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Lorraine recognises the power of storytelling, although she admits that measuring its impact isn't always straightforward. "Have I been in the press? Yes, several times. Have I gained anything from it? I don't really know how to measure that return on investment," she says honestly. "What I do know is that people notice. They'll say, 'Oh, I saw you get that award,' or, 'I saw you on that panel.'"

She mentions receiving the Lancelot Andrewes medal as an example of her growing visibility. "Raising my profile is invaluable. It's not about immediate monetary returns, it's about awareness and positioning yourself in front of the right audience. The property industry magazines, for example, are perfect for sharing my message."


"People buy you, don't they? That's why a lot of what I share is personal. It's about coming from nothing and having something, inspiring others to realise that it's possible. I do post the hard stuff too - it's not all rainbows. But it's also about aiming higher. If you don't put yourself out there, how will you ever grow? You've got to visualise where you want to be to get there."

So where does Lorraine see herself in 10 years? Her vision is clear yet humble. "I'd like to think I'm retired," she smiles. "I want to step back and focus on teaching the younger generation how to fish, so I don't have to catch as much anymore!" She believes in honoring past struggles while empowering others to create their own greatness. I hope my legacy will be: she lifted others and gave them the tools to succeed."

As our conversation wraps up, Lorraine's heartfelt passion shines through. From building homes to mentoring others, her journey is driven by a deep commitment to making a difference. She's not just a very successful entrepreneur and running a passion business; she's shaping futures and communities.

Her final words sum it up perfectly: "At the end of the day, it's about leaving the world a little better than you found it," she says with a big smile. With her unwavering dedication, there's no doubt she will do just that. •

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LORRAINE THOMAS

PEOPLE BEFORE PROFIT

A Voice to Build Change

“We made every mistake in the book, we wasted so much money. But you know what? We learned. And we got better.”

OPPORTUNITIES RARELY COME GIFT-WRAPPED, BUT LORRAINE THOMAS IS A BOLD, RISK-TAKING VISIONARY WHO KNOWS HOW TO SEIZE THEM. IN THIS EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW, BRAND YOU UNCOVERS THE REMARKABLE STORY BEHIND HER ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY TO BUILDING AN AWARD-WINNING MULTI MILLION PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT EMPIRE. WE FIND OUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A LANDLORD WITH A SOCIAL PURPOSE WHO IS PAVING THE WAY FOR THE DISADVANTAGED TO HAVE THEIR OWN WINDOW WITH A VIEW.

“Life has a funny way of working itself out,” Lorraine says with a thoughtful smile. Then she delivers the big question: “Think about this. If you could see into your future, what would you do? Leave the mystery intact and trust things to unfold as planned, or have a peek at what’s waiting for you and make a few tweaks, but with no idea what the outcome will be?”

Now, that’s food for thought! Lorraine believes the beauty of life lies in its unpredictability, in those moments when we take leaps of faith into the unknown. She knows this feeling well as her own life took a dramatic turn in 2016 when she decided to leave behind a 20-year career in the legal sector.

This was where her interest in marketing was sparked, and that passion led her to earn a Masters in marketing and eventually to marking Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) exam papers. However, her father’s battle with Parkinson’s and dementia was worsening and she made a bold move. “He was my rock,” she says, her voice warm with affection. “After I lost my mum at 16, he held everything together. When he needed me, there was no question - I had to be there for him.”

But leaving a high-flying career came with its challenges, especially financial ones. Suddenly, Lorraine found herself relying on just £62.50 a week and remembers thinking, “How on earth am I going to make this work?” It was a daunting chapter, but one that would lead her down an entirely unexpected path.

Enter serendipity. One day, Lorraine opened her inbox to find an email meant for someone else. It was a request to help find accommodation for disadvantaged young adults being looked after by the borough. “Without thinking twice, I just thought, Yeah, I can do that!” she recalls. To her surprise, not only could she do it, but she was good at it. Working just a couple of days a week, she found respite from full-time caregiving while stepping into a new role.

“Yeah, I can do that!”

That’s when she encountered the problem that would become her mission. The housing conditions she found were shocking. “Mushrooms were growing on the walls, taps didn’t work - it was awful,” she says, her voice tinged with disbelief. “These young people, some as young as 16, had already been through so much. They’d grown up in care and had tough lives. How could they ever hope to thrive in places like these? I thought, there has to be a better way.”

Lorraine and her friend, Delores, decided to take action. With some money her dad had given them, they ventured into the world of property development. Their first auction was a baptism of fire. “We made every mistake in the book,” she laughs. “We didn’t read the special conditions, had no bridging finance and bid without a solid plan. We wasted so much money. But you know what? We learned. And we got better.”

View From My Window, a south London-based property development and management company, was created in 2016 and is led by Lorraine. Today it has become a recognised name in the property industry and a passionate advocate for social change.

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By February 2018, Lorraine was redeveloping a disused plot of garages in Croydon. That project became Fountain Gates, a new-build development featuring two houses and seven flats with Help to Buy for first time buyers. Today, she’s a seasoned developer with projects ranging from £100K to £1.3 million, and a portfolio to be proud of.

But for Lorraine, it’s never just been about bricks and mortar. “It’s about creating opportunities, particularly for young people and disadvantaged communities to thrive,” she explains. “If someone has a home they can be proud of, they’ll take better care of it. It gives them the confidence to aim higher. That’s why I renovate with the same care I’d put into high-end rentals.”

Delores complements this vision through her own business, which places key workers with vulnerable young tenants. “They act almost like surrogate parents,” Lorraine says. “They help with the basics - planning meals, budgeting for bills, making sure they’re on track for work or college. It’s that hands-on support that makes the difference. The idea is to help them transition to independence.” >>



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“You’re giving them a chance to dream, to build, to create something better for themselves and their families. That’s what drives me every single day.”

Many of the tenants they work with are supported by council programmes, which cover their rent while encouraging them to study, work, or do both. “It’s all about giving them the tools to build a future. The council provides a framework but it’s the day-to-day support that helps them turn things around.”

Lorraine’s work extends beyond young people. “I’m a landlord with a social purpose,” she says firmly. “I’m here for the people trying their best - the ones juggling two or three jobs but who can’t get past a credit check. I’m less keen supporting those sitting around not trying, but I’ll bend over backwards to help someone who’s giving it their all.”

This philosophy has ripple effects far beyond housing. Lorraine believes that a stable home can transform lives. “When you give people a place to call their own, you’re giving them hope,” she says. “You’re giving them a chance to dream, to build, to create something better for themselves and their families. That’s what drives me every single day. Sometimes, you don’t need to see the whole path - you just need to take the next step and trust that the rest will follow.”

“I’m a landlord with a social purpose.”

“Last year was brutal,” Lorraine admits. “The Renters’ Rights Bill and rising interest rates have made things so tough. I’m all for supporting tenants, but not at the cost of killing landlords. We’re not all bad or rich!” Rising costs couldn’t simply be passed on to her tenants, so Lorraine had to think creatively. She decided to lease properties to organisations with values that align with hers. “It guarantees the rent, and we’re still helping people who really need it,” she explains. It’s classic Lorraine - practical and purpose-driven.

Now, she’s set her sights on tackling new challenges. More Ground-up developments and Houses with Multiple Occupation (HMOs) are her focus - turning large properties into affordable, practical living spaces. “A lot of people can’t afford even a one-bed flat. Whole families are crammed into one room, spending everything on rent and having no life,” she says. “I want to offer affordable options, like studios with private bathrooms for single occupants and couples. It’s about helping people live, not just scrape by.”



Yet, the road is far from smooth. Croydon, the area where Lorraine operates and sees great need, has tightened its restrictions on HMOs, creating significant hurdles. “The biggest challenges always come from the council,” she says with a sigh. Still, she’s undeterred. “This is what people need, and I’m here to deliver.”

She’s not afraid to call out inefficiencies either. “I’d love to have the courage to get in front of the council and tell them, ‘Listen to me. You’re in crisis and I can help. You’re housing people in hotel rooms with no windows, spending thousands. If you gave me that money, I could provide homes with a little patio or outdoor space - something that gives people a life, not just a place to stay.’”

Her vision doesn’t stop there. Lorraine is thinking big and beyond housing. “One of my former mentees started an amazing business called We Rise In,” she beams. “She’s building a network of young, black professionals - surveyors, architects, planners - who often don’t get the same opportunities as their peers. She’s changing that.”

Lorraine plans to invest in this initiative, which is based in a Farringdon space dedicated to networking and growth. “I’m passionate about diversity and levelling the playing field,” she says. “It’ll never be completely equal, but even shifting the dial a tiny bit matters. This is where I want to leave my legacy, by helping people find their voice and get in the room.”

For Lorraine, collaboration is key. “It’s not about competition or comparison. It’s about who you connect with and how you work together,” she says. That philosophy inspired her to co-author *Fab Collab: How Women Create Success*, a book with 14 other female founders. “We bonded over our love of connections and wanted to share our experiences of building collaborations.”

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Lorraine readily agrees that her drive to make a difference stems from her family's story. "My parents came from Jamaica as part of the Windrush generation. They thought the streets were paved with gold, but the reality was very different. They shared a room with two other couples at first. If someone hadn't given them that chance, they would've been on the streets. That's where my heart lies in helping people who have no way out."

Her passion for mentoring is personal too. "You don't have to go it alone," she says. Many of her mentees come from council housing backgrounds, where homeownership feels like an impossible dream. "They've grown up believing it's out of reach, but it's not. Even if they invest in a project I'm doing, they're inspired. And for those ready to own, we create a bigger plan."

“Some of my lenders started platforming me because I talk about the stuff that matters. It's all about creating impact.”

Her role has evolved, moving from hands-on development to a focus on big-picture impact. "You won't catch me on social media showing 'before and after' shots of projects," she laughs. "That's what every other developer does. I want to be different: raising the profile, building relationships and showing why people and purpose matter. That's the foundation of my personal brand."

Lorraine's journey has opened doors she never imagined. "From speaking at Google about women, diversity and property was incredible, to being invited to Number 10 to meet Boris as an inspirational person for our next generation, surreal," she recalls. "Being selected for a Nationwide video by a lender is also pretty cool and everything else in between. It's all about creating impact."

The UK's focus on homeownership is part of why Lorraine is so passionate about this. "Here, owning puts you in a different lane. It's not for everyone and not everyone can afford it, but for those who want it, it's possible, even if you come from a background where no one in your family has owned anything."

But Lorraine has no time for overpriced mentorship schemes. "I hate seeing people spend £10,000 or £20,000 on courses that leave them with flashy materials but no practical path forward. I'd rather they put that money into actual bricks and mortar and into something that's theirs."

When asked where she turns for advice or inspiration, Lorraine's face lights up. "Oh, that's such a great question because having the right network is absolutely key," she enthuses. "Different groups play unique roles in my life. I've got my wonderful school friends who I've known since I was 10. When I need grounding, they don't hesitate. They'll call me out and say, 'Lorraine, that's not you. You gotta keep it real!'"

She also surrounds herself with a powerhouse group of entrepreneurial women. "These ladies are next-level - wealthier (in mind and body too), more successful and absolutely brilliant. I love being around them because they challenge me to grow. If you're the smartest person in the room, you're in the wrong room!" she quips.

Another cornerstone of Lorraine's life is her faith community. "My church is wonderfully diverse and it helps me check in with my purpose," she explains. "When I'm wondering, 'Am I making the right decision? Is this about me or the greater good?' they help keep me aligned." >>



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