

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



Episode 24

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Annemarie Cross: You're listening to Women and Leadership Podcast, episode 24.

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Hi I'm you're Annemarie Cross. Welcome to another episode of Women in Leadership podcast, the podcast that empowers you to reach you're full potential whether you're a woman running your own business or you're in a corporate role.

Have you ever been a situation where you're excited to launch your new program? You share it with your community and you ask people to buy from you. However the result you get is crickets, nada, zero sales. Even though you know that people struggle with what you were going to help them with. So what do you now?

Well my guest today is here to help. Joining me on today's show is Frances Pratt. She loves sales and selling and more than that, she loves teaching people who aren't comfortable with selling the hidden secrets of sales.

Now when people know these secrets, they can confidently talk about themselves and their business. They can confidently find and nurture prospective clients into paying customers. Frances has been selling and teaching sales and consulting to business on sales for more than 20 years and she loves all elements of sales including cold calling.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



On today's show, Frances' going to share what to do when you do ask people to buy from you and then they don't. Why mistakes are an essential part of being in business and how to use mistakes to help you talk about your business and make more sales. And whether you win or lose at bringing on a new client, the three essential questions that you must ask to improve your business outcome. So welcome to the show Frances.

Frances Pratt: Thank you so much Annemarie. I'm so excited to be here.

Annemarie Cross: Cold calling, my goodness. I have not met many people who say that they love cold calling. What is it about cold calling that you really enjoy?

Frances Pratt: To me, it's almost like the extreme form of sales. Some people like extreme sports and I like extreme selling. So if you put yourself in a position where the only thing between you and the other the person is the phone and your voice. Winning in that situation, you have to be really, really focused and really, really listening and engaging with the person. So when you win in that environment, it feels like you've successfully climbed Mount Everest.

Annemarie Cross: Yeah. I think what's really important is that many of us I'm sure have been on the other side of the desk or the phone where someone has been really pushy and really that horrible kind of car salesman push you almost.

What you're talking about is so different that has nothing to do with that at all. It really is all about the relationship building. Imagine that when you do have someone who says yes, the incredible opportunity that you've got to help them is really exciting. It's getting to that state that you really love and so many of us just

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



freak out at the thought of having to just ring of out of the blue, never really having spoken to that person before.

Frances Pratt: Well, yeah and I think that's exactly the point. I was listening to a psychologist talking about fear of...whether it's public speaking or whatever it is. The fear that someone feels...so the fear you guys feel in that environment and the fear that I feel are exactly the same like the physical elements of the same but how we choose to channel is different. I think you're exactly right. So it's not about barking at someone and hoping that finally someone will listen. It's really about how do you get that person to engage and listen and want to meet with you Yes.

Annemarie Cross: I think also to—I mean you've obviously got techniques and something that you'll be sharing today. I know that this is how you support clients and we'll certainly share how people can get in contact with you at the end of the show. But when we are nervous about the whole aspect anyway of sales and selling let alone cold calling by not kind of following a technique that you know really works. We do get nervous and then we kind of tend to pull ourselves out of the game so to speak that we just kind of just want to get off that phone. We're really setting ourselves up for a no anyway because the whole ways through, the conversation is just not done well. Yet we end up with the result that we dread. Is that kind of what you found with clients?

Frances Pratt: Well yes. I think you end up with the result that you intend. If you think about it like this, if you pick up the phone thinking, "Oh my God, this person doesn't want to talk to me. I'm annoying them." Then how you speak and even the position of your body...whether you've got a smile on your face. All the little itty bitty things come across.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



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That fear and trepidation come across in how you speak. So that's one thing. So the person is going to hear that on the other end and respond to that. But equally, even if we are able to pull off feeling and thinking successfully and that comes across in our voice. If that little voices in our head saying, "Oh, they don't want to speak to us and there's a pause on the other end of the line." Immediately, we've got to think the worst. Whereas if you go in thinking, "This person wants to speak to me. I've got to solution for their problem," that pause, you can view or perceive as thinking to buy rather than a negative. It's about how we're perceived but equally how we perceive the reaction of other people in that environment.

Annemarie Cross: Yeah, so, so true. Well let's dive in to some of the insights that you want to share today. Tell us about the situation in when...what do we need to do? What approach do we need to take when we have gone out, we've asked clients to buy from us and they haven't? I mean at that stage we're feeling quite deflated, aren't we?

Frances Pratt: Yeah there's nothing worse than putting something out there, putting your heart and soul out there and then as you say, "Getting crickets." You know I've just been through this situation recently and I put together this information and I knew it was what people needed. I'd even had feedback from potential clients saying, "Oh my God, that's so great." But then still, once I put it out there, there was no action on the sales front.

I think when you're first confronted with that, you can think, "Oh well. It was good to give it a go but now I'm going to pack up and go home." That's certainly is

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



one response. But I think and certainly what I did was...you know I had feedback, I had information. So I went back to those people and threw a couple of other ideas. What was it about? Was it the pricing? Was it the format? Was it the value? Was it how were providing it? What was it perhaps could be delivered differently and in a way that my customers could say yes to?

The learnings from that enabled us to repackage what we were doing. That meant that people could buy. They didn't have to buy the whole program. They didn't have to be available on a particular day or particular city. I think for me, going back into it and repackaging it and then putting it back out to market was really gratifying to get the response that I knew was there but it was just that the packaging wasn't right.

Annemarie Cross: I think in that this instance is what's...and another incredible insight is that you did go back and you did ask those questions and you did have that conversation. How many of us after receiving a no or hearing crickets, we assume. I think the assumption, assuming something really is to our detriment because we assume no one wants that information. It's not good or I'm of no value, that kind of thing. All of those negative self-talk that we often have with ourselves is absolutely untrue.

Going back and asking your prospective clients can give you insights that are invaluable. In this instance, it had you repackage the program and being able to offer it in different bite sizes and different options and formats that would make it a lot easier for people then to say yes to it because it fit their needs. Yes?

Frances Pratt: Yeah exactly. Just hearing you explain it like that makes me think how I describe. Sales is a very different discipline to other business disciplines. I think finance and

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even marketing to an extent. Customers, they're very black and white. Either you have done the right thing. Either the books are balanced or they haven't. Selling is really like a life science experiment.

So what we know if you take yourselves back to high school science and whether you've love that or hated that. If you think about what you did in that environment is you ran a number of experiments. You didn't just talk to one person. If someone is trying to find out or crack a code or map the human genome, it's from countless hours and countless conversations with hundreds of different people. That's very, very true with sales.

So what great selling is, is being able to amalgamate the information that you discover across 10, 20, a hundred conversations with prospective clients. Because everyone is going to say yes to you.

I think one of the times that we get hung up on that yes and no scenario is when we're desperate. When that yes or no means I can put food on the table or not. Whereas if we know that we've got to talk to 10 people to get one or two people to say yes. Whatever those numbers are, then the no is easier because we know that it's part of the experiment or part of the process.

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Annemarie Cross: That's right. I mean hearing you give that feedback and sharing that I think is incredibly supportive or helpful because how many times have we heard from people who have said, "Well you know, I've put my sales page together, got the e-mail written, send it out." Within five minutes, "Ding ding, ding, ding." I was

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



getting all these orders. So when that doesn't happen it's like, "Okay. Hello is anyone there?" It really has you questioning yourself and doubting.

Yet I think if some of those people were honest that "Ding, ding, ding" came after some of this tweaking or going and having conversations with clients. Not many people will often be transparent in that way to be able to share that. I think that that's to our detriment, everyone's detriment. I'm glad that you have said that. That it's not just this recipe that one two three and then all of a sudden sit back and count the orders coming in. That would be a great problem to have.

Frances Pratt:

I think that's right and whether it's online sales or face to face sales I think that's the same thing. Look, I've had situations where I've walked into a meeting and a person said yes straight away and we've signed up and they paid me thousands of dollars. That's fantastic but they're blue birds, they're rare. That's not the norm.

Equally I've had situations where you've spoken to someone 20 or 30 times and they still haven't said yes but then they do. When people say, "You've got to have six or seven touches," that's the average. So it can be one but equally it could be 50. It's about knowing what your averages are and about tracking that over time so that you can see how you're tracking and how to improve that and having to work on it.

Annemarie Cross:

And easing up on ourselves. Easing up on ourselves that when you have that conversation, one or two conversations, and that prospective client is still not really yet to say yes, that we don't beat ourselves up because obviously it's a process. Look who we're dealing with it. Other human beings. Let's face it, we are all complex aren't we? We bring our own nuances, our own beliefs about ourselves. They might not even think they're worth investing that kind of money

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



depending obviously on what you're offering them. Often it has nothing to do with you or with us, the program but just the other aspects to do with them. So great, great insights.

Let's talk about mistakes and why they're so essential in our businesses. Because let's face it, when we do make it a mistake or that word failure. We again tend to beat ourselves up thinking we're the only ones that did make a mistake or that we failed. You use them to help talk about business and make more sales. Share more about that.

Frances Pratt:

So it comes back to me. I think that often in the world we put on our glossy when we go out to sell or to talk to new potential clients. That's all good and well but I think that if you put yourself in the buyer's position, glossy isn't real. We deeply know that it's not real and yet we think that people only want to hear about us excesses.

So my reverse point of view is that...actually there's study that proves the people buy from people they know, like and trust. How can you be as human as possible to this perspective person that you're talking to? I think that's by sharing your stories. I mean it's great to share good news stories. It's great to tell people about your success but equally it's great to share with people what you've learned in your life. Because it shows so much more that your grit and your determination and how you approach business that a win does.

People say to me, "Oh man. You're so great at selling and you can sum things up so easily. How do you do that?" I kind of think of myself like a beautiful ballerina.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



Well I don't often think about it. But anyway let's just go with the analogy. When they're performing on stage, it's beautiful, it's amazing, it's inspiring but there's countless broken toe shoes and bloodied toes, lots of things that go in the preparation of that.

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I think that if you can show people what you've learned and share that and tell people why you've changed in your business. People are attracted to that because they want to know that when something goes wrong when you're dealing with them. So let's they say yes to you and you've shared with them a story about how you've learned that when clients are complaining that really what you need to do is pick up the phone and talk to them.

The reason that you do that is because, look, sometimes their complaints don't make sense to you and sometimes their complaints are just that they're feeling bad or whatever. If you try and sort that out on email or backwards and forwards, it just doesn't work. Picking up the phone and actually having a conversation with them enables you to really deeply understand what's going on. You understand how you can move forward. Because what they're talking about is something that's happened in the past.

Now unless you've got a time machine, you can't go backwards. Together you can work out a solution. Sometimes that solution is to go your own separate ways and that's okay. But what that client is learning through that conversation and that story is that, okay we have a problem. Fran is not going to ignore me or try and send me an email, 20 email responses. She is going to pick up the phone and that makes me feel good.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



Annemarie Cross: I think how service providers, how they respond to their customers or even perspective customers, really can either nurture and build and strengthen that relationship or it can really tarnish it. I mean we can probably both think of scenarios where we did say yes when we were working with someone or had a product. Unfortunately it didn't work as what we thought. How the supplier responded to us whether it was replacing or helping us to learn how to use this tool. That response really solidified the relationship to the point that we're happily going to refer and continue using them. So it's all in how we respond and how we manage that relationship. Feeling heard and validated is so important as the client isn't it?

Frances Pratt: Absolutely, absolutely. We all want that. So if someone can tell stories about how they've learnt to do that better and how they've learnt to do that better by doing it badly in the first place or what they've learned when they don't do that. Then suddenly that person becomes much more real, reliable, trust worthy to us. We kind of know...well great. If I'm ever in that situation, I know I can pick up the phone and talk to Fran. I know that she is going to deal with that professionally and be open to my feeling that it's not working okay.

Annemarie Cross: Great insights. Sometimes it can be a little bit scary having those conversations. Yet when we listen and we really great questions that helps that person share comfortably what they're experiencing. Then we can go together look at...okay. Well what's the solution to this? What's the next steps to ensure that there's a win-win outcome, whatever that may be for the both of you. Great insights there.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PODCAST



Let's talk about whether we're winning or we're losing at bringing on a new client. You say that they've three essential questions that we have to ask ourselves in order to improve our business outcomes. What are those three questions?

Frances Pratt:

The first question is for ourselves. When you first win or someone says yes or no, I want you to sit back and think about what you've learned. What was it that the person said yes to in your mind? Was it how you presented it? Was it a particular question that you asked or answered? What was it that convinced them? What was the turning point? What was the fulcrum? I think if when we focus on the win but not the reason. So that's the first question that I would ask, which is for yourself.

The second question is really for the person who has says yes or no. I like to go back them and say, "Thank you so much for giving back to me." That's equally whether it's a yes or a no because if someone comes back to me and says no, at least I know. There's something great about that. so I honestly do thank them for saying no. Then I ask them two questions. One, can you explain to me what the process was like for you. Because for me, great selling is about helping people buy or helping people make a buying decision. That decision is either yes or no. So I want to know what they enjoyed about the process. I also want to know what they didn't enjoy about the process. Was there something that was missing in there?

Because if my job in sales is to help people buy then more information that I get about how people buy or how they feel about process, what they like and don't like about it, then the better my process is going to get. Sometimes no doesn't me no forever. Someone might say, "Look the process is great, I've really

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understand your value but I'm just not in a position to do that right now." That can be about timing, it can be about money, it can be about other priorities but it gives you insight into what's going on for that person.

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Equally sometimes people say, "We look I just didn't really understand. If they're saying no because of price sometimes it's because they didn't understand your value. Understanding where they missed on that or how you missed it with them, if that makes sense, is really insightful. Sometimes that means that that person is just not your client which is deeply okay.

I remember listening to Seth Gordon talking about that. He said, "Stop trying to market to everyone. Everyone is not your client. Get off that bandwagon." So learning about who isn't your client sometimes helps you put in relief or the shadow of who is your client. So it helps you get that insight.

Annemarie Cross: So many of us are somewhat afraid I think, of asking for feedback. This is such a great lesson and insight to say how important it is to get that feedback. Because I would imagine that over the time how you've done this process and you've asked those questions, your process that you follow now looks remarkably different to how did many, many years ago when you first started having sales conversation. Would you agree? Have you changed it and tweaked it?

Frances Pratt: Beyond measure. I kind of think about those little bits of questions like drops of water. We all know that water in itself like a couple of drops of water aren't going to make a big difference. But then if over time and the continuity of water you can make the Grand Canyon. Do you know what I mean? Which is something

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immense and beautiful. To me it's about being honest and real and vulnerable within the process.

A simple little tip that I give to people who are nervous about it is this. Just simply be honest with people. When you first meet someone, you tell them what the process is. "Hi prospective client. What I'm going to do is, I'm going to do this. I'm going to do that. I'm going to ask you a few questions. We're going to have a chat. I'm going to put a proposal to you, whether that's in writing or whatever your process is. Then at the end of that process, you're going to come back to me and you're going to tell me whether you're interested or not. Either is okay. Whether you're interested or not interested, I still want to know. With your permission at the end of that process, what I'd really love to do is ask you two simple questions. One, what did you enjoy about meeting me and the process. Equally, if there was one thing that I could learn to do differently that would help you. What would that be?"

So if you do that from the beginning, you know that it's coming but so does your client. They don't feel like you're going to jump on them at the end and go "Ooh, you know, what about..."

Annemarie Cross: They're just waiting for it but that's right. You've set it up. It's an intentional conversation and you both know what's going to happen. So Frances would you...this feedback, the questions that you then send those two questions. If say for instance you emailed them the proposal and then they email you back and say, "Look, unfortunately at this stage we're not going to move forward." Would you email the questions back to them or would you ring them and then ask that

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over the phone to get feedback that way? Is one process or one way better than other or does it depend?

Frances Pratt:

So my preference and I'll tell you why. The psychology and the reasoning why the best way to get the feedback is face to face. That's because 87 percent of communication is non-verbal. So the way people flick their eyes, whether they smile, everything about their body language and how they're conducting that conversation. Only seven percent are words themselves. The little bit in between is tone and intonation.

So if you can get it face to face, you will learn so much more. If you can't, I understand that. But even if there's a geographical issue, you could do it over Skype with the video on. Obviously, you have to get the person's permission. Secondly my second preference is to do it over the phone or just half the tone and that time of information happening. And lastly as last resort, I would use email. But it's very easy because words are only seven percent. That's why email and the written word are very often misconstrued and misunderstood.

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Just the way you do a podcast, Annemarie, the best way for that to occur is to be a conversation.

Annemarie Cross:

Yeah, absolutely. That's a great lesson to us as well. In that providing the proposal and it depends obviously whether it's a personal person or company that you're dealing with. An individual or company, providing the proposal is also very good to do face to face if possible too because they may have questions. You want to

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make sure is that you're proposing is understood correctly. Then you've got the opportunity to ask questions and things like that when you are the obviously.

Frances Pratt: Absolutely. Absolutely. Sometimes it comes down to a numbers game. If you're selling something worth 50 dollars then you can't afford to have face to face meetings, one on one people.

Annemarie Cross: No, of course not.

Frances Pratt: But if it's worth 5000 dollars then absolutely face to face is going to win you business much more often than over the phone or Skype.

Annemarie Cross: So what would be one last word of encouragement that you would like to leave with people today Frances?

Frances Pratt: The biggest question that I get when I'm talking to people about sales and selling and coaching people on sales is.... I have to say I focus on people who cringe at the world sale. It's not their natural way of being. So the number one thing that I advise people and the best response I get is just be yourself. Selling is a deeply human thing. If any of you out there and I'm sure a number of you do have kids, they learn to sell from the time they can talk. Selling is about influencing and about understanding how you can get that other person to do what you want.

So if you think about how people buy. So don't think about it as selling and pushing yourself on other people. Think about it as you're helping this person on a journey. It's a journey of discovery and education. Through that journey, they might decide to buy from you and you need to allow that, gracefully. You need to ask them to buy from you. But equally, you need to gracefully allow them to disengage from the process when they want to. When you're selling your own

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thing, your won services, your own creations, that's tricky. So it really is about being vulnerable and real and allowing people to connect with you which is why I really encourage people to talk about their stories and their mistakes is it makes us so much more real. It allows other people to connect with that. That's when people want to buy from you.

Annemarie Cross: Thank you so much for coming on the show Frances. I know that this is a topic or an area that so many women in business struggle with. I'm sure that they've taken away lots of insight to support them in becoming far more comfortable. Don't know if we'll get comfortable with the cold calling that might be something that you just have as your area of expertise, yeah. Anyway so how can people get in contact with you?

Frances Pratt: So I have a website which is Kiss To Sell, kisstosell.com.au. So come along there, there's a lots of information on my blog and I've got a free e-book that people can subscribe to and also there's contact details. So come find me on Facebook, on Instagram, LinkedIn, any question or comments or areas you're not quite sure of with sales and selling, I'd love to connect with you.

Annemarie Cross: Terrific and of course we'll put the website on our show notes. So to access the show notes, annemariexross.com/podcast24. Make sure you checkout the resources that Frances has mentioned because as you can tell she knows hers stuff. Thanks once again for coming on the show Frances.

Frances Pratt: You're very welcome. Have fun everyone.

Annemarie Cross: So today's inspirational message is brought to you by Communicate Your Brand To Get Noticed, Hired And Paid What You're Worth. And today's tip is be you.

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Never let anyone make you feel like you're not enough especially when it comes to your brand, your message or your mission. You are good enough, your message is important and your mission does count. Give yourself permission to be used. Step forward confidently and continue to share the message and the mission that has been placed in your heart today.

Now if this is an area that you're struggling with let's talk. Register for one of my complimentary business breakthrough sessions over at annemariex.com/breakthroughsession, annemariex.com/breakthroughsession. That brings us to the end of another episode and I do hope that you will join me again next week.

Remember to subscribe to our iTunes channel. That means that you will be the first to know when we have another great guest just like Frances today when we publish a new episode. So all you need to do is go to annemariex.com/podcastitunes. When you're over there, why not just let us know how did you find today's show? Rate us out of five. By doing that, we really appreciate you and that helps us in front of many other incredible women leaders, women business owners. Until next week, have a fabulous week. See you later friend.

Frances Pratt: Thanks, bye.

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