



# One to One with Keith Vaz MP

## Ross Norman

### CEO of Sharps Pixley Ltd

Ross started his business career with computer guru Sir Clive Sinclair of Sinclair Research in Cambridge, before joining Johnson Matthey as Gold Refining Manager (then the world's largest gold refiners), before becoming a gold trader at NM Rothschild & Sons (then Chairman of the London Gold Fixing) and later Credit Suisse, where he was a Senior Dealer in physical bullion trading.

In 2010 Ross re-founded Sharps Pixley Ltd, bringing back to life a name with a long history in bullion back to 1778. Sharps Pixley is owned by Degussa who are one of the leading precious metals houses in Europe.

Ross has an enviable record within the London bullion market as the leading gold price forecaster over the last decade and he is frequently sought by the media for commentary on the bullion markets.

#### 1) What is your current position?

Chief Executive of Sharps Pixley, London's leading bullion broker.

#### 2) What are your proudest achievements?

The London Bullion Market has an annual gold forecast competition and I have consistently been the most accurate over the last fifteen years.

#### 3) What inspires you?

Creating a vision – then making it happen. To do that you need peers with whom you can argue the case, then fashion the business accordingly. A sharper mind might draw a

strategy like an architect, my style is probably more akin to braille (with bruises). It is making something out of nothing and then making it fly, fast.

#### 4) What has been the biggest obstacle in your career?

I never entered the business world with grandiose ideas of running a major corporation – so to that extent, at the personal level, I am largely achieving what I felt was possible. We are not all Richard Branson's and I feel I have played my cards optimally – so no obstacles as such.

#### 5) Who has been the biggest influence on your career to



#### date?

My first job was with the entrepreneur and inventor, Sir Clive Sinclair in Cambridge. He taught me about getting "buy-in" from the staff. Trust them and engage with them – and they will all do whatever is possible to make the business a success. He brings to mind the words of Isaac Newton ... "if I have seen a little further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants."

#### 6) What is the best aspect about your current role?

The owners of Sharps Pixley are the largest sellers of retail gold in Europe. We are supplied

with capital, but beyond that we are trusted to make all the right decisions – without interference. That trust is a very precious thing as it allows our team to feel fulfilled in our work and excited and engaged with our evolving strategy. Effectively we work with the pleasure that comes as if we owned the business.

#### 7) And the worst?

To be honest there are very few, if any, downsides to the role other than wishing I could move faster – and much of that is within my gift to change. Patience is not my strong card

and occasionally – being half Italian – the passion can come forward.

#### 8) What are your long term goals?

The UK remains the global capital for gold trading, gold shipping and gold vaulting – and yet it remains invisible as an asset class other than high priced jewellery. We could learn a lot from India who recognise its role in wealth preservation, as a safe haven asset and a diversifier of risk. My long terms goals are to make gold visible and accessible in the UK because it offers a lifeboat in a crisis and it

provides protection against human folly. Ideally everyone should have the comfort that comes from that security.

#### 9) If you were Prime Minister, what one aspect would you change?

I would make the Arts Council funding (to the tune of £340m per annum) contingent upon performers providing free events for the masses. To support this I would create more public venues – not only would it give pleasure to a wider demographic, it would reinforce the UK as somewhere that tourists would want to visit – in short, the grant would effectively be self-funding and it would allow us to showcase real talent.

#### 10) If you were marooned on a desert island, which historical figure would you like to spend your time with and why?

Oddly enough, Oliver Cromwell – less for his religious zeal and his attitude to the monarchy – but more to better understand his deeply felt principles. His talents extended through politics to military strategy – and he was quite clearly a man of conviction and action. The appeal would be to challenge him on his beliefs (through modern eyes) but at the same time to better understand his motivations. Men of his stature are few and far between – and it would be a privilege to learn the art of leadership from them.