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CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

**How to overcome struggles, challenges
and setbacks in life and business
Inspiring true stories from the real estate industry**

JET XAVIER

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Inspiring true stories from the real estate industry

Jet Xavier

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ENDORSEMENTS

The real estate industry needs a book like this..... A raw, honest, no holds barred authentic account of the brutal reality of life and business from some of the best in real estate. It's an eye-opener, as well as an inspiring read for those finding it tough at times to keep going.

Dean Mackie, CEO Strategy and Growth Di Jones Real Estate

Jet, congratulations on the creation of your new book. Over my thirty industry years, I have collaborated with many greats who struggled to live up to the person they thought they should be. It's great to see a book like yours bring the needed light on a very dark side topic—well done.

Lee Woodward, Real Estate Trainer

All too often, our industry hides behind a carefully curated veneer on social media or a disingenuous polished personal brand. This can lead to agents comparing themselves to their peers, often evoking a sense of inadequacy, anxiety or inferiority. We need to stop comparing our own struggles to everyone else's highlight reel. This book cuts through the usual BS, providing a unique insight into the trials and tribulations of some of our industry's most respected figures and how they overcame adversity.

Douglas Driscoll, CEO Starr Partners Real Estate

Real estate is a fast-paced, addictive and rewarding industry of which we typically only hear all the good things and show off our wins and successes. But success does come at a cost; it's great that someone like Jet has brought this to the surface and openly discusses the challenges with everyday people doing their best in real estate. It's a topic not spoken about enough!

Ben Chick, Owner Explore Property Group Mackay QLD

Great to see a book talking about mental health in real estate.

Tom Panos, Real Estate Trainer

Congratulations Jet on your endeavours to highlight the struggles that the industry faces on a day to day basis and for continually striving to find a solution!

I have worked in the real estate industry for the past eighteen years, achieving exceptional results. I have been a high-performing agent and over the last ten years I have also established a very successful franchise business with over thirty offices. The perception from the outside is that life is great at all times. The reality is that after a harrowing four-year divorce and having to sell multiple offices to fund it, I hit a big wall. I didn't know how to deal with my struggles. It took one of my employees to identify that I was totally broken and in need of help. In hindsight, the best thing I did was reach out and get the help I needed before it was all too late. Don't be pig-headed. There is help out there and it's only a call away.

Darren Hutchins, Co-Founder & Corporate Director O'Brien Real Estate

Champions Cry Too gives every agent permission to pursue their personal potential. Too often, the notion of mental wellness is deficit-based and focuses on people who are experiencing a crisis. Yet wellness is much more than the absence of disease; it is an opportunity for everyone to shift the needle, to be more 'well'. In a high-risk industry for mental health challenges, the first step to enabling our people to be well is to break down the stigma around mental health and to disconnect the notion of high performance as being an all-in pursuit. This read bravely faces the issues of imbalance.

Sarah Bell, CoFounder AiRE and RiTA's Mum

Everyone has a journey. It can be gritty, tough or heartbreaking. The human spirit can endure, recover and then soar to great heights.

This book will help others do that.

Sadhana Smiles (JeraJ), Director Harcourts Move

Real estate can be a fast track way to achieve shiny success for many, often with a whatever-it-takes approach; however, whilst it can be deeply rewarding it is never worth losing your health, relationships, happiness and self-worth over. *Champions Cry Too* is a real, raw and authentic look beneath the slick of the industry shine where it deep dives into the well-spring of human courage and the power of what's possible when we are willing to continue, despite the consuming desire to quit at times!

Tanja Lee, Leadership and Mindset Specialist

Jet knows how to get down to the nitty-gritty of what really matters in life. He gives valuable reminders that working smarter rather than harder can be literally life-saving in more ways than one.

Georgi Bates, Partner Cunninghams Real Estate

The dream is free; the journey isn't. Jet Xavier's *Champions Cry Too* provides a deep and personal perspective of the sacrifice, resilience and perseverance required to reach the pinnacle of our industry. Behind every success and accolade there is a heartfelt story of how the dream to reach the top was often accompanied by extraordinary personal challenges. Those in this book provide every reader with an invaluable resource to help navigate through their own battles and, more importantly, come out the other end triumphantly. I highly recommend *Champions Cry Too*; it makes for compulsory reading for all new and current industry professionals.

Manos Findikakis, CEO Eview Group

Success in real estate can be broken into two parts. Fifty per cent is the 'how to'—the nuts and bolts of real estate systems and structure—and the other fifty per cent is the 'why to'—the internal hunger and motivation. Jet is the coach agents turn to, to get back on track fast. This book gives great insight into how to overcome tough times and get motivated again.

Aaron Shiner, Real Estate Trainer

Elton John once said, “It is a weird thing... to be on stage in front of 80,000 screaming fans calling your name and then to go backstage afterwards and feel like shit.” When we earn huge money in this business, the other side can quite often be obsessiveness, addiction and sadness. In the end, we are not striving against a bunch of KPIs or even to get more money. It comes down to how you feel about yourself and how it looks beyond the perceived “normal” earning power, which can distort all of that. Jet understands this. He has worked outside the industry and within it to bring awareness and is very qualified to do this work. This is a book all agents should read, whether just starting off or in the thick of “success”.

Peter Gilchrist, Real Estate Trainer

It has been refreshing to get a trainer who focuses more on getting the balance right than the dialogue. Jet has lived and breathed a transformation and you can sense it with his ability to engage in the topics he opens up about. He is authentic and very real and I have personally enjoyed the relatability to good business and life lessons. This book is a great reflection of those lessons.

Elliot Placks, Managing Director Ray White Double Bay

DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to its amazing, courageous contributors.

To those who keep turning up every day in the real estate industry to be their best despite the challenges, obstacles or setbacks that come their way.

You all epitomise the champion spirit.

To my daughters, Zoe and Jazmin, who have taught me that being a dad is not about the words you say but the actions you do.

To all my clients, past and present, who have invited me into their lives and their journey, and trusted me along the way to help them be the best version they can be.

To all the people I have met in the real estate industry who have become close friends and supporters. Thank you for always being in my corner.

Finally, to Aneta: you continue to help me stay focused and keep me on track in life and business by not letting me make excuses or lower my standards. You inspire me to think and dream big always, and to consistently turn up as the human I was meant to be. Kocham Cie.

THANK YOU

I would also like to thank the following people, without whom this book would not have been possible.

To those who have shared their stories in this book: you have set great examples of those who never give up, demonstrating what resilience is all about in life and business. You are true testaments that as humans we are remarkable; we can overcome and come back from anything. I respect you all.

To the special clients I have had the privilege of working with over the years who have trusted in my approach. As a result they have taken ownership of their circumstances, creating great lives and businesses that make a difference.

To Sarah Bell who believed in, supported and helped me get the wellness and wellbeing research and message on the map in the Australian real estate industry. In turn, this has helped thousands to re-evaluate what real success is and to focus on what really matters in life and business.

Ben Chick for his constant belief in what I do; Garth Makowski for going over and above to support me always and back me in every way possible; Glenn Twiddle for getting me on his stages in the early days ten years ago and helping me get a leg up in the industry.

John Cunningham for his guidance on many things over the years, and Andrea Tucker for being there when I needed it and helping me through some tough times.

To all the other agents, principals, CEOs, Directors and PMs who have always taken my calls and given their time and energy without asking for anything back. There are way too many to mention; however, if I have ever talked to you about what you thought or if I needed your help for something, then that's YOU. Thank you!

I would also like to thank the following KEY FINANCIAL sponsors of this book. You made this book happen.

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THE REAL CARE APP AND RISE INITIATIVE

The Real Care app is the primary project of the Rise Initiative, an organisation formed in 2019 to recognise the mental health crisis occurring in real estate in Australia and New Zealand. Real Care provides free to access mental health resources for real estate agents and their families in the form of a mobile phone app that can be accessed easily and discreetly at any time. The Real Care app is the result of thousands of hours of research of real estate agents, which revealed that some sixty-five per cent of agents report physical symptoms caused by job-related stress and anxiety.

A survey of more than one thousand Australian real estate agents found that two out of five agents feel overwhelmed by their work and almost half (forty-seven per cent) say that anxiety is a consistent part of their professional life. Some twenty-six per cent use alcohol to cope with the stress, and seven and a half per cent say they've resorted to illegal recreational drugs.

The legacy of these shocking statistics are burnout and even suicide. In 2014 the Coroner's report of Victoria officially classified real estate as a "high-risk industry" with an average annual suicide rate of thirteen people per one hundred thousand employees, placing it higher on the danger spectrum than policing. The Real Care app has been built in conjunction with technology and public health expert David Stanley and the team at Utility Creative, who have produced a similar resource for police forces across Australia and New Zealand.

The app addresses major stressors faced by agents including financial health and wellbeing checks, guidance for self-care and rapid response features for crisis intervention. The Real Care app is an initiative that we believe will improve mental health in the real estate industry and save lives. Download the app from iTunes or Google Play today.

Additional information is available here:

<https://RiseConference.com.au/2020/10/01/jeff-kennett-praises-real-care-app/> or on the www.RiseConference.com.au website.



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: Jet Xavier 1

CHAPTER ONE: Nick Papas 5

CHAPTER TWO: Kate Strickland 12

CHAPTER THREE: Tom Carlin 17

CHAPTER FOUR: Jacq Hackett 27

CHAPTER FIVE: Ryan McCann 36

CHAPTER SIX: Jed Wood 44

CHAPTER SEVEN: John Cunningham 52

CHAPTER EIGHT: Andrea Tucker 62

CHAPTER NINE: Shane Kempton 74

CHAPTER TEN: Sherrie Storer 84

CHAPTER ELEVEN: Anthony Toop 95

CHAPTER TWELVE: Nathan Casserly 110

ABOUT THE AUTHOR 115



Tough times don't last — tough people do.

ROBERT H SCHULLER

INTRODUCTION

Jet Xavier



Champions Cry Too is a book about real people in the real estate industry who have faced and overcome major challenges and adversity in their lives and businesses to create successful careers in real estate. Some were already at the peak of their career success when they were challenged the hardest—they had to really step up to make it through.

This book was created due to over five thousand coaching, training, keynote speaking sessions and the many experiences I have had over the years with agents at various levels. I am constantly inspired by helping my own coaching clients going through very tough times, then watching them come out the other side even stronger and more successful in their lives and businesses than ever before.

The people in this book once again showed me and confirmed that humans are remarkable and able to overcome anything. Regardless of whether they were just starting their careers, reaching million-dollar agent status or running successful multi-million-dollar businesses, this book shares the worst and most challenging of times they went through

2 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

to enable all of us to see that anything is possible if you just keep going forward and don't give up.

Whether it be stress, divorce, financial pressure, serious health problems, attempted suicide impacts, burnout, anxiety, depression, self-doubt, bankruptcy, rejection, work-life integration problems, relationship issues, death of loved ones, business challenges or many other associated issues, this book highlights those who found the courage and resilience to push through, survive and become even stronger and more effective humans.

The true stories in this book exemplify how people can, despite the most adverse conditions, find it within themselves to push on and find the resilience and the courage to not give up. This book is for anybody in the real estate industry who's going through tough times, no matter how small or big. It's for those who feel like giving up and quitting at times and for those who just can't see a way through at the moment. It's for those who need the inspiration to believe in themselves enough to keep going no matter what.

If you are finding it tough right now in life or business or both, I want you to understand a few things that are reflected by the powerful life-changing stories in this book.

- 1.** Keep a positive mindset. Things do get better. Optimism is a powerful drug.
- 2.** Somebody is always in a worse position than you. Perspective is everything.
- 3.** Other people have overcome the same as you, so you can as well. Learn from others and what got them through.
- 4.** Get professional support. You're not alone, so reach out for help because somebody can and wants to help you.
- 5.** Stop feeling sorry for yourself and stop playing the victim. You were born to be the victor.
- 6.** Be solution-focused and not problem-focused, because where your focus goes your energy flows.
- 7.** Be kind, compassionate, non-judgmental and non-critical about yourself and your situation. You are not perfect and it's OK to be vulnerable, make mistakes and even fail sometimes.

INTRODUCTION: JET XAVIER 3

Please use the stories in this book as inspiration to keep going and get through whatever it is you are facing right now. Pass it on to somebody else who might need it as well and share the stories of these awesome humans who overcome adversity—just like you can and will.

Remember you are not alone. You've got this.

Jet Xavier

If you need help in any way please contact these services.



Beyond Blue—1300 22 4636

Lifeline—13 11 14

Kids Helpline—1800 551 800

Suicide Call Back Service—1300 659 467

MensLine Australia—1300 78 99 78

Emergency—000

Reach out to Jet at Jet@JetXavier.com



“You can do anything but not everything.”

DAVID ALLEN

CHAPTER ONE

Nick Papas



For the last seven years, Nick Papas has been awarded the number one agent in the Century 21 Australasian Network, ranking in the top one per cent of C21 agents worldwide. He also is a fully licensed and award-winning auctioneer.

With over seventeen years' experience dedicated to the real estate industry, Nick has one of the best track records in property sales. He is often asked to speak at industry conferences and mentors rising real agents.

Now Nick shares his story—how, whilst at the top of his field, he battled depression, panic attacks, severe anxiety and an experience that made him feel like he was going to die in the midst of it. Nobody knew or detected anything. On the outside it was success and achievement, but on the inside his world was falling apart. His health was impacted, his marriage was strained and he wasn't turning up as a parent.

Nick's story is a great insight into how success does not protect you or make you immune to some of life's biggest challenges.

6 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

How long have you been in real estate and what made you become a real estate agent?

I have been in real estate for over 17 years. I was nearing the end of my apprenticeship as an electrician but just couldn't shake the feeling that all I wanted to be was a real estate agent. I'd always had an interest in real estate, and the thought of helping people buy and sell property and build dreams appealed to me.

I was always really passionate and driven, and I had always envisioned myself doing a job where I could network with people all day and help them to fulfil their goals. Real estate also seemed like a job where you could really make something of yourself and build a nice life. As a young guy, the prospect of making lots of money and having nice things was a huge drawcard. Who wouldn't want to be successful and rich?

My father-in-law also was a huge influence in making the career shift. He would always talk about his work in real estate and the stories and opportunities just made me want to do it.

What do you love about the real estate industry?

I'm not going to lie: from early on in my career it became very evident that if I worked hard and became really good at my job, the money would follow. And when I was younger, that was my driving force.

However, with age and time I guess you realise that that is just the icing on the cake. The thing that makes me get up and put on my suit every day is that I can help make a difference in people's lives. I am often dealing with clients during emotional, difficult or stressful times, and if I can help to make their experience, and the process in general, easier and much more enjoyable then I'm a happy man. I love walking away from a sale knowing that I have done my very best to make my client happy.

I also love the chase. The thrill of getting deals done and expanding myself professionally. And I have been very lucky in that I have been able to share my experiences with others in the industry like others have done with me.

What was the most challenging time in your life as an agent?

This would have to be 2014 when I suffered mental, physical and emotional burnout. I was 30 years old, my wife and I had just had our third child, I was writing about \$1.4m, working ridiculous hours and literally couldn't find time to breathe. I was so focused on work and pleasing every single client around the clock that something had to give. I had stopped being present and supportive to my family, even though everything I thought I was doing was to support and provide for them. My whole life revolved around work and everything else came second, which was really unhealthy.

One night I was driving home from a listing that I had just signed up. It was about 9 pm and I called my wife to tell her I was on my way home and how excited I was about the listing that I'd won over three other great agents. Her response was not the reaction I was looking for.

She was tired, run-down and had had a rough day with the kids and my work was the last thing she wanted to hear about. She exploded about my hours and the effort I was putting into everyone other than my family and she was really unimpressed with me.

Suddenly, my chest felt extremely tight and I was having difficulty breathing. I was driving home on the dark freeway, my heart was beating so fast that it felt like it was coming out of my chest and I was struggling to catch air. I thought I was having a heart attack and all I could think was that I was going to die right there and then.

I drove myself straight to the hospital. My heart rate was approximately 160 bpm and they hooked me up to the machines as a suspected heart attack case. After hours of testing and administering medications, they ruled out any heart attack and informed me that what I had was a panic attack, brought on by stress.

This really hit me hard. I literally felt like I could have died and none of the stress, work or things I was working for would even matter. This was an awakening, but it also created a lot of fear which I didn't expect. So much fear that I was unable to physically get in the car and drive myself to work. I didn't drive anywhere for the next three months, I didn't work for

8 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

the next six months, and it was over a year before I could drive in the car alone. The debilitating fear of dying or something happening to me while I was driving literally stopped me from doing so much.

How did you overcome this challenging time in your life?

The sheer anxiety and panic I felt made me totally isolated. I withdrew from everything, stayed home on the couch and refused to go anywhere or do anything. I felt like anything other than being at home was dangerous to my health, and I couldn't be alone at any time. I neglected my work, friends, family, commitments and anything in life that brought me joy or happiness.

After a few months like this, something suddenly snapped in me. I looked at how my life had become and it made me angry. I realised that the amazing and full life I was living, with everything that I could have ever dreamed of, had all been reduced to the four walls of my house. I reminded myself that I had the three most amazing children and a wife who loved me more than anything, and I knew that I had to get my life together for them.

It wasn't an easy realisation to come to and I did have to make a lot of life changes, but it was the best thing for my life. I was lucky to have had this happen to me when I was young, healthy and strong enough to make some serious changes and rewire the way I thought about and approached life.

From that day I started doing things for *me*. I started seeing a life coach for help on how I could still be successful with my career but be able to give back to my family and loved ones. I started practising yoga and meditation, I joined the gym and I focused more on spirituality. I was determined to start fresh and enjoy all the pleasures of life that were still ahead of me.

What do you think about wellness and wellbeing in the industry and what changes do you feel we need to make?

I believe that the wellbeing of an individual dictates everything else in their life. You can't perform at optimum levels if your mental, physical and emotional health are compromised. And unfortunately, too many people learn this the hard way.

Our industry is also to blame. Real estate has this culture where everyone is always trying to be the biggest and best, and often not caring how they get there. This is evident in the way the general public feel about real estate agents. There is a lot of ego and bravado, and we often focus on the wrong aspects of our job as we think they will bring us the most happiness.

The reality is that most people don't care about all the unrealistic and self-indulgent benchmarks you set for yourself. People don't care if you write a million dollars in GCI, or if you have the best car or if you have one million Instagram followers.

Most people want a real estate agent who is solution-focused, level-headed, trustworthy and knowledgeable in their field. I think we have to start teaching our agents that in the long run these are the traits that will win them repeat business and lifetime relationships with their clients and colleagues. We need to show more empathy and genuine interest in our clients.

We also need to teach our agents that if they look after themselves the rest will follow. And that if they don't, it will eventually all catch up. We are not here to live a superstar lifestyle, and I guarantee many agents have felt the burnout from all the pressure put on them by themselves and the industry.

Real estate agents have to remember that most of the time we are dealing with people's largest investment, and sometimes at very difficult times in their life. It could be death, debt, or even their first home, and the emotions are often high. You can't keep a level head and be in control of your sales if you are not OK. You need to make time for fun, sleep, and family. The rest will start to happen on its own if you are passionate about what you do.

What would you say to others in the industry who are finding it difficult, struggling and facing challenges in life and business?

Sit back and think about what you really want, both in life and in work. This will dictate the way you plan and execute the plan. Write it out and focus on that every day. Make sure that anything you plan out is realistic

10 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

and achievable, while still allowing yourself to dream big and have those goals and dreams that are worth fighting for.

Remember that no matter how many sales you make, no matter how much money you have, no matter how big your house is, we all end up dying eventually, so what's the point of life if you cannot enjoy it and what it has to offer?



“You only live once, but if you do it well once is enough.”

MAE WEST

CHAPTER TWO

Kate Strickland



Kate is one of Australia's top agents, writing over \$1,000,000 per year in GCI. She has also spoken at one of the largest real estate conferences on the planet, AREC, and appears regularly on the speaking circuits around Australia.

Kate is an accomplished real estate professional and since 2011 has been a Director of Marshall White, Brighton. She is positioned at the forefront of Marshall White's Training and Leadership Program.

Kate has a degree in Communications and Business from Monash University. With solid business acumen, she also had great success running an e-Commerce precious metals company. Her experience and drive to succeed in everything she does underline her exceptional abilities.

In her past career as an elite athlete, Kate played softball for Australia on one hundred and forty three occasions and represented Victoria in a multitude of sports. She is highly committed to personal development, with a record of sporting achievements highlighting her focus, drive and determination.

Here Kate shares how her work and life changed forever—from a serious divorce due to no balance in her life and then the death of a close friend by suicide—and how she got through these tough times.

How long have you been in real estate and what made you become a real estate agent?

I entered the sport of real estate following a professional career as a soft-baller, after being with the Australian team from 2003 to 2008 and working in sports coaching and education. I decided it was time to kick off the sneakers and throw on the high heels.

I purchased my first property at twenty-one years of age and was inspired personally by building wealth through a portfolio. I have a love for helping people achieve their goals, so it's just a perfect match.

What do you love about the real estate industry?

It stems from the freedom it provides for you to create your destiny. You determine your success. You determine the hours you put in. You determine your income. It's empowering to be in charge of your life and we are blessed that real estate provides a platform for us all to live a great life if we so desire.

What was the most challenging time in your life as an agent?

My first challenge arose in 2014 when my marriage fell apart in a very public forum. The pressure of time, the hunger to strive and the lofty ego of myself and my then-husband drove us apart. Our obsession with work, money, winning and building wealth meant that it was all falling apart, though we were blissfully unaware.

The more recent challenge came in October 2017, when my dear friend and colleague, who had been by my side almost my entire real estate career, took his own life. To face the pain of this type of loss was excruciating and since his passing the daily activities in the office are a reminder that he is no longer here.

It is still shocking and brings tears to my eyes. Jason will always be by my side on and off the field of real estate.

Real estate brought him into my life and real estate was part of what may have taken him away. We will never know why he chose to end his life that day. I wish I did. I wish I could go back and do something to stop it. It is a challenge I work through every single day.

14 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

How did you overcome this challenging time in your life?

Overcoming those two heartbreaking times has mostly been in the learning: that healing is a journey, not a destination. It is a constant work in progress.

Also, the knowledge that I cannot go it alone. I have learned to lean on professional help and have built a pit crew of people around me to guide me in the right direction.

Having the courage to ask for help is the bravest thing you can ever do. It took me to break down to have that breakthrough.

What do you think about wellness and wellbeing in the industry and what changes do you feel we need to make?

The topic of wellness and wellbeing in real estate is a passionate focus for me. I have been at the coalface of pain and I have also regularly seen the effects with others, demonstrating the need for mechanisms to support and guide all real estate professionals.

It is a limitless industry in so many ways, making it a dangerous profession. Money, ego, lack of education and low barriers to entry can play havoc with relationships, drug and alcohol abuse and self-harm.

What would you say to others in the industry who are finding it difficult, struggling and facing challenges in life and business?

I would encourage all agents, particularly upcoming high performers or those in high-pressure roles, to build a support team around them of what I refer to as a pit crew. When you realise that you have voices inside your head that maybe lean towards the negative, or you tend to believe any limiting beliefs about never being good enough, focus on getting your team around you.

CHAPTER TWO: KATE STRICKLAND 15

It helps to have a support person... someone to look out for you. You commit to having each other's back; you may need them when the going gets tough and vice versa. Also, consider a life coach or professional who can be there to provide strategies to get through the struggles. When you are feeling suffocation from pressure, there is always a way forward. You will come out the other side; believe me, I know.



**“Today I will do what others won’t, so tomorrow I can
do what others can’t.”**

JERRY RICE

CHAPTER THREE

Tom Carlin



Warning—This story may be upsetting to some readers. Should you require assistance, please find the phone numbers you may need at the end of this chapter.

Tom Carlin has been in the top two per cent of real estate agents across the country. At twenty-four years old, Tom wrote \$1.9 million in GCI with his own brand. Without a doubt, an incredible and remarkable achievement.

Tom had it all. However, through several incredibly challenging situations over time, he ended up nearly losing everything, including his life.

Through a crippling relationship breakdown and brutal court case which nearly left him bankrupt, to the battle of finally accepting his sexuality and numerous suicide attempts, Tom shares his road in and out of inner hell to his own personal redemption and amazing comeback in life and business. This is an incredible story of the will to survive in the face of astonishing adversity.

18 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

How long have you been in real estate and what made you become a real estate agent?

I entered the real estate industry aged nineteen in 2007, after arriving from England just a few months earlier. Prior to this I had a brief role in selling cars. I saw a job advertised in the paper that said “no experience needed”. The advertisement said that I would have the ability to earn \$100,000 plus per year, which looked insane for a nineteen year old. I got the job and started out in reception. I had no experience, no knowledge of property in Australia and I had no friends or family to get leads from. My strategy for success was all about hitting the phones and door-knocking to get leads.

At my peak and the tender age of twenty-four, I wrote just under \$1,900,000 GCI. I had a personal pay cheque of seven figures and I owned my very own business.

Fast forward to today, with nearly thirteen years in the industry and over one thousand two hundred sales. I can honestly say it's been a life-changing career and something that I am extremely grateful for. To be able to help people buy their dream home and earn a huge amount of money along the way is mind-blowing, mainly for the fact that we don't work in dangerous conditions, we don't have to go to university for seven years and we don't need outstanding talent. It blows my mind that we can earn more than the Prime Minister, more than most surgeons and on a par with celebrities if you simply work hard and hustle.

What do you love about the real estate industry?

I love that we have the ability to work as much or as little as we desire and that we get rewarded for the effort that we put in. Life is all about choices and the real estate industry provides so many different options to be able to have everything we could ever dream of. It simply comes down to how hard we work and then how much we leverage our time.

I took nearly two years out of the industry and I still managed to keep my brand going. In most respects I had money coming in the door due

to the hard work and ability to leverage my time that I had invested at the start of my career.

What has been the most challenging time in your professional career as an agent?

In 2017 my life was turned upside down when I entered a court battle which nearly resulted in me losing everything that I had spent the previous nine years building. This was a result of a personal relationship breakdown. We entered into a vicious court fight and the battle involved spending horrendous amounts of money on lawyers. It was long, bitter and slanderous. Private investigators were watching my every move and court injunctions sought to remove me from a company and brand that I had put so much into. I felt I was at the mercy of the judge and the court system. I felt exposed and vulnerable. I could have lost it all at the order of the judge.

Simultaneously, I was fighting my own personal demons, trying to work out who I was with my own sexuality. I was fighting against conforming to what I thought was normal and fighting against being honest with myself. All whilst trying to explore who I really was—I was struggling to be honest with myself as well as the outside world.

I had spent my life wanting to be straight; having grown up without the normal bruiser personality, I was constantly reminded by my dad that I didn't want to be gay nor could be.

I had a tough time throughout school with stereotypical bullying, spending the first twenty-seven years of my life thinking that my feelings weren't normal and that something was wrong with me.

At the point of realising that being gay was who I was and that I could not live a life that I was trying to force, I had to make some huge changes.

This was not easy and it also came with huge challenges. Being made to feel unworthy because I was gay, to then accepting it and then owning it, was a hard transition.

Dealing with being gay, going through the breakdown of my long-term straight relationship and then court, all felt like it was too much to handle.

20 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

I entered one of the darkest places possible and depression hit hard. It felt like a huge blow. This is something that I have lived with since and believe it will stay with me for the rest of my life.

I remember times where I would be curled up under my desk, unable to function. I was inconsolable, not wanting to deal with life, its complications and the biased court system.

When I was at home, I spent days in bed. I shut out the world, wanting the world to switch off, the pain to fade away and my mind to stop thinking of the million different things going around in it.

Whilst still technically being in control of a company, going through a court battle and struggling to stay alive, things really started to spiral out of control.

Most team members left the company as I was totally detached from my business world. I would miss appointments, not return calls and even failed to turn up to speaking events booked with no notice provided.

With a brand in a downward spiral, court battles still ongoing and my mental health being in the worst possible state, my team decided to act and started their own replica company. This was a godsend in that it enabled them to save the clients and the reputation that we had built but from the ground up—all without myself being present. I was still trying to comprehend the insensitive and unforgiving legal system that seemed to have favourites. I was still trying to grip onto life.

Talking about my depression and mental state at the time still feels incredibly raw, but I believe that we need to talk about these things. Life has challenges that we all have to deal with and some are stronger than others with the ability to cope. I couldn't cope with the daily struggle of simply being alive. Suicidal thoughts set in and on numerous occasions I tried to take my own life. I did not want to be alive and face the pain of the world. I had thoughts that had me believe that I wasn't right for the world. I didn't feel worthy and I didn't feel accepted—it crushed everything about me.

I would often dream about dying, and when I did an elated feeling would come over me; this became the norm and unfortunately became the happy place in my world.

All I could think was: if I switched the button off then all my pain would be gone and my mind would be empty. I would not have to think anymore. If the lights were off, my mind was blank and everything was in darkness; I would have no pain, no feelings and no thoughts. It was a long, hard road, and even today I still have these feelings—but nowhere near the dark world that I used to be in.

How did you overcome this challenging time in your life?

In May 2018 part of my life returned with an out of court settlement. Whilst the court system had been a huge trigger for the depression, it was not the sole contributor and still only fixed part of the problem.

I retained control of my assets and got control of my life back. I was, however, on the brink of bankruptcy. I had huge debts and my company was in pieces, tarnished by lies.

The brutal reality of our industry is that a minority within it loves to see people fail. These people are happiest when others don't succeed. They will do anything to spread lies and slander if it means that it will hurt others further.

In the months following I joined the Carlin Team, which was the newly formed company that was working from their own offices. We stripped down our remaining assets, moved back to our original premises and we entered into a huge rebranding phase.

I am lucky that I had some amazing people around me assisting me to rebuild. If it wasn't for a few golden people we would not have a company, nor would I potentially be alive.

By the beginning of 2019, we started to make some progress within the market, building on our solid reputation. Month after month, we added to our marketing and our team. We still had hurdles along the way—staff came and went, but every month we got stronger and we progressed. We spent the year paying down debts, clearing tax bills and ensuring that we were on the right track to building an amazing brand.

From near bankruptcy in mid-2017 to, less than three years later, having two offices, the largest rent roll we ever had and now recording the same

22 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

figures from the peak of our previous days, is an overwhelming feeling of achievement. We created the “pink” Carlin Team from scratch and have made it in most respects into a noticeable household name.

I am lucky to have made it through this journey, from questioning if this was my world and wanting the pain to disappear; I knew I would need to learn to adapt and evolve myself in order to survive and truly be happy.

It is still an ongoing process to be able to love myself and be proud of who I am, but unfortunately in a cruel and unforgiving world it's not always so simple. I have struggled and managed to make it through without medication, all with the help of some amazing people, often at the detriment to themselves and their lives—but they helped me keep mine.

I have learnt the difference between anxiety and depression and I can manage them both. Every day I do, the world becomes a lot clearer and much more manageable. This will be the first time I have been honest and open about my world, instead of still trying to hide who I am. I have not spoken to my dad in nearly ten years as he doesn't relate to any of this. That's just the person he is. A lot of the guilt and shame of being who I am came from him and his cruel and derogatory comments growing up.

The real estate industry has so many amazing benefits such as flexibility, not only with working hours but also the role you want to do. You get to choose how much you want to incorporate the job into your personal life and what tasks you do and don't undertake.

Real estate also has huge downsides; sometimes it can be a cruel and “dog eat dog” world. You will often deal with people that only think about themselves, you will find people you can't trust and those that go back on their word.

We are not just real estate agents; we can be life coaches, marriage counsellors, accountants, lawyers, interior designers, marketing experts and emotional sounding boards. Whilst our main role is really negotiation, people can rely on us having these traits and sometimes it can be a lot to take on board.

Not only is life hard enough with your own problems, we often deal with twenty other people's issues too. We can be summoned to court, we could

become entwined in trying to help clients away from domestic violence and sometimes these issues can leave a huge weight on your shoulders. Mental health, I believe, needs to be a company's number one focus with all employees. If we support and assist in this area, we can often have a huge impact on people's lives where they might not normally get this support. I feel that change is needed in this respect, from being open and honest about mental health issues to having support as a collective.

It is often a competition for the best plastic trophy at the awards nights and this can be a huge strain on people not feeling like they are good enough. I can totally see the benefits of reward systems but also acknowledge the adverse effects this can have.

What do you think about wellness and wellbeing in the industry and what changes do you feel we need to make?

In order to combat and effectively improve mental health for everyone, the industry needs to shift its focus to service delivery and client satisfaction rather than top dollar producers. This shift will have a huge change in employee mental health. Companies individually should look at offering support and discussions around mental health. They should give staff free time to de-stress and provide a supportive environment. An office should be a safe and happy place, rather than one filled with stress and toxic environments.

Individuals need to recognise how much they are dealing with and sometimes learn when to say no. They need to learn when to leave the phone in the drawer and to have family time. The more you sometimes give, the more people will take and this will eventually lead to burnout.

I foresee companies becoming a lot more in tune with employee happiness and wellbeing, finding ways to provide support to staff. I also see a general shift in the industry that will recognise the mental and emotional aspects of the roles that we are put through and lead to change in the way we view our colleagues and peers. Twenty years ago these would never have been discussed in the workplace.

What would you say to others in the industry who are finding it difficult, struggling and facing challenges in life and business?

Your current situation is simply a moment in time and everything can change in an instant for the better or worse. Life is all about choices, and sometimes these may be small steps to a greater goal; but by taking the bull by its horns and making these positive steps, things will get better — sometimes slowly, but eventually rock bottom seems like a distant memory. Each individual is different in how they can help themselves; exercise, meditation and healthy eating can make a huge difference to our lives, as well as having more family time and spending valuable time with loved ones.

Never underestimate the power of telling someone you love them and that they are appreciated, because when they are gone you will always wish you had told them one more time. Life can often be difficult and hard; sometimes it seems so unfair, but often most of our issues come from within and the pressure we put on ourselves. My best advice is to figure out what makes you happy and plan a way to make this happen. Go after it with everything you have and forget the excuses. Spend each day with your vision in mind and always work to try and be a better person. Never forget how truly amazing you really are.

Working in real estate has enormous highs and lows. We have pressure from our peers, bosses, clients and family. We often wear so many different hats that we try to please everyone. We also have social expectations too. We often need to take a step back, appreciate ourselves and take time out to enjoy life and all it has to offer.

I am forever thankful for what this industry has given me, the friends I have made and the rewards that have been afforded to me for the hard work I have put in. I could not think of a better industry to work in nor a better place to do it. I always try to remember constantly that today is the present, yesterday is the past and tomorrow may never come — so live your best life today.

If you need assistance, please seek help on the following numbers:



Beyond Blue—1300 22 4636

Lifeline—13 11 14

Kids Helpline—1800 551 800

Suicide Call Back Service—1300 659 467

MensLine Australia—1300 78 99 78



“Who wills, can. Who tries, does. Who loves, lives.”

ANNE MCCAFFREY

CHAPTER FOUR

Jacq Hackett



From a failed business, a broken marriage and struggling to support three daughters, Jacq quit her secure but low-paying job, pulled her girls out of school and got into real estate. With all odds against her, she went from having eighty-eight cents in the bank to eventually earning eighty thousand dollars' worth of commissions in six weeks.

Jacq's story is a testament to having a determined and possibility-focused mindset.

How long have you been in real estate and what made you become a real estate agent?

Six years. I didn't mean to become an agent as I don't particularly trust salespeople. But from day one, I held onto a belief that has opened more than one type of door.

“The great thing about the subconscious is it doesn't know the difference between reality and imagination. The great thing about quantum mechanics is that there is no difference between reality and imagination.”

That was what I told fellow agents a few months after my real estate career began late in 2013. I was working as an on-the-job trainee with a major brand, smashing all the KPIs, and was asked to speak at one of the monthly motivational meetings. The Company was (and still is) very proactive in supporting, educating and motivating staff to increase productivity, and they wanted to pick my brains about how I managed to go from a standing start to knocking it out of the ballpark on my first day and every day for those three months.

Unfortunately, very few people grasp how my mind works. I believe when the “logical” mind is engaged, the intuitive and creative mind ceases to function and it is only when the subconscious is explored we find the magic to do the impossible. I'll try to explain:

Becoming a real estate agent was not a logical decision I made, nor something I planned. I kind of fell into it. A close friend from Victoria saw a real estate job advertisement to earn \$100,000 and applied to attend the free information night in Brisbane. His application was accepted. Unable to leave Melbourne, he asked me to go on his behalf. I had a failed business, a broken marriage and was struggling to support my three daughters, so I went with both curiosity and the intention of giving him feedback.

One of the successful agents presenting that night was a single mother of two children. Within the first few minutes I was hooked on the idea that if she could do it, so could I. I quit my secure, but low paying job, pulled the girls out of school and moved closer to the nearest real estate office to where I wanted to work. That's not logical. People told me I was crazy, reckless and insensible.

I have been told that all my life! People—family, friends and work colleagues have told me, “It’s impossible!” “You can’t do that!” “You’re talking rubbish!” The thing is, when enough people put their own insecurities on you and your negative self-talk begins repeating it, your subconscious believes it as truth; you cut yourself off from your creative potential and logical reality becomes your prison. No matter how many self-help books you read or motivational seminars you attend, if you have taken on a mind-set of limiting belief by living in a reality where things are impossible it’s hard to believe in yourself.

In real estate, you get paid your worth. I have always believed in my own self-worth.

What do you love about real estate?

The limitless possibilities it offers!

I began my real estate career on 8 October 2013 with \$0.88 in the bank (one of the postscripts of the Lockyer Arts Festival debt). Sixteen months later I remember wanting to take the rest of the quarter off having already made \$80,000 commission in six weeks. I was living in a million-dollar house and driving a brand-new Audi Cabriolet. I remember the gratitude I felt when my eldest daughter needed an emergency extraction of all four wisdom teeth and I was able to hand over \$2,000 and end her pain immediately. I feel the same gratitude when I drive with the top down and the wind in my hair...

Working in real estate gives us the freedom to choose. It doesn't matter if we are single or married; male or female; childless or with dependents. We get paid our worth.

What was the most challenging time in your life as an agent?

The first day I was told to pick up the phone and book three appointments or I wouldn't have a job.

How did you overcome this challenging time in your life?

I picked up the phone and booked three appointments.

It really was as simple as that. But don't discount how hard that challenge was. Challenges stop us in our tracks and either break us or make us. Those life-changing events happen every day and begin at a very early age. It is our attitude to those challenges that prevent us from picking up the phone or compiling a list of numbers to dial. I don't believe challenges get any easier—we just get better at handling them. Let me explain with a story:

Do you remember when we were young, we believed we could do anything? The whole world was magical. A simple cardboard box was a rocket ship, an island refuge, a fire engine. We would moonwalk with aliens, outswim sharks and go save the world, all before breakfast.

When I was two my father told me how disappointed he was with me. I remember him walking towards a large building, holding my hand. My little legs had trouble keeping up with his pace. All the way down the driveway he kept repeating, "A son! A son! I finally have a son. You were my firstborn—you were meant to be born a boy!"

I was two!

I am so grateful that my young mind took that as a challenge. My childhood was spent doing things older boys did... doing things little girls didn't. I climbed trees. I scaled walls. I jumped off balconies. I helped the milkman deliver milk (for any Gen Y or Gen Z reading this, delivering milk was a thing in Gen X days). I rode in the garbage truck as the dustman emptied rubbish bins from our street. I did everything I could to prove I was just as good as any boy, but by being different, I grew up without girlfriends. When my pre-teen body began to develop, I was a scrawny and awkward creature and the boys on the street began to taunt and tease me. I turned to books. Apart from holidays with my grandparents, my primary school years were without any social influence. My solitary existence didn't involve other people or their judgements—so I didn't develop negative self-talk.

My family immigrated to Australia in 1980. Still a tomboy and determined to make friends, I joined a group of older kids playing in bushland nearby. My young brain was probably too fragile to cope with those five

high school boys who attacked me. As a safety mechanism, my mind just locked the memory away until I could come to terms with being raped.

I was eleven!

Twenty-four years later I was living a dream life: I was happily married with three children; I had written, illustrated and published a successful children's picture book; and I was immersed in an Indigenous community who taught me to embrace a nature-based spirituality that matched my own philosophies. I had it all. Whoohoo! My mind decided the buried memory was no longer a threat ... so it resurfaced.

Strangely enough, I was more amazed by finally having a reason for poor recall than concerned with my body being violated so many years earlier. Again, I was so grateful that my mind took the initiative to protect me and prepare me for more challenges. And with that, the realisation that the subconscious mind works quite independently from the logical processor. I theorised that if it worked for my benefit without conscious guidance, then with focused intent my subconscious mind could do other miraculous things...

Are you still with me?

To be honest, I didn't understand how my brain worked either, but I basically thought if I believed I could do something, it was as good as done.

I tested the theory many times by embracing challenges others thought were impossible. One such challenge was persuading singing diva Marcia Hines to perform a concert at the Gatton Shire Hall as part of a four-day free event upon the anniversary of the 2011 floods. The entire event was my idea — The Lockyer Arts Festival was a gathering of artists, performers, authors and television personalities who gave free tutorials in painting, illustrating, singing, writing and cooking. It was an exercise in resilience: bringing a region wracked in grief and loss to heal through creativity. By taking this challenge, I found the ability to set up a charity, acquire funding from sponsors, donations and government grants and entice some of the country's top artists to become involved.

The event planning, preparation and executing was (back then) my most challenging time in life. The four days went so quickly after ten months of hard work. It was my greatest success. It was also my greatest failure.

32 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

I remember sitting in the front row of the concert at the finale. The two groups who had won the Battle of the Bands competition in the lead up to the event had both finished performing as the support acts. As Marcia Hines walked on stage I received a text message from Mayor Steve Jones saying the major sponsor of the event had pulled out. It was a handshake deal between the mayor, the Member of Parliament and the CEO of a major company. It was worth \$100,000. The event suddenly went from \$40,000 in profit (which was going to go towards the charity) to \$60,000 in debt. Marcia was singing “Happy Birthday” to me and thanking the people of the Lockyer Valley for inviting her to perform. I had a surreal out of body experience—I didn’t have the money to pay her.

As a child, I used to devour my father’s self-help and motivational books. I was well versed in *Think & Grow Rich* and *Seven Habits of Highly Successful People* before we came out to Australia. I continued reading about mindset, philosophy and psychology my entire life. But going from the highest of highs to the lowest of lows in a split second was something a person can’t understand academically. You have to live it to appreciate it.

That’s what real estate is like.

The roller coaster highs and the stomach-churning lows are a day to day, minute by minute reality in real estate sales.

The most miraculous, hallelujah, light bulb moment of my entire life happened in the front row of my very own birthday concert. It was the most beneficial present to myself, ever! I sat there knowing for sure I was about to face another challenge. I knew for sure that life was about to change in a BIC way. As the director of the festival, I was liable for all the costs and there was nothing I could do about it. So I relaxed. I sang along with Marcia and the rest of the audience. I thoroughly enjoyed the concert and the smiles of the people who came to forget about their worries and losses. I found joy and peace in the moment.

It cost me the business, my car, my marriage and eventually the house... and led me to attend a real estate information night which changed my life, again.

The challenges in life as a real estate agent are comparatively insignificant. It is the decision to face the challenge of booking a listing appointment or three, every day, that makes or breaks an agent.

What do you think about wellness and wellbeing in the industry and what changes do you feel we need to make?

What needs to change? Belief!

Firstly, I don't view wellness or wellbeing as having a work/life balance in any industry. I'm not going to recommend taking time off as a method to escape the stresses of work. Wellness and wellbeing are mental and psychosomatic states, regardless of geography. I believe it is the ability to value our own self-worth and choose to feel joy or peace in any given moment. Without that fundamental understanding, I believe all areas of life are at risk.

Secondly, real estate is a peculiar, results-driven industry where periods of low or no results equate to more than just low or no income. The industry feeds the modern societal association of success with material wealth (Results = \$ = Success). Likewise, the industry attacks our feelings of self-worth when our efforts (through no fault of our own) prove ineffective, ineffectual or unsuccessful.

Entering real estate practising mindfulness with a relaxed, anything-is-possible mindset made it easy for me to find listings, uncover people's needs and make lots of sales. In 2017, Pricerunner's "The A-List" had me ranked one hundred and three out of sixteen thousand five hundred Queensland agents. At the time I averaged thirty listings on my books. I was signing up ten and selling six to eight each month. The Company supplied a receptionist/administration assistant and a contract reviewer to help with the paperwork, but I didn't have a buyer manager or co-lister to help with the actual, daily results.

I invested heavily in myself and my ability to grow my business: I changed brands, partnered with another agent and employed a third.

34 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

I wrote a book on my beliefs and methods, spoke at seminars, was interviewed by The Real Estate Experts and QUT filmed a documentary on me in 2019. There was disbelief... but our team signed 99 per cent of all listing presentations with full marketing paid upfront, between 3.5 per cent and 4.8 per cent commission, when our competition asked for 2.2 per cent.

Feeling worthy is a state of wellbeing. It is a conscious thought process that carries us to the highs and through the lows by appreciating the present moment. It is the ability to view challenges as learning opportunities without judging them to be good or bad. Being in a state of wellbeing is therefore the actual measure of success. It is the belief in this that needs to change.

What would you say to others in the industry who are finding it difficult, struggling and facing challenges in life and business?

If we can create a reality from our imagination and choose to refuse others' shortcomings to be imposed upon us, we can believe in our own self-worth. Our minds are incredible. Famous motivational coaches have claimed, "The shortest distance between Point A and Point B is a straight line." They would all have us believe Point A is us, here, now. They know we will struggle with challenges as we fight and lose ground to reach Point B. They would have us believe Point B is the goal—it is success—it is material wealth—it is what we really want. They will try to motivate us to keep fighting our way through the challenges to get there. Why? Because we all want to feel successful. We all want to have self-worth.

But here's the magic.

"The great thing about the subconscious is it doesn't know the difference between reality and imagination. The great thing about quantum mechanics is that there is no difference between reality and imagination."

Point A is Point B—you are already there.



“It’s hard to beat a person that never gives up.”

BABE RUTH

CHAPTER FIVE

Ryan McCann



Ryan McCann has been awarded Queensland Salesperson of the Year at First National Real Estate for the past five years. Ryan's Cleveland office also won First National Sales Office of the Year, Queensland, for 2020.

Ryan has won countless awards in real estate and was named First National Number Two Sales Person in Australia. He is regularly in the top 100 agents in the country in both the REB Top 100 list and Rate My Agent's Top 100 agents, which includes all real estate brands across Australia. For the past three years Ryan has been the most successful agent within the prestigious Raby Bay Waterfront area, winning Rate My Agent of the Year for Cleveland.

For Ryan, it hasn't always been like this. In this raw, brutal, tell-it-like-it-is chapter, Ryan shares how he went from a career on the rise as number two sales agent in Queensland for one of the country's biggest national brands, writing nearly \$1million in commission fees a year, to being arrested for serious drug use. Ryan spent six weeks in jail and a month in rehab losing it all. He then made an incredible comeback, to create an even more successful business and life. Ryan's story is a powerful reminder of what's possible.

How long have you been in real estate and what made you become a real estate agent?

I have been in real estate for twenty-one years and all but the first twelve months I was on commission only. I started my real estate career at the age of twenty and it has been my only full-time job. When I commenced as a rookie in 1998, I did so following in my dad's footsteps; he was a very successful real estate agent in my local area here in the Bayside area of Brisbane. I made him the promise that I would give real estate a go if I could not secure a Super League contract with the Western Reds during the Rugby League wars. So when I fell just short and I couldn't secure a contract in Rugby League, I stayed true to my word and it's been real estate ever since. In a way, it's been a blessing in disguise as not many footballers have a twenty-plus year career— that's what I tell myself, anyway.

I worked in the Smith Chip factory fresh out of school as a permanent casual employee, saved up enough money with a lot of overtime to buy a car and saved my deposit for a house at the age of nineteen. This gave me a really good understanding of how the industry worked from a buyer's point of view and that is what really ignited my interest in the property market.

What do you love about the real estate industry?

I know it's a cliché, but I love helping someone get to the next chapter in their life. We as agents are problem solvers, in my opinion; whether that be clients having job relocations, divorce, upgrading, downsizing or two families merging into one home, we are there to solve problems. I enjoy being that person. I truly thrive on exceeding my clients' expectations; when my clients set me a target to achieve, sometimes I can better that number by \$50,000, sometimes \$5,000, but even if it's \$1,500—I love to see their faces when I turn up with that signed contract. I love that they know I went that extra mile and tried just that little bit harder; it's an awesome feeling, it's priceless and it cements me as their first agent of choice. Sometimes that relationship can last for decades; I appreciate the trust they show in me and the opportunities that follow.

38 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

Listing presentations are also something I love doing, for a completely different reason. I am a competitive person by nature; this aspect of the business allows me to compete for someone's business, to put my views on the table, explain why I am the best option for them, to ensure their home sells for the premium price. I really relish that process.

As a rookie I would practise listing presentations with people that were upfront with me and would openly say we aren't thinking of selling for at least five years—it was just great practice for me so I would be ready for when it really mattered. To be successful in real estate you require a flawless listing presentation; learning how best to connect with complete strangers and giving them the absolute best advice so they're in a better financial position when they sell is extremely motivating for me.

I think selling real estate gives you great flexibility in life; sometimes it feels inflexible, but if you really love what you do, you make it work. Like any business or trade, your first three to four years are about learning your craft. They're absolutely the hardest years finance-wise, but from there you should be kicking some serious goals and establishing a solid career with sales and creating repeat business. This is what I love about real estate—there is no ceiling on what you can earn as long as you master what you're trained to do; the sky's the limit on what you can achieve. It really is up to the individual agent. The saying “you get out what you put in” is certainly true when it comes to real estate sales.

What was the most challenging time in your life as an agent?

Nearly six years ago I was arrested for drug use. I spent six weeks in remand and a month in rehab; this was fifteen years into my real estate career. I was the number two sales agent in Queensland for one of the country's biggest national brands, writing nearly \$1million in commission fees a year. Six years on, 2019 was my best year ever with personal sales figures above \$1.75million in GCI.

One of the most rewarding things for me was each year from 2015 my sales figures increased despite heavy media coverage on my huge fall from

grace. Learning how to forgive myself and getting myself into a position to make my inner circle proud of me once again was my first personal hurdle. I was determined not to let my past define my future; once I understood this, I could move on in life.

Today I am very proud to be First National's number one agent in Queensland for four years and the number two agent in Australia for this brand. I have twenty-two staff employed in my office at First National Cleveland and I am most proud of that. My fall in 2014 was easily the hardest and most challenging thing I have endured in my life, but ultimately it was also the best thing to ever happen to me.

This may surprise people, but I wouldn't change one thing that happened. I needed to reset, reprogram, be more grateful and learn more empathy. I needed that kick in the pants and it took hitting rock bottom for me to realise how much I loved real estate, and how much I wanted real estate to be part of my life. Without all of this happening, I wouldn't own my own business. I wouldn't have quality staff at my office. I wouldn't be earning what I do today and most importantly I would not be off drugs six years on.

This experience opened doors for me to be active with charities such as Drug Arm, a charity where we have funded twenty young adults to attend rehabilitation; this is something very close to my heart and that motivates me still to this day.

How did you overcome this challenging time in your life?

It was impossible to overcome what I went through without an inner circle of support. My support group was impregnable when I had days of doubt—and there were many days. They kicked me out of bed when the major newspapers printed lies on the front page to sell papers. They held me up, dusted me off and said “We start again tomorrow”. When journalists came looking for a story, they handed me keys to their holiday home to escape so I could get my head together. They encouraged me to seek out First National Real Estate and to ask them for an opportunity.

40 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

I was good enough and I did deserve to have a second chance in real estate. I didn't believe I was worthy of that myself at the time and that was despite all the help, guidance and coaching I had given others for over a decade in my previous roles within real estate offices. When I announced I was opening my own office I had six staff pack their bags from the largest office in our area and walk across the road to start a new venture with me; it was incredible.

Without family and that close inner circle, I will say it would have been almost impossible to overcome what I went through. Yes, there needs to be a great self-belief in our business and thick skin certainly helps, but no matter how much I screamed my side of the story, for some, what the newspaper printed was the truth. Without that support around you, I would challenge anyone to be able to re-establish themselves and then improve their real estate figures and, more importantly, better themselves as a person as well.

Some advice I learned early was to always treat the janitor like you treat the CEO; be genuine about it as one day you really may need others to help you—I certainly learnt that.

What do you think about wellness and wellbeing in the industry and what changes do you feel we need to make?

I personally think that the education of wellness and wellbeing is at a very low level in real estate, unfortunately. We operate in a very competitive industry where there is no greater fear than the fear of loss. If you think you will lose something (like a listing) you want it even more, and when you get that call saying, "We went with another agent", some agents take it very personally and poorly.

We will work seven days a week, twelve hours a day, because if we do not the buyer or seller will call someone else. It's a dangerous practice, especially over a long period of time. This is partly to blame for me self-destructing in 2014. I was burnt out; I wouldn't leave the office until 10 pm most nights and not having a day off in thirty days was absolutely normal

for me; I couldn't say no to people and would book appointments when I had arranged to take the day off.

Today I am much more selfish with my time off. I take random days off if I feel burnt out as long as my assistant can handle my daily diary. Today I do not work as many hours as I did back in 2007 to 2014, but I work smarter and my personal sales and income have doubled since then.

The industry could really do with coaching and information classes for agents on wellness. We train on VPA, social media, advertising and listing presentations—wellness and wellbeing need to be just as important. What is the point of being the best agent in your area for four to five years if you burn out or end up in a rehabilitation facility as I did? 2014 was a massive wake-up moment for me and I now understand what I was doing was the wrong way to be successful in the industry. For me, there had to be a better avenue and thankfully I found it.

The one question that has always been in the back of my mind is, “Without fifteen years’ proven track record in sales, would I have been able to bounce back as quickly as I did?” What happens to the agent without that long history of sales? Their health and future are just as important as mine was. With wellness coaching, we could help many agents notice the warning signs before they go off the rails or self-destruct, as I certainly did.

What would you say to others in the industry who are finding it difficult, struggling and facing challenges in life and business?

First and foremost, it's important to have a mentor/coach, someone who can give you one on one time. It's one of the most important things that saved not only my career but my life. I was on the path to completely self-destruct, I was miserable in my workplace, I disliked the environment I was working in and at the time I went through an emotional and disastrous break-up in my personal life. Smoking ice just completely numbed me. I was unfortunate to be a highly functioning addict; I say that because despite my heavy use of drugs my sales were still good enough for me to

42 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

win state and national recognition, so nobody tapped me on the shoulder to ask if things were OK. My figures didn't slide, it was just business as usual — nobody knew.

My life coach/mentor isn't directly in real estate, he is a builder/developer; a very successful individual with an amazing family, and he took me under his wing and coached me on success and taught me how and why to cancel noise outside of what I can't control. Without him I wouldn't be where I find myself today. The fact a person like him believed in me gave me great confidence in silencing any doubters. He taught me that the doubters had a vested interest in seeing me not succeed.

My advice to anyone struggling is to ensure you listen to other people's positive advice and practise your skills as an agent. You don't know it all, so stop thinking that you do. After twenty-one years in the business, much of that time at the very top of our industry, I still learn things on a weekly basis. Attending training or coaching is paramount in staying at the top, even if you're the best at what you do and you already know what is being said at training; just hearing what is said can reinvigorate or remind you of things that you can improve to make your service or your business better.



“What other people think of me is none of my business.”

ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

CHAPTER SIX

Jed Wood



Jed Wood was on his way to a very long-standing successful career in real estate until he burnt out and nearly didn't make it back.

He was working ten to fourteen hours a day. He was angry, severely stressed, overweight and always worried about what people thought. This finally took its toll and he was hospitalised for seven days. After burnout Jed was forced to rethink his aspirations, which in turn led him to assess and rebuild his business model. During this process, he also realised that he had to let go of what other people thought.

Doing so, Jed became a million-dollar agent. He is now recognised as an industry leader who speaks and trains agents at major training conferences. An avid sports fan and dedicated family man, Jed and his wife Ellen have three children and they live in the Cronulla area.

Jed's story will challenge the industry to rethink their business models so they align with holistic approaches to success.

It's not always about money.

How long have you been in real estate and what made you become a real estate agent?

I have been in real estate since 1998, straight out of high school. I did work experience three times before I left school in years ten, eleven and twelve with one of the people I looked up to as a youngster. He was doing really well. He made it look cruisy and relaxed.

After doing work experience in high school, I was attracted to the industry by the ever-changing environment and I liked that you were not stuck in an office all day long.

My three brothers are tradespeople and I didn't want to work in that type of environment. I did three days of work experience as a plumber with one of my older brothers and told him I wasn't coming back for the last two days as I hated it. He later told me that he gave me all the s*** jobs to do to try and turn me off! During my last stint of work experience, I was reading the jobs section of the newspaper and saw a job advertised at my current office. I then created a resume and submitted my application. Three interviews later I had the job as the office junior.

My parents had several real estate transactions, buying and selling our family home and investment properties. As a twelve-year-old, I was mesmerised by one of the agents they dealt with. He was probably about fifty years old at the time. My parents became friends with him and we would go to his home for parties every few months. He lived in a beautiful waterfront home, had two boats, six cars and was a really outgoing person. I was attracted to the glamorous lifestyle and luxury.

What do you love about the real estate industry?

I love the competition to win business, the fact our income has no limit and we are rewarded for our hard work. You get to create your own future pending how well you apply yourself. I love the fact I can choose the hours I work and spend time with my family at important times like school drop off, sports carnivals, excursions and so on.

46 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

I love creating relationships with people in our community, providing advice on selling their homes and helping to guide them through what can be a very tough and challenging time in their lives, whether they are selling for good or bad reasons in good or bad markets.

Having a seller listen intently to your advice is quite a satisfying feeling as you are handling the sale of their most valuable asset.

It's also rewarding calling a buyer week in, week out, helping them on their search for a new home. Then once you have their ideal home listed, you get to witness them push as hard as they can, making offers or bidding against others at an auction. It's like a sport. I love that!

What was the most challenging time in your life you have had as an agent?

There have been two very challenging times in my life:

The first was from 2005 to 2010, when I went from being everyone's friend in the office as a sales assistant to the new agent in the sales department. I quickly realised that the world of real estate sales is incredibly competitive and no one was going to do me any favours. I was now a competitor to the other established agents within my own office.

I started at zero contacts and had to create my database one relationship at a time. I was allocated a suburb that no one else wanted. Fortunately, I was able to gain traction within the market place quite quickly with multiple listings on the go.

This led to me working seven days per week, ten to fourteen hours per day whilst trying to be everything to everyone—managing sellers, buyers, administration and marketing. I was considerably stressed and was struggling to sleep and function properly. It felt like I had static from an AM radio going in my head.

I was drinking a lot of alcohol to try and escape and numb the noise in my head. Feeling guilty at the excessive drinking I was doing, I would then go to the gym and bust my gut working out and training like a man possessed. It was complete madness!

I was so driven and competitive by nature that I just kept on pushing through. I didn't give myself any rest or downtime. I was trying to make myself proud, but deep down wanted to prove to my family and friends that I was really becoming something in the world.

My thoughts were out of control and I was thinking in a way that was not productive. As an example, I would dream about punching or stabbing my competitors in the street if they beat me to a listing! I was running on adrenaline, anger and fear.

I ended up in hospital twice in three years. The first occasion was in 2008, in the middle of the night. I woke up with excruciating pain in my stomach. I got out of bed and then passed out. The pain was so intense my fiancée took me to the hospital. I had turned an awful shade of yellow and was on a drip. Numerous tests and assessments revealed I had a blocked bile duct.

By 2011 I was married with one son and had what felt like an enormous mortgage. I was working long hours, feeling guilty about being at work when I thought I should be home and feeling guilty when I was at home when I thought I should be at work.

I wasn't present at any moment.

I was making a lot of money, receiving many accolades and awards, but I still felt like I wasn't enough and needed to do more and more. Nothing was ever good enough. I was chasing an impossible scoreboard.

Our son had a minor illness and I caught it from him. It hit me hard but I didn't slow down and tried to push through. A few days later I couldn't handle any noise, I was sensitive to light, I couldn't even stand up! My wife drove me to the hospital again and I was immediately admitted and given a lumbar puncture and morphine.

I had meningitis and the test results were showing I had both bacterial and viral meningitis. I spent five nights in the hospital before the doctors were able to clarify whether I had a viral or bacterial infection. Because they were unsure I was receiving medication for both. The feeling of being in a hospital bed without a proper diagnosis was terrifying. I was feeling incredibly scared and vulnerable. After a ten-night stay in the hospital,

48 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

I was discharged but had to see brain specialists and have ongoing tests. I had forgotten some basic words and had lost some memory.

I was thirty years old and I was burnt out!

All I could think was... Was this career right for me and what was I going to do?

How did you overcome this challenging time in your life?

In 2012 I started searching for peace of mind and a better way to operate.

As the world would have it, I connected with Jet Xavier. I was able to learn all about the way my brain was chemically responding to the messages I was giving it. I learnt that I was running on the “fight or flight” feeling and adrenaline, which burnt me out. I was able to identify the story I was telling myself and realise that I was trying to prove myself to an audience I thought were watching me when really the only person watching me was me!

By learning all about my emotions and triggers I was able to calm myself down and let go of a lot of the baggage I was carrying around. The best day of my life was when I realised no one was actually watching me and I no longer cared what other people thought of me!

I created my first winner's bible. My goals were clear. My story was positive and focused. My history did not define me. I had learnt from my mistakes.

Jet opened my eyes to the opportunity of increasing my network and marketing opportunities whilst working smarter, not harder.

What do you think about wellness and wellbeing in the industry and what changes do you feel we need to make?

I think wellness and wellbeing are incredibly important. I'm not sure what the solution is with regards to how we can help others in the industry; however, one thing that comes to mind is that we need to remove the attachment to the “million-dollar agent” and stop putting people up on a pedestal based on their GCI.

The truth with most GCI is there is a ten-year career plan and several assistants working for the agent. We should be focusing on agents who take care of their families, take regular holidays and live a healthy lifestyle. We need to educate agents about how their brain works. One of the best things I learnt from Jet Xavier was how to understand the chemicals in your brain, the different parts of my brain and how to best harness them. Learning meditation, gratitude and reflection is the next best thing.

What would you say to others in the industry who are finding it difficult, struggling and facing challenges in life and business?

I would ask them if their expectations were in line with their time in the business, their ability and their personality. There are eight agents in my office and one of the critical things that set some agents apart from the rest is just how effective they are in their time management and creating outcomes. Some spend way too much time on tasks that are not dollar productive and not outcome/solution focused.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Real estate is not a five- to ten-year career. It's a lifelong lifestyle that requires your total commitment. Now that I have been married for eleven years and have three children, I can tell you it's an entire family affair.

Our kids are used to being in the back seat of my car and know the rules—when dad's on the phone they need to be quiet. My family knows that I am not going to be home for dinner Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday but I will be there Thursday and Friday afternoons to pick them up from school and bring them home. They know I cannot watch them every single week when playing sports, but I will be there when I can. We get to enjoy great family weekends away and school holidays camping, which are scheduled every year in advance.

There is an incredible amount of competition and comparison in real estate, and I feel it's an unnecessary part of the whole industry that drags

50 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

many people down by focusing them on their competitors as opposed to concentrating on their own actions. I know I was guilty of it.

One of the best days of my life was when I stopped caring about what other people thought about me!



**“To live is the rarest thing in the world.
Most people exist, that is all.”**

OSCAR WILDE

CHAPTER SEVEN

John Cunningham



John commenced his career in real estate in 1977 with a very simple philosophy—to establish business relationships built on trust. Opening Cunninghams Property in 1991 with his wife, Ann, John integrated this philosophy into the three-office, seventy-plus team member business it is today on Sydney's Northern Beaches. His team has become one of the most highly awarded in Australia and the business is recognised throughout Australasia for its Best Practice systems and operations.

John is a proud and active member of the Real Estate Institute of NSW, serving on the Board of Directors for the past twelve years. In 2018 John was recognised for his contribution to the real estate industry and was awarded the prestigious Woodrow Weight award from the REINSW. In 2019 he was awarded the highest honour in Australia, the REIA President's award for services to the real estate industry in Australia. His goals of turning the industry into a profession have been set in motion as he forges positive change for agents and consumers alike.

John shares his story of cancer to cure, and how learning the four Cs saved him and changed his life forever.

How long have you been in real estate and what made you become a real estate agent?

My career began in 1977 at the age of twenty-one, when I decided that a career path in valuation really did not suit my outgoing style. Having studied for a Real Estate Valuation Diploma at Sydney TAFE after leaving school, I was halfway through my course and working at the Sydney Water Board when I decided to look into the other side of the industry. My product and technical knowledge were increasing so I decided to pursue employment in real estate when I departed the Water Board in late 1975. I had no idea what I was doing but I knew I loved everything real estate and had done so since I was a child, so I took jobs lawn mowing, gardening, cleaning bricks, delivering flowers and rustproofing cars before I found a job in May 1977 with a local small real estate agent.

I think I went for over thirty interviews in the fourteen months of job hunting during what was then referred to as the Credit Squeeze. The only reason the local agent hired me was that he had sold my aunty a house and thought I came from a good family, which was a good set of reasons in my book. He said, "Better the devil you know..."

I began in property management and, due to my continued study and knowledge, I was able to provide my boss with greater value than he had imagined. I flourished in the role and it soon became apparent that my people talents went beyond the role I had been doing, so when the third selling agent in 18 months got the sack due to inactivity, I suggested to my boss that I could do better. So, at the ripe age of twenty-two, I began my real estate sales career.

At first I was like a fish out of water, but it didn't take too long to feel my way. In the first month I sold two listings for my boss; the next month I began to sell other agents' listings through EAC Multilist. I asked my boss if he could tell me how to find my own listings and he directed me to the private for sale ads. Before too long I had a handful or two of private sellers on my books and before I knew it I had sold six of these, along with another six from other agents and my boss' listings. So all-up in my first three months I had fourteen sales under my belt and an unlimited mindset to go with it.

What do you love about the real estate industry?

I was attracted to the industry due to my love of property; I was drawing houses and house plans when other kids my age were drawing cars and aeroplanes, so it was in my DNA. I would study every detail of the home of the week in *Woman's Weekly* and, at the age of eight, I went around building sites with my dad to see how things were put together. My father had hand-built our beautiful family home and was hands-on in everything to do with the home, so I learnt to appreciate what goes into the making of a building and how things were put together and why. To transfer this passion into all things property was a natural progression for me, and as I had been brought up with a service to the community belief system, the idea of helping people for a living had further appeal.

The industry seemed to have everything that I liked. You got to meet all kinds of interesting people, you got to spend your day in conversation, you spend a lot of time looking at property and when you pull all the elements together, you get to match the right people with the right properties and for that, you get really well paid. To me, it was therefore a no-brainer to give as much back to the industry as I got out of it and to give as much to the service of clients to match. To go above and beyond; my reward in gratitude.

I saw it as a two-way street: you give first and then you often receive. I had been brought up to show gratitude for all you have, so treating clients, both buyers and sellers, landlords and tenants well was second nature to me. Seeing the opposite occur with many of my competitors baffled me but I also saw it as an opportunity and advantage, and I leveraged it to the max. We still do that today.

My parents instilled into me four key beliefs that became my guiding principles for life and business, and I still make this the first introduction to new team members in our business today.

1. Always tell the truth
2. Always apply common sense to every situation as it usually is the best way

3. If a job is worth doing it is worth doing well
4. Always be nice to everyone you meet; it costs nothing but pays huge dividends.

These four rules have defined my career and my business, and they are what our guiding principles have been built on.

What I have also always loved is the lack of limitations on performance and the service we can offer our clients. If you always guide your clients on the best path, with the best advice and best experience, you will achieve the best result. It's not rocket science and there are no silver bullets or magic pills; it's simply taking the accountability for your role seriously and committing to it. This way you cannot fail so long as you have the requisite skills, knowledge and fortitude to follow it through.

Unfortunately, it is my observation that our industry is littered with people who do not have the moral compass nor the skills and commitment to adequately fulfil their responsibilities. There are no shortcuts—you must follow a process and apply discipline to all you do. I have always encouraged others to build a business and/or personal brand around what we call our three values or cornerstones. With these, you can build an unbreakable model. These values are PRINCIPLES, RESPONSIBILITIES and DISCIPLINES. This triangle or pyramid is the strongest structure on earth.

I have had a love-hate relationship with KPs my whole career and have felt the obsession with GCI to be the unhealthiest obsession I have ever seen. The false expectations and undue pressure it puts on agents, and subsequently their families, comes with a price tag that is often overlooked and underestimated. Success cannot be measured in monetary terms. Although I love this industry, we need to redefine what success is and move away from the obsession with perceived performance through results and get back to a service ethos that creates the best outcomes for our clients. Therein lies the true measure of success—the material benefits we derive being a by-product of the quality of service we provide and our client satisfaction.

What was the most challenging time in your life as an agent and how did you overcome this?

There have been several challenges along my forty-two year career journey and I am sure there will be more, although it is not until you have a potentially fatal health issue that people, processes, legal or client challenges become just bumps along the road of life. These things are designed for us to put them into context as first-world problems masked as serious issues, to create drama.

Having led an extremely healthy and blessed life up until the age of fifty-one, I got the results of my annual blood tests not long after my fifty-first birthday and my world changed in the blink of an eye. When a doctor says you have cancer, your stomach disappears into your backside. It feels like all the blood drains out of your body and it is replaced with something I have never experienced before...SHEER FEAR. Mortality stares you in the face and, before you can gather yourself to find out how serious it is and what it all means, you realise that nothing will be the same again.

I had been diagnosed with advanced prostate cancer and I was oblivious to what that could mean, even when I had the biopsy done. I turned up to the doctors with no thought of there being any issues; in other words, totally unprepared for the diagnosis. I had been told that prostate cancer was one of the better ones to get, that you could live with it and it didn't necessarily mean death but, until you get the word CANCER thrown at you, you don't know. My cancer was unfortunately advanced and I was told that I had to act relatively quickly and that my options were threefold but limited in the doctor's view, due to the nature of my cancer.

Of course, I sought other opinions and looked at all the alternatives but, as my cancer was on the outside edge of the prostate, surgery was the only real option. To cut a long story short, the cancer had broken out of the prostate but my surgeon got it all out after mammoth surgery and he did all he could to spare my nerves. Well, that was thirteen years ago, and I am cancer free but still get my annual blood tests done to stay vigilant. I have all my normal bodily functions in complete working order now,

but it took four years of both mental and physical therapy to get it all back. I was determined and understood that it has more to do with my mind-set than my physical make up, so I had to get them working in harmony.

The things I learnt from this experience were invaluable in both my personal and business life and yes, my life was not the same as before; not worse, just different. It was more alive, and it was more purposeful and yes, it was also more challenging.

I decided early on to get some professional help and went to a three-day retreat with my wife run by Petrea King, called Quest for Life. It was the best thing I could have done for both of us. Doing something like that together gives you a new perspective on life and your existence on this earth; it also provided us with the tools to help us through the tough times and to live a fuller life as a result. We walked away stronger, more committed to each other and more committed to living the best life we could.

We learnt about the four Cs of life and how to live them every day. This may seem obvious, but it is the congruence of the four that really count; it's hard to understand their true significance unless you have been through a life-changing event or experience, but if you are prepared to open your mind to the possibilities they are very powerful. Often the problem is that most humans cannot have empathy for a situation until they experience it themselves, and as such they never get past their own experiences and perspectives.

The four Cs are:

- 1. CONTROL**—Be in control of your life and surround yourself with the best people—people who have your best interests at heart.
- 2. COMMITMENT**—Decide to commit to living and follow through on your commitments. Live a full life with substance and self-belief.
- 3. CHALLENGES**—Welcome and seek challenges in your life to keep you alive and on your toes. Be selective, but at the same time don't always play the safe option.

58 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

4. CONNECTIVITY—Be connected to your loved ones, family, work colleagues, your community, human beings, all forms of life and our precious planet. It makes you real and grounded.

What do you think about wellness and wellbeing in the industry and what changes do you feel we need to make?

Wellness and wellbeing in the industry have been a forgotten element for so long, as the “toughen the f*** up” approach has ruled since I first entered real estate in 1977. Fortunately, things are changing and along with the RUOK and #metoo movements, mental health and associated impacts are now well and truly included in good business policy and procedures. New standards are being set to include such elements in work health and safety guidelines from the Government.

Having said that, the industry is massive and to say that these principles are common would be an exaggeration as there is still a fundamentally selfish nature shown by many, especially in the sales side of real estate. The culture of “me first” and “minimal care for others” has led to a focus on the dollars as the panacea of everything. To fix our poor culture of care will take a long time. To see significant change will take a movement like RUOK to achieve it. It is hoped that the RISE initiative that began in 2019 and followed on from Jet's groundbreaking REVIVE study and reports from 2017 and 2019 will instigate change.

Thankfully, it is also being driven by some significant leaders and influencers in the industry such as Jet. Until we have business leaders understanding the importance of wellness and wellbeing and accepting that it's an integral part of their day to day activities, we will still be stuck in the dark ages. They need to understand the positive impact that a cared for, content and committed workforce can do for their business.

What would you say to others in the industry who are finding it difficult, struggling and facing challenges in life and business?

There will always be challenges in business and life, and the key to dealing with them is to understand that they are growth opportunities. Yes, you have heard it all before and it sounds so easy, but until you face a serious challenge front on and come out the other end having learnt some good sound lessons, it is hard to understand the benefits. Life is simply not fair and to expect it to be is naive and foolish.

Life is what is thrown at you, what you create and what you make of it. When you are struggling and finding things difficult, the solutions are usually best found within. It is however important to understand that this process is not a solo operation. The most critical way to find your solutions, and to find yourself in the process, is to seek help—and help is out there, it's just finding the first right steps to get you going.

Many people are more afraid of asking for help than sinking and as such they drown in a sea of confusion. It doesn't need to be that way. No one ever got ahead by doing it on their own; they created their own quasi “Board of Directors” who helped them stay in control of all the challenges and stresses that surrounded them.

Your Board of Directors should be made up of people you trust, people who have skills you don't have and people who are simply there to support your initiatives. They do not meet together but they all have your best interests at heart. Imagine if you were ill and you had to make some serious decisions about your treatment; your Board of Directors would help to pull you through. They would consist of your doctor, other medical specialists, carers, supporters and associated entities. Should you fall sick, you need to have the best people on your health Board of Directors and it's no different to your business life and any other aspect of your personal life.

What do you do to keep your mind and body well?

I have spent a lot of time over the years working on the mindset benefits to wellness and wellbeing, and I have discovered that the physical benefits are just as important. A healthy body leads to a healthy mind, so utilising your mindshift processes and disciplines to physical wellbeing needs to be part of the journey.

I have always maintained a reasonable level of fitness, but finding the activities that brought out the best in my mind/body/spirit was essential for the balance I sought in my life. For me, I found that a combination of surfing, walking and yoga, along with workouts with my personal trainer every week, has kept me on my toes; as I age, I have found the need to increase this to ensure I have at least twenty minutes of strenuous cardio activity per day.

One of the key pieces of advice I was given in the past by my urologist back in 2007 was to keep my core strength. The urologist said that building my core strength would enable me to have a full recovery from my impending surgery. So, when I injured my back a few years ago and I had a couple of bulging discs, the same advice was given. I always now focus on my core strength, balance and flexibility, and because I have always loved travel and the discovery of new places, walking and fitness are essential to see what this wonderful world has to offer.

Finding your flame in business and in your personal life starts with your own balance. When you get your balance right then you can benefit those around you, your loved ones and colleagues. Having the discipline to follow through on your commitments will enable this to happen. Locking in the important over the urgent will allow you to have consistency in your physical wellness and mental wellbeing.



“What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals.”

ZIG ZIGLAR

CHAPTER EIGHT

Andrea Tucker



Andrea Tucker went from selling wedding gowns to becoming a successful real estate agent—not once, but twice. After establishing her second successful business as a single mum and in a completely new area and state, she had to deal with a major theft in her business from somebody she trusted. This blindsided her and truly tested her grit and character to push through to succeed. Her story is an amazing rollercoaster of trials and tribulations, and here she shows us how she overcame those challenges.

How long have you been in real estate and what made you become a real estate agent?

I started in real estate twenty-two years ago in Albury-Wodonga. I had a marriage break-up and for the first time felt like I could make decisions for myself and do what I wanted to do. At the time I had a retail business that I had run for nine years. My business incorporated wedding gowns, after-five wear, mother of the bride and top-end retail. I'd just finished reading *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* by Robert Kiyosaki (and Sharon Lechter) and Napoleon Hill's *Think & Grow Rich*. They were the two pivotal books that made me think that my life could be bigger than it was.

Real estate seemed to be the vehicle that I could take with me anywhere. Also, I was then a single mother of two small children; a three-year-old and a five-year-old, and I thought, "Well, I can't rely on anybody else; I have to do this myself." So I put a manager into the retail business and went into real estate.

I loved it and I ended up selling my other business because it was too difficult to do the two. I worked in Albury-Wodonga on the Victorian side, and was the number one sales agent for Stockdale and Leggo, beating all my Melbourne counterparts.

What do you love about the real estate industry?

The thing I love about real estate is the people. When I was growing up, I always wanted to be a psychologist and in a way I am. I just don't have the piece of paper. As I sit down in front of people, I'm always thinking, "What's the best way I can support this person in their individual circumstances to get to where they need to go?" Sometimes they want the most amount of money and they don't care how long it takes. Sometimes they want it to be as quick, simple and as painless as possible. Sometimes they don't really care about the financial result, they just want me to look after them, then it's matching the buyer on the other side.

64 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

We're always a mediator. Sometimes I see vendors and purchasers who hate each other through the process and I think, "Well, the only reason that can happen is that the agents haven't done their job properly, because they didn't hate each other before this started!" It's about correctly delivering information so that it lands on each person in a manner and tone that they will digest, understand and respect. For example, if you're delivering a really low offer, people get offended. You have to navigate your way around that so that you're still communicating but not upsetting people. It's challenging to do properly. But I love that because no two sales are ever the same and no two groups of people you're dealing with are ever the same.

The financial side of real estate is also fantastic. It allows me to have a lifestyle and flexibility. I think, having been a single mum through a lot of my career, real estate gave me the flexibility to still go to school sports, still be mum on canteen, and do reading at school. I just worked my hours around that. Yes, you're working weekends but you can get a good blend if you do it right.

What was the most challenging time in your life as an agent?

Two things. The first was leaving Albury Wodonga with my two kids as a single mum to move to another state with nothing. I started all over again, building a successful real estate business from scratch. The second is now, which has been challenging. I think it's been a knock-on effect for me. The biggest challenge for me in my career as an agent and now as a selling principal with two offices was just over two years ago. I discovered my senior property manager had embezzled a lot of money from us.

The first challenge was feeling stupid. How could I let that happen under my nose? I'd see this person every day, they sat near me. They were taking my money and looking at me walking in the door, questioning my business decisions and yet they were also stealing from me. In hindsight, it makes perfect sense because she was trying to steer me in a certain direction so I wouldn't discover what she was up to.

I thought it was a relationship issue. I brought in trainers and counselors to the business to try and figure out why I'm struggling to work with this person. I was trying to grow the business, I was trying to move forward, and I kept getting pushback. She had twenty-five years of industry experience; she was regarded as the best property manager in our region. I felt like I needed to work with this person. I questioned myself, wondering if it was a personality thing, I tried to work out how I could work with her to get the best out of her so she wasn't objecting to everything I tried to do.

Then I found one or two anomalies, but it was like pulling a thread and the whole thing unravelled. The Department of Fair Trading said it was one of the most intricate, elaborate frauds and money laundering that they've ever dealt with. It's just rigorous having the police and Fair Trading come in, flashing their badges, going through every single piece of paper in your office, every file.

There were so many emotions. I took it personally, like she'd stolen from me. I was ashamed that I didn't see it. I felt stupid that I couldn't see what was happening right under my nose. There was betrayal. I deliberately set up my offices with lots of glass because of my experience with other agencies in real estate; I wanted it to be transparent. There are no secrets here. We don't do dodgy deals. If you want to come and see the boss, you can see she's sitting right there. So all my personal values had been just shattered.

How did you overcome this challenging time in your life?

Initially, I felt humiliated and ashamed; but once I got through that I was like, actually, I haven't done the wrong thing here and people need to know this. If you bury your head in the sand, you're just supporting her to go out and do it again. Certainly, I had to go through a process, unpacking the layers to get there, but I'm quite comfortable with it now. That's not to say there wasn't a big fallout. We had a big turnover of staff. Some of my staff felt that it was me being the wolf. I think they thought that I had made a mistake, that she couldn't have done what I accused her of doing.

66 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

So it's been a big couple of years with that and then on top of that we had the bushfires, then we had Covid. It's been a fairly tumultuous time.

But I feel like now it doesn't matter what someone throws at me, I can deal with it. I mean I've had sleepless nights. I've woken up in the morning not wanting to do the day, not wanting to face it, and literally making myself put one foot in front of the other. I have to say though, and I kept saying this to my team even though I didn't fully believe it myself at the time, there'll be a silver lining around this; we just haven't found it yet. There was a gift in this for us; we just hadn't found it yet.

We've got the gift now. The gift is that this team is so tight-knit that when we recruit now I get the rest of the team to do the recruiting. The last three people we put on, I hadn't met them until the day they started. Because of what we've been through, we're family now. If they're not okay working with them, I'm not employing them. It's been a difficult thing for me to let go because I'm pretty much a control freak on lots of levels, but they've got to feel comfortable about the next person coming into our fold.

The other benefit is that we completely unpacked our property management down to its bare bones and rebuilt it back up. It's exciting and we've plugged in a few other little side businesses to support it and retain control.

What do you think about wellness and wellbeing in the industry and what changes do you feel we need to make?

There's not enough attention put into wellness in this industry. It's get the deal—get the deal done. How many listings are you getting? How many sales are you doing? It's all about the numbers. It's all about the volume. It's all about sell, sell, sell, list, list, list. Put the deals together, whatever it takes. Start early, work late, work your weekends.

There is an expectation around that. I know from myself, having had a couple of burnouts where I've literally had to stop and say, right, I need to take a six-month break or a two-year break. So now, if I want to exercise, I book appointments in my diary. Even if it's in the middle of the day, it's

an appointment. If it was a listing appointment in my diary at two o'clock, I would turn up at two o'clock. And you just have to treat your wellness that way.

From an industry perspective there are a lot of agents who drink a lot, don't eat very well and a lot of them still smoke. It seems they need those crutches to get them through. It's partly a leadership issue. Whenever my team comes together, I always say family comes first.

I have a single dad in my team and I want to make sure that he can take his daughter to school and pick her up from school. On the weeks he has her, he finishes work at three o'clock. On the weeks he doesn't have her, he might work until seven or eight. He adjusts his time and I want him to be able to. With the girls in property management, if their children are getting an award at school, I want them to be there. You don't get another opportunity to do that and it gives you balance.

It is challenging to fit in exercise and to fit in mindfulness. Before Covid, we ran free yoga classes for whoever on the team wanted to turn up, and we'll get back to that. It's important.

At the heart of this question about wellness and wellbeing is that I have to think about how my business needs to look. How does it need to face the market? If you're hiring people who smoke and drink and go out for boozy lunches, then that's what you get. The other day, one of my sales staff said, "I can't focus, I'm really tired, I'm going to the gym." It was two o'clock in the afternoon and she went to the gym, did her thing for a couple of hours, came back and went, "Right. I'm good to go." There's no point me saying, "No, you can't go to the gym, you need to sit there and do your work." If she's not focusing, the output's not going to be there and she's not going to respect me.

I think too, before Covid, I was reluctant to let people work from home, even though I do it a lot. It's funny how I never really rolled that out further than myself until we had to. Now, if one of my sales or property management team says, "I'm just going to work from home for the morning because I've got a lot to do," my response is, "Go for it." An hour or two at home might be worth three or four hours in the office.

68 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

If you're offering a work environment where wellness and wellbeing are central to how the business runs, you're attracting better quality candidates. It comes down to the synergy of how people fit together. If you've got someone who's a heavy smoker and drinker, they're not going to fit into our vibe here. Sure, we like to go out and have fun, but when I look at our team, it's about the synergy in the office, having the flexibility to be with family as well as being really focused on having great expectations of themselves and meeting those expectations for our clients. That's really important.

Of course, you still have to have measurables because you've got to make sure you're turning over enough income. It is also important to check in on people one-on-one to see how they're tracking. Ask them how they are going. What else can you do to support them right now? Is there any training that they'd like? How are they feeling? Are they tired? Do they need a break?

I make sure we don't get to "Jesus, I've worked six months and I haven't had a break yet." It's important to me that I have a good enough relationship with my team for them to be able to say, "Hey, I need a few days off." It's not just me working for me, or them working for themselves, it's about how we can support each other.

Having worked in agencies where it's dog-eat-dog and you're literally fighting over the telephone or the person walking in the front door, I set procedures to make sure this was set up right, from the beginning. I've been running this business for eight years now and even though we've had a change of staff in that time, we've never had fights over who owns what. I share my market intelligence with them because when they're successful, my business is successful.

I've never worked in an agency where they would say, "Here you go, you take all these leads and go with them." By spreading the load in our office, it means that we don't have to turn up to work all the time and run everything, keeping all the balls juggling as well. Ultimately, our wellness and wellbeing are better off by divesting ourselves of responsibility rather than owning responsibility. It also allows clients to have a touchpoint with the team rather than an individual. If one person's not there today, then they're happy to talk to another sales agent. We're not build-

ing this diving board model where they'll only want to speak to one person, because they know our team and they've had a very similar experience with the company and the team. Whether a client comes in to talk to property management or sales, they're getting the same kind of vibe and there is continuity and consistency.

Making your real estate business a lovely place to work, spreading the pressure evenly across the business, not only results in a better level of client service for both the property and the sales business but also allows staff to be able to blend their work and personal lives in a way that works for them. That's how you build a happy team and retain them.

I think the other challenge a lot of agents have is that property management and sales work independently of each other. Our office is cohesive. For instance, we do monthly team breakfast meetings where we share a beautiful nourishing meal and talk about something cultural to the company. It's not about numbers and who's done what. It might be about the message we're sending out to the broader community, such as how we manage Covid in the business. How do we make our clients feel safe? How do we make our tenants feel safe? How do we make our sellers feel safe when we're running an open home, what does that look like now?

What would you say to others in the industry who are finding it difficult, struggling and facing challenges in life and business?

Put your hand up and ask for help. I think as business owners and as leaders, there's an expectation that we have all the answers and that your team look up to you. And you've got to walk in every day with a smile on your face. There are some days where I've walked in and said, "You know what, I'm struggling today." Someone will always step up. Sometimes, in your vulnerability lies your strength and sometimes it's okay to let them see that. It's a balance; they can't see the leader topple off the perch and go and hide under a rock and never come back, but for them to see your realness and identify with that, it's important.

70 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

What I find works well when I am going through challenges is to look for someone I can call that's had this experience or someone that can support me through this to get me to the next step. For example, when the bush-fires hit this time last year, we'd just merged from an independent, Tucker to McGrath. McGrath offered us enormous support and I also had other principals ringing me from around the country. Because all of our holiday properties that were booked cancelled and people were turning around or people were stuck, some were homeless. We had people sitting in our front office with just the clothes on their back, stunned. Not even able to speak. "We need somewhere to live," is what they wanted to say. Then I had team members who had been caught in the fire and they'd see people come into the office, which would act as a trigger. We lost staff out of that because they couldn't be confronted with this on a daily basis.

So to come back to the question, it's okay to not be okay and put your hand up for help. For me, when I find life gets overwhelming, I chunk it down. What can I do today? What can I leave until tomorrow? I made sure that every day I checked in with the team. Are you okay today? Do you need anything from me? Just to make sure because that then took a weight off me.

You can't hand staff a piece of paper and say, "These are the core statements that are true of us, and here are our five core beliefs". You have to keep reiterating it and living it. It's like a muscle that you've got to keep exercising. Going back to what I said earlier, by me divesting the responsibility for who is joining the team to the greater team, I am empowering them to make sure that they're hiring people that they can work with. That in itself also feeds the wellbeing and wellness journey.

Cultural fit comes first. I always believe that I can teach people and that we can train people, but if they don't culturally fit, it's never going to work. I know we've had a turnover in staff, but that's because I'm so staunch with that. Sometimes I like to give people the benefit of the doubt and sometimes people want to step up to that. They want to be there but sometimes they just can't. Then you've got to sit down with people and have a hard conversation. "You're doing great but we've got issues over here, so we've

got to work on that. I'm happy to support you but we need to work through this." It's not always about the numbers for me, because I can't have someone come into my team and be toxic.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

I'd had a seven-year marriage, a couple of years on my own, then a seven-year relationship that dissolved. So I found myself on my own again thinking, what do I do? At the time, I was in a group of women called The Successful Businesswoman and we met once a month and talked about how we can improve ourselves professionally and personally. Every meeting, someone would bring an exercise or something to do which would challenge us or stretch us.

One of my ideas was to give everyone a shoebox, and we had to write on the lid of the box, "*Everything contained in this box has happened.* It's not what I want, it's not what I don't have, it already exists." Then I said, "I want you to put into the box what you want your income to be, where you will be living and what your life looks like." So in my little red shoebox, I had a payslip and I put a zero on the end of my annual earnings. I had photographs of the beach, of yoga, I had a photo of Andrew Dado—I don't know why that was, but it was him sitting on the beach. He was relaxed and earthy and grounded and that's what I identified with. I put a photo of a diamond ring in there. All just photographs and pictures. And then I put it aside.

Then one day, I was driving around Albury to get some office supplies and normally I'm one of those people that always find a rockstar car park. But this day, I drove around and around and I started getting really angry and uptight because I couldn't find a park. I started thinking that it was an interesting feeling and I made myself slow down. I remember thinking at the time that it was happening for a reason. I got comfortable and I found a car park. An incredible feeling came over me. That I was in the right place at the right time. It was the weirdest, most bizarre feeling.

Next, I was walking down the Ritz Arcade in Albury and standing at the end, leaning on the lamp post, just like in a movie, was Josh Phegan.

72 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

Now Josh is a well-renowned real estate trainer in Australasia and at that time he was also a real estate agent in Albury. I knew I had to speak to Josh as this was what it was all about. So I went up to Josh and said, "I want to move to the beach somewhere, but it's got to be in New South Wales on the coast because of the kids' dad." He said, "Ben Pryde, Raine & Horne, Mollymook."

Eight weeks later, I had rented out my house, I had a job with Raine & Horne, and I had rented a house in an area where we knew no one. I said to the kids, "Let's give it a year" and with that, we hit the ground running and we loved it. Then I met Rod, my now-husband. A few years later, I was unpacking and found the red box, and I thought, gosh, all those things I'd put in there, I had created. I still remember my income then was \$78,000 and when I put a zero on it, it was \$780,000. That was the turnover of my business for the first year to the dollar! My ring: we got engaged. The beach house: we bought a property on Mitchell Parade and we're now building a beautiful house there. It proves that our thoughts are so powerful. When you go through tumultuous times, it's easy for our mind to go down a rabbit hole, and then what we focus on, we create.

To me, it's all about vibration. Where you focus your energy, positively and in the right space, that's what you will create. You will create the right clients to walk in the door, you'll create the right team to come in the door. I think because I've got that attitude, that's what affected me most about the property management issue. Because my brain is wired to think that I'm able to manifest things, I think how did I attract that, like that? I believe I did and there were gifts out of that too.

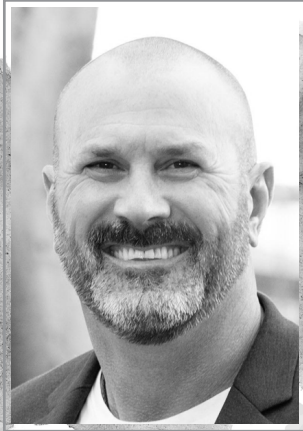


“Be You. Shine. You Are Enough.”

UNKNOWN

CHAPTER NINE

Shane Kempton



Six foot four inches tall and one hundred and ten kilos, Shane Kempton was born, bred and is still proudly Western Australian. He has experienced life and business from many perspectives and at the highest level, serving his country as a soldier in the Australian Army working alongside the SASR, business owner of Australia's number one real estate office, CEO of three national groups, co-author of two books and the Founder and President of a Military Motorcycle Club. (The motorcycle club looks after our latest service veterans.)

Coaching and mentoring a variety of people and companies from many industries, he understands that the principles of success, leadership and fulfilment are the same for individuals and teams alike.

These same success principles took his office to number one in Australia, OTOC Australia from \$2million to \$50million in four years whilst he was Chairman, and the Joondalup Brothers Rugby Union Club to Minor and Major Premiers where he was proudly President and "Club Captain".

Blessed with four healthy children and three grandchildren, Shane has a strong sense of community responsibility and contributes to it in vari-

ous ways, including hosting Sir Richard Branson for breakfast, raising in excess of \$160,000 for charity.

Shane shares how he nearly lost his family by getting caught up overworking, putting the family second model and how he changed that for even better results and success in life and business by gaining what he calls “the home team advantage”.

How long have you been in real estate and what made you become a real estate agent?

I guess you could call me a “real estate retread”. I've always loved property although my real estate career has had its ebbs and flows. In 1990, I was in my early twenties when I joined the profession and that's when I met my first mentor, Geoff. My uncle and I had built a set of duplexes in the northern suburbs of Perth, Western Australia, and Geoff was our agent of choice to sell them. Geoff must have seen something in me because he said, “Why don't you come work for me and you can sell them yourself?”

I'd been selling homes and I'd been working in the building industry for a few years so the shift to real estate felt right. I also liked Geoff and it seemed like the perfect transition into the wider property market. I worked with Geoff for five years, before my real estate plans derailed (more on that later) and a five-year stint in the Australian Army called. I returned to real estate where I have worked, led, coached and mentored in the industry at the highest level for the last two decades.

What do you love about the real estate industry?

What I love about our profession is the personal growth you go through in order to be successful. Initially, when you first start your career in real estate, it becomes your lifestyle. You live it, you eat it, you breathe it. You immerse yourself in it. For me, you need this degree of commitment and sheer dedication to succeed. If you do commit, follow through and stick with it, a wonderful transformation occurs. Real estate can fund your lifestyle and offer a new level of freedom.

76 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

The transformation that occurs is also an internal one. The personal growth and upskilling required to be a success is the gift of working in real estate. Part of your growth comes from the wonderful people you meet, the friendships you form and the experiences you share with your clients. My goal, like for many others in real estate, is to be my clients' "agent for life". Like the family doctor, I have always strived to be the trusted property advisor to my clients and their family and friends.

Man who chases two rabbits catches none. — Confucius

What was the most challenging time in your life as an agent and how did you overcome this?

My time in real estate has blessed me with many challenges and even more victories. I say blessed, for it's this process of overcoming adversity that builds your character and defines your success. As your real estate journey unfolds, you will soon discover that the challenges don't get easier: they just get harder so you must get better otherwise you'll become redundant. And, in fact, the greatest challenge I have faced as an agent is in balancing the demands of the job with family life and getting that "home team advantage".

When you start out in real estate, the first six to twelve months can be a tough period. Remember I said I was a real estate retread? Well, the first time round, I had the wrong plan. I was in my twenties and my immature, undisciplined approach to success saw me taking long lunches, accumulating debt through buying fast cars and budgeting poorly (not saving for a rainy day). This first attempt at a career in real estate was lucrative but short because most of my success was based on a stellar market and not so much on my skills or a well-defined strategy.

When the market turned, so did my success. I didn't have a strong enough foundation or the skills to see me through it. All of this saw my career mirror a shooting star when the market crashed — I shone brightly for a couple of years before I eventually faded out. Challenging as this was, the greatest lesson was yet to come.

When I returned to real estate after my time in the Australian Army, my motivation and personal discipline levels were at an all-time high. My time in the military taught me, above all things, the strength of self-discipline, the efficiency of systems and the power of perseverance and commitment to a vision or mission, even when things got uncomfortable.

This second time around, I was confident that I had all the skills and resources required to succeed. Military life saw me travelling and working from the crack of dawn to 7:30 pm every day and so I missed most of my daughter's early school years. When I was back at home, my goal was to use real estate as my vehicle to make money fast and get back time with my kids so I decided to work my butt off for a few years to achieve that goal. Plus, in my mind, I had unfinished business in real estate. My vision was to be the best, both as a salesperson and as a business owner.

Returning to real estate, I rejoined my old mentor, Geoff. Happy for my loyal return, he made it clear, however, that there would be no free kicks. I would have to work my way up the ladder of success again and put in the hard yards to succeed.

I went all in, working thirteen-day fortnights and twelve-hour days, applying my new-found personal discipline, structuring and scheduling every hour of my day. I set up systems for prospecting and lead generation, rehearsed my scripts and presentations and stayed in the office every night until I had a least one appraisal booked for the next day and had spoken to at least thirty people about their real estate plans. My new enhanced approach to work-life began to pay dividends and I soon became the top sales representative for the office.

And yet it came at a huge price.

I achieved everything I had wanted to achieve within five years, but not without almost losing my family. The more my success grew, the more distant I became with my wife and children, the very reason why I was working so hard.

For me, my vision was crystal clear: work hard for the next eighteen to twenty-four months, including most weekends, so I will never have to work

78 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

another weekend again. The problem was this: I forget to tell my loved ones *why* I was working so hard and for such long hours.

The breaking point was one of those rare nights that I was home to help my wife Lara put our kids to bed. If you can imagine the scene, I was tucking in our youngest son, Cooper, in his bed. I had my mobile phone balanced between my right shoulder and ear, negotiating a big contract. Cooper, who was all of five or six, was holding up a storybook for his Dad to read. I couldn't see him. I was an absent and distracted father, totally obsessed with work.

I turned and walked out his bedroom door, ignoring his big, pleading brown eyes. I saw my wife standing there. She just looked at me and shook her head. The realisation of that moment hit me like a tonne of bricks. All the angst and tension which had built up when I left home to work late at night, or on weekends when “normal families” were playing in the park, riding bikes or having summer BBQs, finally hit home.

I hadn't told them where we were going. They hadn't bought in to this journey we were on. I just started running and left them all behind.

That moment defined me, not only in my career but as a man and a father. I immediately took that weekend off work and Lara and I sat down and planned our bright future together. We discussed and shared our goals and dreams, creating a compelling vision for our future life and putting a firm plan of action in place.

From that day forward, there was no resentment for working the long hours. Rather, it was like a countdown and a “ticking off the list” as we moved forward together with a shared vision. From that day, I had the “home team advantage” and my success exploded. Within two years of that day, I bought the business from my mentor and took it to number one in the state and then the country for our group. The “home team advantage” helped me bring it home!

What do you think about wellness and wellbeing in the industry and what changes do you feel we need to make?

I truly believe that health and wellness is the cornerstone of our success and happiness. It really is the best way to combat stress, stay adaptable and build resilience to the obstacles life throws in our way.

Whether you're leading a group, business, office, team or yourself, working within the real estate profession comes with above-average pressures. We are often dealing with our client's biggest asset: their home. With this comes the emotions, doubts and fears around selling and moving and the life changes that go along with it. These emotions around transacting a home are sometimes due to clients wanting to upgrade when kids come along or downsize when they've left the nest. Sometimes it's because they are in serious debt and have to sell or they're going through a divorce or, in some instances, there has been a death in the family.

All of these life situations come with a heightened state of emotional stress, which can get transferred to us as their agent and (more often than not) confidant. This transference of the client's stress, coupled with our own day-to-day pressures, can cause health issues if you don't deal with them head on.

With this in mind, we need to have support processes around our people within the profession. We need outlets and channels where they can talk and decompress and share those pressures. Our bodies are designed to handle stress in the short term but for prolonged periods of time it becomes unhealthy and unmanageable. Education and educators that can teach, train and coach our people on ways to deal with stress, keep healthy work boundaries and maintain a balanced lifestyle that's about wellness are crucial to ensure we are all performing at our best.

When I talk about wellness, I mean taking care of the whole person—your social, emotional, mental, physical and spiritual self. If you feel good mentally, socially, emotionally, physically and spiritually, it's much easier to succeed at work and become what I call a “complete leader”.

80 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

When employing new people into real estate, business owners and managers should meet with the spouses or partners and/or significant others of their new team members to ensure that everyone is aware of the demands on their time and lifestyle, especially in those critical six to twelve months.

In addition, having a work environment that encourages a healthy, balanced lifestyle is critical to strong workplace dynamics and a happy, motivated team. Some other ideas I've seen in successful offices include negotiating special rates for fitness clubs, promoting healthy eating at work, weekly in-office massages, scheduled time off and holidays, and a culture based on holistic profits and not just bucks in the bank.

What would you say to others in the industry who are finding it difficult, struggling and facing challenges in life and business?

Real estate is simple but not easy. It's about finding a buyer and a seller and matching them up and then repeating the process again and again. When you remove the emotional aspect, it's purely a numbers game and the numbers haven't changed too much over the years. Talk to twenty-five people and you will get one appraisal. Do four appraisals and get one listing.

Real estate professionals tend to struggle in two areas: either not enough money or not enough time. Firstly, they may not be doing any business and are under pressure financially or, secondly, they're doing huge amounts of business, making lots of money but have no balance in their life. Both scenarios can cause stress and pressure yet both can be solved with the same solution: personal discipline to block out time to do the actions required to deliver the results or personal discipline to block out time to recharge, refresh and to create a healthy, balanced life.

Both personal discipline solutions will only be activated if the individual has a compelling vision of what their ideal life looks like, with enough detail to bring it to life. Map out your income, time off, holidays, hobbies, wealth, health goals and everything you want your dream life to be. I use

the phrase “compelling vision” on purpose because it needs to excite, motivate and inspire you to switch on your desire or personal discipline to do the actions.

And remember: only in the dictionary does success come before hard work. Real estate requires your full commitment and focus in order to succeed. Yes, there will be some personal sacrifices in the beginning; however, if you are consistent and persistent with your efforts, the prize is greater than the price. But you have to do the work and you will only do the work if you have a compelling reason or vision to do so.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

If you are in a relationship, you need “the home team advantage” to succeed in this profession. If your significant other resents the fact that you are working all weekend or late at night, then your mind will be on home when you are work and, vice versa, your mind will be on the job when you are at home; you will be constantly torn and not present and disconnected with the people you are with. You get the home team advantage by great communication with your significant other. Together, you need to create your shared, compelling vision of the future.

Plan your holidays as a team, work together on your action plan and schedule in some down time with your loved ones. Make sure to have a day off every now and then where you can completely switch off from work. When it comes to holidays, I suggest you take at least one full weekend every eight weeks and no more than two weeks off in a row in your first two years.

Momentum is so important in your first twenty-four months so you want to maintain what you have created with your initial efforts and gain good traction. Finally, ensure that everyone is on the same page when it comes to what is required from a commitment level to ensure your “compelling vision” becomes a reality. When there are two visions, you get “di-vision” which will hinder your home team advantage.

Communicate, communicate, communicate. With your clients, with your team and, most importantly, with your family. Finally, remember

82 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

all solid growth and enlightenment comes during your periods of rest so make time to recharge and refresh. Living a “complete” life means taking care of all aspects of life: health, wealth, mental stimulation, relaxation, emotional connections and spiritual growth. Nail those and you'll set yourself up for true success.

Shane's top key takeaways for lasting success in life and business:

- 1.** Involve your family in your vision to create “the home team advantage”.
- 2.** Be a complete leader with your wellness and wellbeing.
- 3.** Rest periods are crucial. Recharge and refresh.
- 4.** Communication is essential.
- 5.** Momentum is important, so make sure everybody understands your compelling vision.



“Build your best life.”

SHERRIE STOROR

CHAPTER TEN

Sherrie Storor



Sherrie went from building a thriving business to having it go into administration in the GFC—which resulted in her becoming personally bankrupt. Around this time, she also found out her fiancé was cheating on her. Everything in her world collapsed around her as she fell into dark depression.

Losing everything she worked so hard to build should have made her give up and quit, but that was never going to be the case. Financial ruin and the embarrassment of a failing business and relationship did not stop her from coming back against all odds to rebuild her business and life into a success. With two dollars in the bank, she started again. The rest is history.

How long have you been in real estate and what made you become a real estate agent?

I started in the business of real estate in 2001 at age twenty-three. Like most people, I fell into the industry. After working in retail selling jewellery during high school and university, I continued on this path after graduating. I was extremely driven and wanted to be a “success”. I had started thinking about what the next step in my career was going to be. As it happened, a colleague had started working in real estate, working at Devine where she was selling house and land packages. She called me and said “Sherrie, selling off the plan is just like what we were doing selling jewellery. You probe, show, overcome objections, negotiate and close. It's no different. You would absolutely love it...and I'm making all this money.”

Being so young at the time, I thought that sounded like a really cool opportunity. I wanted to be a success and, to me, success meant making money. The next day she called me to say, “It's not all sunshine and roses; come and sit with me for a day to see what it's all about.”

So I went out and spent the day with her in her donga (her onsite sales display) which was in a dustbowl in the middle of nowhere, now known as Murarrie in Brisbane. She showed me what she did. She took the calls, made appointments, showed people building and allotment plans, found the package of choice and asked them to buy. That was it for me. I was in.

I had fallen in love with inner-city Brisbane—the lifestyle, the architecture, the high rises. It was a far cry from growing up in suburbia, Townsville. I had always wanted to work in the CBD and wear a power suit (thanks to watching my mum and the movie *Working Girl*). I decided my next career move was to sell “off the plan” high rises. I called the CEO of a local project marketing agency and made an appointment to meet for coffee. He told me what the role of a project marketer entailed, about the industry, and when there was a gap in the conversation I asked him, “That sounds great! When can I start?” My first real estate close was completed.

I started the next day.

86 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

I saw project marketing and working in a sales display as 'retail real estate'. I found that it was the same process whether you are selling a watch, a diamond ring or an investment property. It was selling a dream and it was the greatest Australian dream there is—to own your own home. I just had to work out the objective of each buyer. I had to work out if their purchase was to be their dream home or a dream lifestyle fuelled by investments. I was a gun at selling dreams and so I knew that selling real estate was going to be my match. It sure was! It was life-changing in every possible way and changed the course of my life!

What do you love about the real estate industry?

There are many different segments that I love working within the industry. I love to see agents, suppliers and businesses collaborate with each other (like this book!). This is a growing trend in our industry. There is more sharing of information, strategies and thinking to be better, all in the aim of achieving the best results for our consumers in buying and selling homes.

When I worked full time as an agent, I loved helping people achieve their dreams. I truly loved being of service, assisting them with the next property chapter in their lives, whether that be downsizing, upsizing, a sea change, a tree change or building their financial and investment portfolios so that they could have the wealth that they dreamed of to achieve their dream life.

Now that I work as a sales coach, I'm still helping people achieve their dreams but it's in another way. I empower agents and agencies to build their best lives. I provide the tools to harness their real estate careers, implement proven sales systems and structures, leverage results, build celebrity profiles and build their teams and EBUs (Effective Business Units) whilst making more profit and working less. These are skills that when implemented change their businesses and are life changing in the structure and financial aspects of their lives.

This is one of a few industries where you can truly be financially rewarded for your ability and effort. It makes sense to build a team and empower them with sales systems and structures so that this continues whether the lead agent is on the job or on holidays.

My goal is to help agents build their version of THEIR best life. And I have found that the best life looks different for everyone. Giving agents the tools to hone their craft and harness their skill sets to provide the wealth and freedom that they've always dreamt of in order to build THEIR best lives—this is the part of real estate that I now like best. Seeing people implement change to create a life of their own choosing. It's a wild and rewarding ride and I love being a part of the journey!

What was the most challenging time in your life as an agent and how did you overcome it?

The most challenging time in my career was when the Global Financial Crisis occurred in 2008. I was the CEO, owner and founder of an agency with large sales, management and support teams. The business was selling over a dozen projects off the plan, along with a wide range of residential properties.

When the GFC happened, everything went from fabulous to horrendous in a heartbeat when people stopped buying and selling properties literally overnight.

A large portion of the projects that I had listed to sell and were on site for were in seaside locations on the northeast coast of Australia. People were asset rich but cash-flow poor and no longer had the capacity to buy a lifestyle property, holiday home or investment. Banks foreclosed on highly leveraged property portfolios and the market dropped. People who needed to were then forced to sell their properties and for a fraction of what they were once worth.

This was not great for property developers, who still required to sell at a certain level to break even. This resulted in two of my major developers closing shop, which saw me and my team say goodbye to over a million dollars in contracted commissions for properties that we had sold.

I was suddenly in a position that I had never experienced in my career—a downturn and a BIG one. I didn't really know what I was up against. I grew up not really knowing anyone who owned a business and I learned everything as I went. This turned out to be one huge lesson.

88 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

I had huge overheads with costs and wages. The commission from sales achieved that was “guaranteed” to roll in didn't. There was only so much time before my cash reserves dried up.

Looking back now, I see that I was a hopeless business owner and leader. I didn't show my team that I valued them. I neglected to inspire, encourage and motivate them. I left this to my managers to do and I didn't hold them accountable in their roles.

I was a green business owner and I didn't know the inside tricks to make my business and myself financially and structurally secure. I was immature in knowing how to deal with my accountant and their responsibilities.

I sold everything I had to keep the business afloat. Everything I had worked so hard for. But it wasn't enough and the time came where I had to bite the bullet and put the company into administration. My business structure had not been set up correctly and my personal guarantees saw me become personally bankrupt.

That was an incredibly challenging time. I was no longer wealthy. I had sold all my properties, had one property foreclosure (my holiday home in Byron), a repossessed car and my financial security (something that was incredibly important to my being) was now zero. I had also just found out that the man I was engaged to, that I had supported and built my life with, was having an affair. Most of my friends knew about it. My life as I knew it was gone. I had no job, no mental capacity for one and had two dollars in my bank account. And this was the scariest feeling in the world. I had never felt more alone.

This business loss also came with an identity crisis. I didn't really know who I was if I wasn't Sherrie Storor the business owner, the real estate agent or the real estate agency owner. I was thirty years old and I had attached such a big part of who I was as a person to my work and my career. I didn't know my identity outside of this. I needed to go on a journey to find out who I really was underneath all this bravado and what made me deeply happy.

I was depressed and for a while I wallowed and took pity on myself. I was too embarrassed to leave the house. I didn't want to see anyone, to face anyone. I was super embarrassed about what had happened.

But it all changed in one phone call with one of my developers who had made his wealth in mining. He told me “Sherrie, this is a really normal part of being in business. In good times we expand and in lean times we retract.” He told me that this had been a particularly difficult time for himself and a lot of businesses he knew.

“It doesn't matter what has happened, but only what happens next. So get it together, pick yourself up, dust yourself off and get back out there.” And I did.

I started working at a large corporation as the Director of Residential, overseeing their project marketing and residential sales division. They fired the entire sales team except for three agents one day before I started, so I knew on my first day that this was going to be a nightmare role. I needed the money, so I battled through. I was already feeling low about myself, and the company's culture and chauvinistic attitudes made my confidence drop even further.

My dream was always to coach and to work with agents to build businesses, income and profit. I was already business coaching on the side.

The path was to rebuild myself and my profile within the industry and rebuild my wealth at the same time. I decided to get back on the tools and start selling again. This was a decision surprisingly difficult to implement. Whilst I knew this was the step forward, my ego kept telling me it was a step back. I had this little voice that kept telling me “I've been a CEO, a Managing Director and now I'm just going back to be a lowly salesperson.” I had to really work hard on eliminating this voice and adjusting my ego. In reality, I have always loved being a sales agent. I have always been the happiest when I am selling. And just quietly, it's also where I've made the most amount of money.

From there I became a business building and processing machine. I consumed any educational platform, conference and training that would help me become a high-powered selling agent and build my EBU. I focused on building my profile, brand and reputation as an agent. I perfected my systems to create sales structures and leverage in the market to build an attraction business where prospecting was no longer a daily requirement.

Now, I'm leveraging that experience and working with agents and agencies to help them build their businesses through what I have learnt and practised, the tools of the trade that I still use when I sell today.

Looking back, I am now grateful for these experiences. It has given me my mantra of building MY best life—a life that makes me happy without the influence of others' opinions. There were a lot of lessons that I learnt throughout that process and, honestly, it has made me an incredibly good businessperson today. I know all the things not to do! Ha!

What do you think about wellness and wellbeing in the industry and what changes do you feel we need to make?

It's time to make a change in how we work as individuals within the industry and how we value our consumers (but that's another topic!).

We should be encouraging agents to build a life that is not just built on the platform of what we do for a living. We should live to work, not work to live.

As an industry, we reward agents who are writing the most GCI. We encourage them to work continuously, even after they have become a million dollar agent—to keep aspiring to more and more and more.

But when is the more ever enough? The narrative is always to hustle and grind.

We now have generations of real estate agents who have worked long days, every day of their working lives, and as a result have fractured relationships with their families, their friends and their loved ones. Most still do not know who they are, only what they do. And retirement is not an option as they would be at a loss at how to spend a day off, let alone years of it.

It's time to focus on longevity in our careers instead of the results of our last deal, of the last quarter and the last year. It's time to play an infinite game of business.

We should focus more on profits instead of overall revenue.

Building teams with sales structures gives an agent a knowing understanding that every buyer and seller will be managed in a consistent,

exceptional way. This is imperative for building businesses where we want our agents and their clients to have an “agent for life” mentality, hence building long-term attraction businesses.

This also allows agents to have balance in life—taking days off and enjoying short breaks and holidays. The notion of working constantly, seven days a week, and being contactable twenty-four seven is an outdated business practice; thanks to technology and cultural changes, we no longer need to or are expected to work this way. Having this two-pronged approach of systemised teams eliminates the fear of an agent losing a listing and the fear of losing a sale.

This team business model also provides an exit strategy for the lead agent when they are ready to retire or slow down with residual income, with another team member stepping up and taking over the database and business—a win for both parties.

Having the courage to change, delegate tasks and implement roles in a team can be trying for agents, but it is the only way to financial wealth and freedom.

An agent must demonstrate to their market that they are consistent in achieving exceptional outcomes by utilising the best sales strategies—on and off the market, unparalleled marketing with a point of difference to their direct competitors—and that they are a quality human that contributes to their community. This will see sellers choose them above others.

And, in most cases, sellers will even wait to enlist their services, giving an agent the freedom to have those holidays. It's the sellers who don't choose to wait who most likely don't meet the profile of the agent's ideal client.

An ideal client is no longer just someone with a house for sale in a market that the agent works in. It's someone who is going to prepare and present the home for sale in the right way for their market (regardless of the price range of the home), engage in the correct marketing and who is prepared to pay the agent what they are worth. Then it's also in the style of property or the area where the agent chooses to sell.

Working with sellers who are outside these parameters often leads to more stress for the agent.

92 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

It's OK to say no to sellers who do not meet your ideal client parameters.

We need to drop the guilt for not always continuously working. It's time to put ourselves back on the priority list. This concept of always being “on” is impossible to live up to, especially long term. Be super productive in the allocated time for working, have critical conversations, do the right activities to list properties, market them well and close the deals.

Having time off outside of the office assists with our mental health, giving us much better capacity to put together deals, create a win for the buyer and the seller. Let's face it, it's often challenging at the best of times, let alone in changing markets.

Many tasks in the role of a real estate agent are tough, trying and can be emotionally and mentally draining. It's time to learn how to counterbalance this. Finding who we are, what truly powers us and makes us happy outside of work is the key to motivating us to build success in business. Money is a by-product.

The workplace also needs to become more flexible when it comes to hours of work and places of work. Covid has hastened our attitudes to today's cultural shift and the acceptance of working with a family and working from home.

Wellness to me means building your own version of your best life. A whole life. One that comprises work and home, and is balanced using your own set of calibrated scales.

What would you say to others in the industry who are finding it difficult, struggling and facing challenges in life and business?

We have all at some time had struggles and challenging times; if you haven't as yet, brace yourself—they are coming.

Everyone has adversity in their lives, whether it be illness, a loss of some kind or family issues.

And everyone I have ever met and have worked with, including myself, has at some point battled imposter syndrome and the fear of not being able to live up to the role or challenge in front of us.

No one person that I have ever met has the perfect life.

Today, we live in an artificial, superficial world where a big part of our lives is what plays out on social media and the internet. Social media is about putting forward our best version of our lives. This adds a new and additional level of pressure on us.

The reality is, much as someone's life might look ideal from the outside, very rarely is it totally and utterly perfect. As people we are seasonal, and we have our ups and downs. There are times where life is wonderful, everything is on the right track and we are happy. And there are times where we face challenges, illness, family problems, our own individual crises and economic hardships.

There is comfort in knowing that we are not alone and that we all feel the same way, especially in those challenging times.

Have a moment to wallow, mentally process and work through your challenging, difficult times and move on. Ask for help; you will be surprised who is there to lift and support you. See a psychologist, get a mindset coach and take action. Implement physical and structural changes that will take your power back in your career and your life.

And when you are ready, talk openly about this challenging time. This will result in helping someone else who has had a similar experience or is currently experiencing something similar that they relate to yours. It's time to be more open about our lives and challenges, and these conversations and the ethos of openness are removing the stigmas.



“Do right and fear not.”

PROVERBS OF GOOD COUNSEL IN BOOK OF PRECEDENCE

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Anthony Toop



In 1985 Anthony Toop established Toop&Toop from his home in Toorak Gardens with his wife Sylvia. With a reputation spanning over thirty-five years, Toop&Toop is a market leader in premium Adelaide real estate.

The Real Estate Institute of Australia's record books have Toop&Toop achieving the National Hall of Fame in all three of the biggest Award categories: Hall of Fame Induction Large Agency 2020, Communication/Marketing 2018 and Innovation 2019.

Anthony's world was rocked and changed dramatically when diagnosed with oesophageal cancer in 2012. His story is a powerful one of overcoming all odds, and the resilience and wisdom of thirty-five years in real estate that enabled him to stay at the top.

How long have you been in real estate and what made you become a real estate agent?

I have been in real estate since 1978, after doing the real estate licence by correspondence from country South Australia and having worked in a family business since leaving boarding school way back in 1975.

Why real estate? I took a real estate agent's daughter to the Prince Alfred College "Red and White" end of year formal. It was her father that convinced me to "just do the course". He then encouraged me to try a job interview, having never done one when visiting Adelaide... only to be given the sales position. It was all very unexpected and sudden. One minute I was working in country South Australia and two weeks later I'm selling real estate in suburbs of Adelaide I had never heard of, for a company I had never heard about, in an industry I had no clue about.

How were the first few months? I went from earning a salary of \$4000 per year and saving \$2500 a year, to earning \$25,000 overnight. Ten times the income! I took to selling like a duck to water. I literally didn't know what to do with all the surplus money in those early days. That soon changed; I quickly learned how easy it is to bring expenditure up to meet income!

What was the timeline? I commenced real estate in 1976. The agency was called Home Market, located in the northeast suburbs of Adelaide. I had never had to look for a job, given after matriculating in Year Twelve I went home to our family business in South Australia's mid-north town of Peterborough. We had several family businesses. I was fascinated with electricals and electronics, so I soon became a jack of all trades in the few years working in Toop's Electrical Business owned and run by my eldest brother Dennis Toop in his business. In a short few years, I secured a builder's licence, wired houses, was a "valve jockey" and fixed and fitted all electrical things. Trades? Air conditioning, space heating—I was pretty much a jack of all trades. My builder's licence remains current today. I learned an enormous amount about building and life skills in those early years.

That fateful job interview in 1977 changed my life... that was the one where I was encouraged to go for an interview in Tee Tree Gully and, to my

astonishment, I was employed immediately. It is fair to say I literally fell into my lifelong career as a real estate salesperson.

On 8th May 2020 we clocked up 35 years as Toop&Toop, and at that milestone we have rewritten the Real Estate Institute of Australia's record books, achieving The National Hall of Fame in all three of the biggest Award categories: Hall of Fame induction Large Agency 2020, Communication/Marketing 2018, and Innovation 2019.

Now back to the beginning. What happened after Home Market? Firstly, there was a name change as Home Market went broke and we became Real Estate Services in the late seventies. Then later I was headhunted to work at a family real estate agency called Kain & Zeceвич (K&Z) circa 1980. Kain & Zeceвич were both agents and builders. This was my introduction to selling building contracts, which I credit to teaching me how to actually sell properties. Let's face it, most agents rarely sell property. I learned what differentiated houses and learned to understand what actually selling property was.

After around five years with Kain & Zeceвич, it was time to think about having a family. I was also having too much to say at Kain & Zeceвич and getting increasingly frustrated at not being able to set my own agenda. I had an amazing boss, but one who was not a fan of change.

On the personal front, I had married my lifelong partner Sylvia in 1980. Given the long hours I was working and the fact Sylvia and I were independent thinkers, we felt a long break together would either bring us closer or blow up the relationship. It was time for a break, it was time for a family, it was time to ensure we were as one.

Given our busy lives, and the number of divorces in my clientele list, we had no way of being sure that we actually got on as a couple given the distraction of our busy work lives (Sylvia is an accountant). That year, 1984-85, was the time for a family of our own. We purchased an old classic campervan and set off around Australia for three months. Three months travelling in extremely confined quarters in outback Australia; Sylvia and I decided we were good and it was time to go for children.

This was November to February 1984-85. While away, as fate had it, Kain & Zeceвич's building company, Kaze Constructions, ran into issues.

98 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

In the meantime, I had the time and motivation to process all the initiatives I would love to introduce if I had my own agency. Sylvia and I had the time to chat about the future, it was three amazing months together. The end result? Thumbs up for our respective careers, time to start our own family and time to also give our own agency a go.

The real estate market had been terrific, but it was on the turnaround at the end of 1984. By the end of our trip the real estate market was becoming problematic; however, the decision had been made. We decided to sell an investment house in Semaphore that we owned and use the equity from that to start the business, and a Plan B was also hatched. If we ran out of money, Plan B was to return to selling for a boss. Sylvia was to remain working in her accounts role for the Royal Adelaide Hospital until we had a baby or until Toop&Toop could financially support our family.

Fortunately, Plan B was never initiated. The business fired and Toop&Toop was on its journey to #1 in the nation. History has shown that both passion and determination can prevail. Failure may have been planned for, but was never really seen as an option... Optimism rather than positivity.

The beginning?

Toop&Toop commenced trading on 8th May 1985. We started small, with just me working from our home study with a luggable computer together with the latest printer, a spin writer. In those days typewriters were the norm, fax machines were just starting to be trialled. This was the era of answering machines, the beginning of pager technology, and car phones that flattened the car battery overnight if left on. Things were very different in those early days.

Toop&Toop's first contracts were from our home office located in Adelaide's eastern suburb of Toorak Gardens. We quickly expanded, leasing offices in Maylands, and in 1987 around my 30th birthday we secured a Mortgagee in Possession office in the very popular Norwood location, where we are still found today.

Our growth was steady. In my day, real estate agencies were built brick by brick, from the ground up. Today new agencies tend to be built fast; I call them tilt-up businesses — a compilation of existing businesses rolled into

one brand or franchised. Buying existing businesses and putting them together is fast and finance has been readily available to make it all happen, and just like tilt-up building... it's fast. Back then, it wasn't common to buy agencies, take on other agents' staff or bother copying other agents' ideas. Data was non-existent and intellectual property wasn't ever an issue.

People were less mobile and the cost of team members was low. It's all changed so much.

What do you love about the real estate industry?

Everything. No two days are the same. We daily meet all sorts of interesting people, in all sorts of interesting times. We deal with all manner of life's issues. We meet celebrities, yet we also meet the most humble. From the rich and famous to the poorest and homeless, real estate agents get to experience all of life's colour. We get to make a real difference, to change people's lives. We get the opportunity to influence and enrich lives daily.

We get opportunities to use our skills to raise money and profile for charities and to get deeply embedded in our communities.

Real estate is colourful, interesting and offers a stimulating lifestyle and at the same time a lifelong career. Real estate can be challenging yet so rewarding. In any one day, life can twist and turn. You get to experience your own life as well as that of others; it's an amazing career.

Influences by observations. An example of how real estate can influence your entire life. I started in real estate when developers were going broke everywhere. We made money selling those developers empty units and houses. We helped dig people out of financial ruin; I sold many personal homes for people who lost their wealth but we saved them from losing everything. So often it was the personal home of these developers and builders that inevitably saved them from losing the lot. It is hard to imagine double-digit interest rates, but that was the era.

We sold for the banks with their mortgagee sales. In those days we had to understand finance better than the bankers themselves; we had to assist buyers to secure their funding.

100 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

Here is a classic memory on financing. I remember sourcing a \$4,000 unsecured personal loan for my owner after the sale was done, just to help him settle. Yes, for the owner. He was \$4,000 short to settle his property when the property sold for \$22,500. Today that would be equivalent to around \$60,000.

I commenced in real estate in a recession. We started Toop&Toop as we were entering a recessionary property market. We seem to build our business on the back of challenges; little wonder innovation is in our DNA. In 2020, Toop&Toop's thirty-fifth year, we entered another era, the era of the global pandemic. Never consider dull times as an agent.

Reflecting on our past, tough markets are what we seem to be best at. It was tough when I started selling. It was shocking when we started Toop&Toop on 8th May 1985, and ironically it was tough as we completed the handover of this business to our two daughters and son-in-law on 1st July 2019.

Tough conditions, I believe, breed strong businesses. Re-inventing. Pivoting. Nimble and creative. The ability to discover what the customer wants and deliver to those needs better than others, no matter what conditions prevail. That is what excites me.

Specialisation. The question has been often asked, "Why remain a residential salesperson? Why don't you go into more lucrative commercial, industrial, valuation, or developments?" It's a question I've been asked hundreds of times. On reflection, I believe specialisation has benefits, given my first days in real estate were "selling up" developers and I made an amazing income doing that while they were going broke. Perhaps that explains why I never got involved in developing, commercial, industrial... this may be the reason.

Specialisation? Another theory. Being the best of the best drives me. I was craving being a specialist from the moment I left school and, coming from a jack of all trades background on leaving college in those earliest years, I was passionate in my pursuit to be the best of the best in something. Given I am motivated by excellence, then knowledge, specialisation and innovation all became essential drivers for me.

Longevity. The continual stream of superstars in selling real estate has existed for all the time I have been in the industry. It reminds me of those looking for that pot of gold at the end of a rainbow. So many rock star agents have come and have gone in my time. Given we literally started Toop&Toop at a time when we were inevitably the second or third agent appointed, if the market had been better there wouldn't have been that opportunity. Slowly, through performance, we built a reputation for getting results when others were unsuccessful. We can thank tough conditions for reaching thirty-five years.

Innovation today is more like a cult activity for us. It remains a primary driver of Toop&Toop. Having to find creative ways and train how to get results was a necessity in the early days; it remains no less important today.

The arrival of co-operatives and the explosion of franchises? In the eighties, there was an explosion of co-operative and franchise brands emerging. This was never tempting to us. Franchise opportunities offered no temptation at all, even though their offering in the early days seemed compelling. The ability to answer only to our bank manager, to develop a brand that represents our values, to develop solutions for challenging markets—that provided motivation and drove our decisions. To win or lose on our own decisions was at the core of our motivation.

Making money? Yes, important for business sustainability. How do we look at money? We consider profit as the by-product of doing things well, being efficient and winning the hearts of the community through performance. In the early days and before internet technology, simple old-school innovations like floodlit signboards, property price codes and pre-planned inspections were all simple but early innovations that set us apart from the pack.

Technology and Innovation. More recently, technology capabilities and the digital world have changed our industry forever by offering us the most profound opportunities. The likes of electronic contracts and legal documents, combined with the low cost of digital, is a gamechanger and the repercussions are only just being realised.

102 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

As new products were released, it became evident real estate was going to change significantly. When Apple released its first iPad, I must have been in the first handful of buyers. I immediately presented it to our on-staff IT programmer and said....PLAY! It was obvious this would change the way real estate was marketed, as clearly Apple would not release a dud product. My thoughts were, "Let's see how an iPad could be adapted to real estate sales and rental." History has shown exactly how incredible technology has changed our world.

Innovation excited me. Discovering better ways to connect, communicate and to reduce costs while improving our service is our Holy Grail. The search for real estate agents' Holy Grail may be long, but it is exciting.

What was the most challenging time in your life as an agent?

The most challenging event in my life was most definitely when diagnosed with oesophageal cancer in 2012. At each stage in life, challenges at that particular time usually seem the biggest. But facing an early death has to take the title of "most challenging in my life".

BC. Before cancer. In the early days, so many challenges seemed so important and insurmountable. At any given time the challenges may seem huge, but with the passage of time become little more than "that's life".

The 70s. As a 'wet behind the ears' country boy, dropped into an office with some of the sharpest real estate salespeople that ever existed, I felt intimidated. I had to learn fast as I had no training. I was shown the keyboard, with two hundred key rings for every property we had for sale, and told to look at them all in my first week. I thought, "How crazy!" I was moving from our comfortable family business in the country to this jungle.

My new-found real estate peers loved it. The team took full advantage of my lack of worldliness. Rather than sook about it, I watched, observed and learned lifelong ways to manage their antics. I quickly adapted and became aware of what was happening. Boarding at college was invaluable in teaching me survival. As they say, it was either going to kill me or make me stronger. Sure, the sales team leveraged me, had plenty of laughs at

my expense, but they were setting me up for my life's journey. How lucky was I to learn life's lessons like that? Weirdly, this was an honourable era in real estate. Somehow everyone knew the rules and there was a strange honour that we understood.

The 80s. Challenges starting a business; first setbacks. On my first sale of Toop&Toop, the buyer cooled off. The sale did not proceed! Was this a sign it was a bad idea to start our business? It was so rare to get a cool off, and there it was, my first sale as Toop&Toop.

How the media look for blood. Now to the first court case over my conducting of an auction. What happened? I didn't accept a dummy bid that the vendor wanted me to accept. The vendor knew it was a dummy bid, being 30 per cent over the former advertised price, and they tried to sue me for the difference just three weeks before the statute of limitations. Another agent became a key witness in this landmark court case on auction. I had a TV camera shoved in my face heading into the court on day one of the trial. Fortunately, not only did we win, we also received a judgment that could have been mistaken for a testimonial. The media didn't report on the vendor who tried to rip off the agent!!

International challenges—like the Iraq war, when Bush Snr went into Iraq and everyone thought it was possibly the start of WW3. Sylvia and I had spontaneously purchased our new family home, stretching us to the limit financially. The purchase was at an auction, for serious money at the time and before any knowledge of the pending invasion. We had a long settlement arranged in order to prepare our own home for sale if we were successful. Whilst we were preparing to go to market, the invasion occurred. Literally, hundreds of peers were in our front garden and it was a total fizz. It was expected by all that it would be so easy to sell. We had hundreds in attendance. Our auction—how humiliating. The humiliation of peers watching as we went through hell with such a flop of our own sale, at our most vulnerable time. It was extremely stressful.

We had another high-risk sale at an emotionally charged time. Thirteen years later we decided to sell our mansion in St George's as we had purchased a vineyard in the Adelaide Hills. It was at the time dummy

104 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

bidding laws were about to change in South Australia; our auction was around one month before controversial legislation went live banning dummy bids. We wanted to show that the changes would not negatively impact on selling by auction despite all the industry rhetoric. What did we do? We publicly declared no dummy bids with Toop&Toop.

We started with our own auction. It made full front-page lead story news with *The Advertiser*, Adelaide's only daily paper. Being featured on the front page of the *Adelaide Advertiser*, no one could have possibly missed the story. The industry wanted to kill us. Agents saw us as breaking ranks and were horrible about this. Special meetings held, and we were very unpopular with peers as the reality of the legislation went live. This was a sensational auction result, unlike the previous one thirteen years earlier. History has shown it really was a storm in a teacup, but at the time it seemed all consuming.

With forty-five years in real estate, there are endless stories I could recite but there was one that literally was life-changing in the real sense.

By far the most defining time followed my diagnosis of oesophageal cancer in 2012.

This type of event is something you normally only hear about. It is always someone else. Literally, overnight I was bed- and hospital-bound. Succession was instant. Family, business, everything changed in a matter of minutes. Sylvia took over running the business. Both daughters returned home immediately from overseas and interstate; Genevieve returned from holidaying in the central USA while working in London, and Suzannah came home from Sydney while on a massive career journey with AMP Capital, a career that was unfolding in Sydney. They returned without prompting to help Sylvia run the business and to look after me. That unprompted response will never be forgotten. Our families' lives were turned on their heads overnight.

All our dreams, plans and aspirations were instantly reset. A new set of norms began. Given the survival rate of oesophageal cancer is low, it was literally against the odds to survive. It was a time of ultimate challenge.

We did have a written disaster plan, but nothing planned to cover an event like this. Note: The disaster plan was helpful as it had forced us

to consider what we would need to do in the event there was a disaster, so if you have a business, consider it.

How did you overcome this challenging time in your life?

The crucial things I needed to focus on –

Handling the news. Keeping stakeholders calm, confident and engaged. Providing a single source of truth. Bringing stakeholders on the journey. Winning the battle. Having a clear Plan B and ensuring communication on Plan A was optimistic yet truthful and clear. Staying calm and making sure that there was no catastrophizing. Keeping things real.

The defining moments— Taking the extreme news head-on. Not wasting energy on anger or regrets, but focusing on solutions and looking forward. Turning this new challenge into a motivating experience to ensure we were consumed in resolving it or dealing with it. Reality check by dealing with it head-on.

My massive learning. Optimism or positivity? I learned the difference. Optimism is about being realistic. Being realistic allows for creative solutions and for planning. To have a Plan A, a best-case scenario, but also having a Plan B. This differentiates between pure positivity and pure optimism and is important.

One mantra our family adopted in this period was, “Plan for the worst, expect the best”.

Positivity can be flakey, hopeful and to me is a victim approach. Optimism, on the other hand, is “positivity with structure”. Optimism is having a realistic acceptance of any challenge or situation. Optimism represents a can-do positive approach where taking on any challenge involves being realistic and having developed Plan B.

The cancer was discovered on 8th May 2012, and that just happened to be Toop&Toop's anniversary. Given we have celebrated with all the team on that day every year, the 2012 celebration was one to remember. I had to wait several days after discovering the cancer for confirmation. You can imagine how the celebrations went for me.

106 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

The pictures the doctors showed me when they discovered the cancer didn't need an explanation, I was clearly in lots of trouble.

What were the steps?

Attention was first aimed at managing our stakeholders and the media. Along with profile comes the invasion of your privacy. Those are the rules and are understood when a high profile is sought. The bank, the accountant and the media were the first priorities. I knew they needed to feel that they were in the loop and a part of the solution. The second was dealing with the Toop&Toop team, my family and loved ones. I had to manage the accuracy of any information to avoid gossip and competitor attacks. It was critical for us and the team to keep customers and competitors from unhelpful reactions or Chinese-whisper comments. Then I finally had to deal with the cancer.

Actions. I knew I needed to cover all bases and part of that was to seek professional assistance to keep my head clear and focused. Early on I engaged a top physician to ensure my mental state was kept in check on the journey. I took a crash course on techniques to avoid catastrophizing and managing my anxiety and of those around me. Then we set up a central point of truth. A daily blog ultimately having 40,000 followers, which was incredible. This was one of the best ways to avoid any mischief or speculation, and keep friends, clients and staff informed. It also worked for me as it helped me deal with my fears and concerns.

Hindsight? We got most things right.

Learnings? Be sure you live a life with no regrets. Deal with conflict head-on.

What do you think about wellness and wellbeing in the industry and what changes do you feel we need to make?

Real estate is an industry that has a lot to learn about wellness. It's an occupation where ego plays too big a part in decisions and wellness is often placed second to ego and having a perception of success.

The silver lining to my health event wasn't merely surviving, although I'm pretty happy about that. It wasn't about reviewing my lifestyle, but I'm pretty

happy about making changes there too. It wasn't just about having the kids come home (and meet their Adelaide life partners in the process), but I'm pretty happy about that. The silver lining was realising as a family, and as a work family, we needed to make changes in how we lived. Real estate is so addictive. As an industry/profession, we really have appalling behaviour and treat ourselves with on-the-run-food, lack of exercise, too much booze and basically abuse ourselves in the search for "success" and "fame".

I've learned that success IS health. It's not money; money can't buy health. It's not about status or profile, as neither of them leads you to good health. It's learning ways to take care of the body. If we take care of our bodies we can have a more sustainable life, better attitude and better results over longer periods.

Rather than ignore one of the likely reasons for getting so sick, we got serious and set up our Toop&Toop Wellness Centre. This wasn't a fad. It wasn't a gimmick. It wasn't set up for marketing or spin. It was simply a way of making a genuine difference to our team and to encourage us all to move health up in our priorities to be the top goal. It was the one regret that we needed to fix. When life hangs in the balance, it needs sorting. For the family. For the team.

While no one can tell another how to run their lives, we felt as a family we could at least lead by example and provide all the opportunities to live a healthy and sensationally rewarding life, and not have regrets.

What would you say to others in the industry who are finding it difficult, struggling and facing challenges in life and business?

If you are in the massive ship with all the other industry practitioners who are finding life difficult, perhaps struggling with challenges, business worries, life and or health worries, I'd firstly say congratulations, you are being honest with yourself. Despite all the puffery and big-noting in the industry, unfortunately, you are in the majority.

I would learn from others. My learnings are that life takes its own direction and, more often than not, what is a crisis today really is no big deal at

108 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

all. When you have a real crisis, it will recalibrate your definition of what is important.

What would I do? Exactly what I did. Be optimistic and create a Plan A and a Plan B. Do something about it; never accept being a victim. Break things down into bite sizes, avoid catastrophizing and accept help if offered.

“If it is to be, it is up to me.”



“Slow down and enjoy the journey”

UNKNOWN

CHAPTER TWELVE

Nathan Casserly



Nathan Casserly is one of the directors of Ouwens Casserly in Adelaide. He is part of the new breed of successful, progressive, independent boutique agents and agencies in Australia.

Nathan's fourteen years in real estate have taught him a lot, especially sustainable ways to manage stress, anxiety and the pressures and demands of real estate for life and business. After nearly burning out in the first five years of his career, Nathan worked out how to create incredible success with less impact on what was important to him.

How long have you been in real estate and what made you become a real estate agent?

I left school and went to university to study teaching. I taught for six years at primary school level and also had a part-time position as a sports and fitness coach with a local AFL team in South Australia. I have always performed at my best when I am passionate about something, and whilst I enjoyed teaching I didn't really love it, so I found myself looking for something more competitive and that I had a real passion for.

My father was a realtor for thirty-odd years and was close to retirement; a few people had mentioned to me that I should follow in his footsteps and that the industry would suit me well. The hours required, late nights and weekend work was something I needed to consider, but with the support of my wife we decided I didn't have much to lose. My wife was working and I maintained my part-time roles as a sports and fitness coach. We were probably naive at the time as to what was really required to succeed in real estate, but these are the things you do when you are young. I started real estate when I was twenty-eight in 2007.

What do you love about the real estate industry?

For me, I enjoy the hours we work. The late nights and weekends provide the variety I crave. Nine to five, five days a week, just feels like groundhog day to me. I like the flexibility and control of my own time. When you can structure yourself and your team well enough, it's awesome!

My other love is the competitiveness and adrenaline rush that comes from winning... a listing, a sale, a connection. Having been involved in sport all my life, I found it really difficult to find something else that could give me the same feelings.

I love working with people and helping others achieve their goals and dreams, and real estate helps me do this. Seeing the emotion of a seller achieving a great price, or a buyer purchasing the home of their dreams, is such an amazing feeling, and knowing you have played a significant role.

112 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

It also is a really fair industry. The best agents get paid extremely well and the crap ones get paid poorly. This makes sense to me because it's real life! I'm not a big believer that every child wins a prize or not keeping score in kids sport.

What was the most challenging time in your life you have had as an agent and how did you overcome this?

One of the first big challenges was my first year in real estate. I received a group certificate with a grand total of eighteen thousand dollars. I enjoyed the year but I clearly didn't win from a financial point of view. It was embarrassing and tough, and I needed to work out a way to make it work. I couldn't keep going only making that amount; it was so disappointing. I sat down and went through all my commission statements and worked out that I had invested marketing dollars into 'annoying people' that I hardly knew, and these resulted in no result. I wasted my time, energy and money.

I worked out all my listings were with people I knew or those I'd had a previous relationship with. From that, I decided to spend the next twelve months talking to and building a database of people I knew. I started providing them with useful, educational information about real estate. This helped put me build a better financial position over the years to come.

The second big challenge was during my first five years in real estate. Real estate is a high-pressure role; it's demanding and people put huge expectations on us. I bottled up my anxiety and stress, and this led to high blood pressure and the fear that I may not make it to my fortieth birthday. I have overcome this over the years by telling people how I am going, I use mentors, I focus on my family and I ensure that my health stays consistent.

What do you think about wellness and wellbeing in the industry and what changes do you feel we need to make?

My father would always say "List and Last" and that's life in real estate. The demands placed on us where we are paid commission only are high. We have an on-demand mentality. We also have the online world, social

media and other technology. It's hard to keep up, stay relevant and not get caught chasing squirrels. Starting a family and having a mortgage also brings great demand. All of this leads to anxiety, stress and depression, and I feel this is a real issue in real estate.

What would you say to others in the industry who are finding it difficult, struggling and facing challenges in life and business?

The first thing to do is to acknowledge your feelings and talk to people you trust. As I mentioned, in my first five years in real estate I bottled up my anxiety and stress which led to high blood pressure. Introducing mentors or a personal coach really helped me. In sport we have coaches, so why not in business? Having a mentor in the most important areas of your whole life really helps. Have someone for each area of your life, either a paid coach or friend or family member in areas such as real estate, health, finance, and so on.

Get seriously organized. The great thing about real estate is the flexibility it creates, yet this can be dangerous if you are unable to create a structure or remain organized; you end up wasting energy, wasting time and wasting money. Tools that worked for me was focusing on an ideal day, an ideal week, strategy days and quarterly reviews.

Vision and values

Write down what you want to achieve in one, two, five, or ten years. Come up with three or four words that reflect who you are: your values. Use them to guide your behaviours and decisions.

Personal finances—My father in law would always say, “You sleep best when your finances are in check”. Good financial management is critical to your health and wellbeing.

Health—This is number one. Without our health we have nothing. My mum would always remind me that you can't take your wealth with you when you pass away. Look after it, make wise decisions and enjoy it.

114 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

Get your family on board—The hours required in real estate will put pressure on your home life, so it's important to have their buy-in. Share your business plan, your ideal week and each day with your family, especially when you have weekend and late-night appointments. Remind yourself of your vision and your values and stay true to them.

Set family goals and talk to your kids to help them understand why you do what you do. My kids know I help people find homes and work at night and on weekends so we can have money to do the things we do and enjoy our time together when we are together.

Conferences and podcasts—I learnt what not to do in my first twelve months in real estate. So I then decided to reach out and learn from those who were succeeding. I have been overwhelmed by how supportive and open this industry is in terms of supporting others and helping others achieve their goals and dreams.

The leader is more important than the brand—work with a leader or leadership team that is aligned to your own vision and values. This is more important than the colour of the brand or the look of their signboards and brochures.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Real estate is an amazing industry going through the most change we have ever seen. Consolidation is happening and more innovation is coming. Embrace change as it will allow up to spend more time on delivering world-class customer service—the stuff we truly love.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jet Xavier is known as THE HIGH PERFORMANCE GUY. He is a sought-after speaker, coach, trainer and mentor, energizing, optimizing and potentializing individuals and teams for HIGH PERFORMANCE.

As the HIGH PERFORMANCE GUY, Jet is focused on HIGH PERFORMANCE from a holistic perspective. For Jet, a HIGH PERFORMANCE HUMAN = A HIGH PERFORMANCE LIFE AND BUSINESS.

Jet believes that you can have the success you want in life and business without sacrificing your health, your family, parenting commitments, key relationships, time for yourself, mental health or work-life integration. Jet has proven this with many clients and his own experience over the last ten years.

Jet has conducted over five thousand HIGH PERFORMANCE HUMAN coaching and training sessions with individuals and teams, particularly in sales industries. He has helped many sales agents and teams to increase their commissions by over \$250,000 plus per year, whilst at the same time enabling them to avoid burnout, boost energy levels, decrease stress, stay motivated, remain focused, and improve the quality of their work-life integration.

Jet is the creator and founder of the first-ever wellness and wellbeing research for the real estate sales industry, The Revive Project. He has contributed major change to the way the industry thinks about and deals with the wellness and wellbeing of its people and how this can contribute to HIGH PERFORMANCE at every level. The Revive Project produced two white papers.

He writes a regular popular Mindset article for the award-winning national real estate industry magazine Elite Agent, which has a national readership of 10,000. He had the number one most-read article in 2016 and the second most-read article in 2017. He was voted one of the top fifty influencers in the Australian real estate sales industry in 2017 and 2018.

He is also a regularly featured thought leader and mentor on the international online real estate agent sales training podcast program Re-uncut. He has featured on many other popular podcasts, including the number one business podcast in Australia, Go All In. Jet produces his own podcast,

116 CHAMPIONS CRY TOO

THE HIGH PERFORMANCE GUY, which equips and empowers people with tips and tools to become HIGH PERFORMANCE HUMANS.


As part of his HIGH PERFORMANCE HUMAN SYSTEM program, he is constantly improving his understanding of what HIGH PERFORMANCE is and how it not only applies to his clients but also to his own life.


In 2019 Jet took twelve business people on a successful personal development program trek to Base Camp Mt Everest, which raised thousands of dollars for young women in crisis in Nepal. Jet also did a 1,100 km solo bicycle ride from Sydney to Melbourne for Young People Living With Cancer and is engaged with various giving-back initiatives and groups. He is an advocate and speaker for the Saying No To Domestic Violence movement, working with major DV organisations around Australia.

Jet is an expert on HIGH PERFORMANCE living and business success, and is the real deal when it comes to understanding what an authentic HIGH PERFORMANCE HUMAN is.

Contact Jet now for further information

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