fit into the sales process? Are those things that you guys help companies with?

00:09:53 Keith Lubner

One hundred percent. Oh yeah. Yeah. The world that we live in, the reality is we exist with both. So, we have to leverage both. So, we were getting questions on, how do I leverage technology effectively to now conduct a meeting virtually? And we mastered it quite frankly. We've absolutely mastered it. You have seen my setup.

00:10:15 Keith Lubner

We have mastered, how do you engage with people effectively? How do you break the patterns that they're used to? Because here's the reality. People are stuck because they're experiencing bad virtual meetings, awful bad meetings. And now the experience on the other end with the person that they're having their meetings with is not a good experience. Now that's a way that they're leveraging technology, not in a good way.

00:10:43 Keith Lubner

So, we'll teach them, how do you leverage it in an effective way where you can still engage people as if you were in person and use technology around, how can you leverage, email and sequencing and all of that effectively. How can you leverage back from your days, PRM Systems? How can you leverage that effectively to engage your sellers in real time, not losing the human to human?

00:11:09 Keith Lubner

We talk a lot about, especially now the concept of blending, meaning you have all of these great technologies sitting out there, virtually you have the Zooms of the world. I just learned of another platform today. You have all these platforms, FaceTime, all of that, but you have email that you can leverage. You have texts that you can leverage, you have voicemail you can leverage, you have video messaging that you can leverage.

00:11:39 Keith Lubner

And when you combine everything into the sales process at different steps that blending, now think of this. That blending of technology in all the sales steps allows you to have more meaningful dialogue with people and engagement with people. So, that's a classic example of leveraging technology in our new world to still maintain a high level of collaboration and engagement with people.

00:12:07 Greg Reffner

I like the blending. I think that's an important word there. And maybe it's just because Keith, I've grown up with technology in my sales career I've been using technology. At the risk of getting yelled at, I had some older sales reps come to me and ask me, "How do I use Zoom? How do I read person on a Zoom call, if their camera's not on, how do I read facial expressions?"

00:12:39 Greg Reffner

And we started getting into conversations around, well, now you actually have to listen. You're listening for tone pitch, what words they're using. Is there excitement or doubt in their voice? And so, again, that blend, if you have the technology, now you actually maybe have to find a new skill, like active listening actually has to mean active listening now. So, you definitely continue have to blend the two. I'm going to steal that word; they're blending when I talk about how to use technology in the sales process.

00:13:12 Keith Lubner

It's so true. Think about engagement and you're blending this. On our call here, if you don't actively tell somebody on a Zoom call, getting on video, that your eyes will move off the camera and onto the screen. If you don't say that, the first thing somebody thinks about, and I think about engagement is, oh my gosh, your eyes are off over here. You must be paying attention to something else why you're not paying attention to me.

00:13:38 Greg Reffner

Absolutely.

00:13:39 Keith Lubner

Those techniques, the older folks and, and still young folks too. Don't get me wrong, but the senior level folks, this is what I was hearing a lot of, like, "How do I do this, Keith? When I'm in person, I can see Greg's eyes right there. I know if he's looking at something over here, but when I'm in this meeting I have no idea what he's looking at, how do I keep that engagement going?"

00:13:59 Greg Reffner

Yeah. And it goes back to, intrinsic curiosity asking questions. So, there's an art inside selling and leveraging technology and you have to learn to blend the two together. Absolutely. Is there any correlation between successful deployment of technology and then actually adopting the techniques that Sales Gravy has, pioneered and continues to teach? Does their way to use technology reinforce and measure the success of a Sales Gravy training session that maybe you deploy out to an SDR team or a sales team?

00:14:41 Keith Lubner

Well, we train a lot of SDRs, a lot of BDRs, a lot of those sorts of teams and, also strategic selling teams. There's no doubt about that. And, with the concepts that we talk about blocking your time. And we have people do that. When you block your time, there's certain tasks within that.

00:14:58 Keith Lubner

Let me give you an example of maybe there's prospecting, so you would block a prospecting time. When you condense your time into that block, you could prospect more. Technology plays a really important factor there because you have to develop lists around where you're prospecting. You have to catalog who you're talking to, so that you have follow-ups. You, need real-time access. If you get into a conversation with somebody, let me have access to the information.

00:15:26 Keith Lubner

We talk about, a person's successful cadence needs to be not only the mindset, but it has to be systematic as well. Meaning the systems have to be there to enable you to make as many calls that you can and not get distracted.

00:15:43 Keith Lubner

Now that's where a lot of salespeople fall short, what happens is they go into a day and they say, I'm going to make 20 calls in a day. Well, we know how that works. You make one call, you get distracted, you make another call, there's an email. You make another call, you do this, and it's just mind boggling.

00:15:58 Keith Lubner

So, you teach them first, here's when you need to do the calls, while you have to support that with the technology stack behind that, to enable them to make those calls. And it could be as easy as the phone, all the way through the CRM system and anywhere in between, you have to support them that way.

00:16:17 Greg Reffner

That's a good point. Not, just, Hey, go make a hundred phone calls in a day. It's, here's the technology. Here's how to use the technology. Here's how to track your success throughout the course of a day. So yeah, I'd never really thought about that. That's such a good point.

00:16:34 Greg Reffner

I've onboarded, a fair amount of sales reps, and I just assume that they know how to use that technology to accomplish their goals. Maybe I should rethink that in my onboarding of reps. Learn something from you every time we talk, Keith. I appreciate that.

00:16:58 Greg Reffner

Couple of minutes left here, I've got a couple of really big takeaways, but I have to ask one question. People, love you fanatical military prospecting, inked, we all have our favorite Sales Gravy book, which one's your favorite?

00:17:14 Keith Lubner

Oh my gosh. It is a loaded question because I teach every single one of them. Sales EQ is a really good one because that encompasses, that's like the rocket fuel on top of everything. Such important connection elements in that book. And it's applied to every single other book, by the way. So, it's really good.

00:17:42 Keith Lubner

The process is fantastic because no BS, here's what you need to do, boom. Here's how you need to do it. Sales EQ is very interesting because it touches on the five magical questions that people think about all the time. And when you truly aligned to that, everything else comes into play. Everything else comes into play.

00:18:02 Greg Reffner

That's a good point. That's like your foundation. That's the foundation you build the house on that emotional intelligence to know how to prospect and how to read a response or how to read someone on a call. I go back and forth between ***Sales EQ*** and ***People Follow You,*** in terms of my favorite books.

00:18:22 Keith Lubner

Yeah. I train in all of them. ***Virtual Selling*** is neat because it's so new and everything, but yeah, ***Sales EQ***, we even apply that into virtual selling. When you're in a virtual meeting, you have to answer those five questions in the virtual meeting. So that aligns you to asking questions, letting people talk, doing active listening, but it all starts with those five questions.

00:18:45 Greg Reffner

That's a good point. Good point. I love it. Well, I have a couple really big takeaways from our time together, Keith. First one, really, going back to the beginning of our conversation around this, adapting and overcoming through challenging times and the winners quote unquote, "Are going to be the people that have embraced technology, embraced a worker remote environment have been tested through the pressure of learning, how to sell in this environment and have come out on top."

00:19:16 Greg Reffner

I really think that's a good reminder that, through tough times there can be opportunity if you're willing to, pick your head up and see what the future holds. So, I really liked that. And then blending of technology. I've always used the word integration of technology, but I really like the word blending more because I think blending in my mind means that there's opportunity to weave back and forth, as opposed to just maybe bi-directional, which kind of means integrated.

00:19:45 Greg Reffner

I really think a blended approach of moving in and out of technology and human experience and emotion really is a better way of looking at it. And so those companies that embrace a world where technology is blended into the buying and selling experience, I think, really will be the winners throughout all this.

00:20:07 Greg Reffner

So really some good key takeaways here. Some things that I'm personally going to change about how I'm doing some stuff and again, thank you for your time. For anybody who wants to learn more about Sales Gravy, get in touch with you guys. What's the best way to get in touch with you Keith and the Sales Gravy team?

00:20:24 Keith Lubner

Sure, sure. So, obviously you can follow us on LinkedIn and all that. We have a page up there. Go to salesgravy.com, subscribe to our blog. We're always releasing new content every single day, even connect with me and some of my colleagues, Keith Lubner and I'm on LinkedIn and you'll see everything that we post and put up there. It's pretty extraordinary the amount of content that we have flowing right now.

00:20:52 Greg Reffner

I can't even keep up with it all.

00:20:54 Keith Lubner

It's a lot.

00:20:56 Greg Reffner

It's a lot. Well, I appreciate your time and thank you for sharing some nuggets of wisdom with us today.

00:21:01 Keith Lubner

Greg, it has been awesome. Thank you for having me and good luck with everything. Thanks.

00:21:06 Greg Reffner

Cool. Thanks, bye.