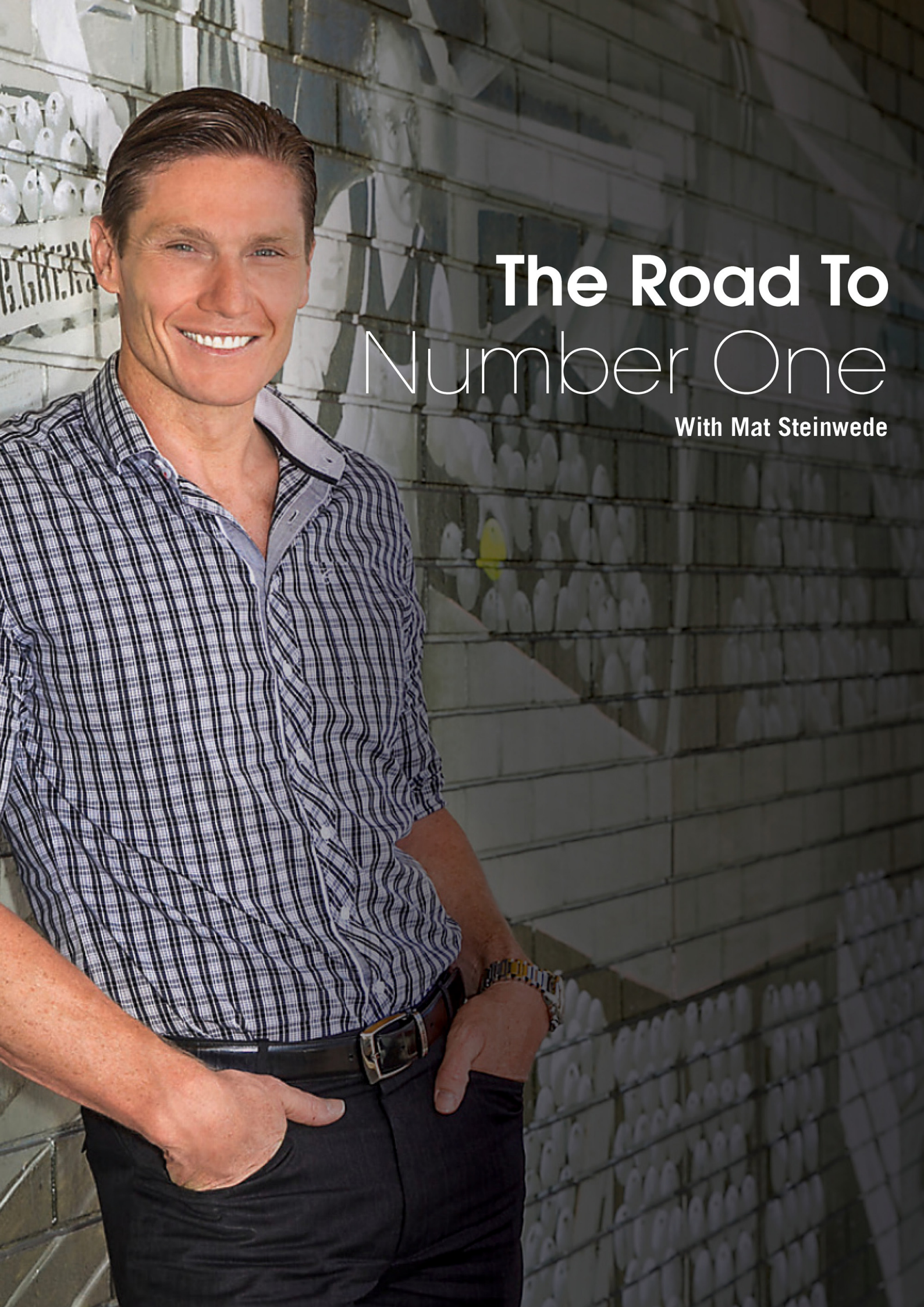


The Road To Number One

With Mat Steinwede

Session Podcast

The Road to Number One - Audio Interview

Mat Steinwede Agent Video

Mat Steinwede Agent
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qu6u_LNwGN4

The Road to Number One

It's been a fifteen-year journey, but recently, industry legend Mat Steinwede of McGrath Central Coast finally cracked the number one position in McGrath.

Beating some 700 agents in the company's NSW, ACT, Queensland and Victorian offices, Mat says, "I think for me it was just the tick in the box that I wanted to achieve, and it wasn't an easy thing to do being up in Terrigal. I know there are lots of Sydney agents who are amazing. McGrath probably has the highest producing bunch of agents, that I know of anyway, in the one company."

For all of those years, Mat's vision didn't change. He says, "I had 'Number one in McGrath' on my screensaver, on my phone, and in my vision book. Even right up until a few months back, all our team would talk about was, 'When we're number one, when we're number one, when we're number one'."

The numbers - McGrath Central Coast

$29 million in fees across 65 agents - there isn't another network or brand on the Central Coast that's done that.

The numbers - Mat Steinwede

At any one time, Mat and his team will be looking after 10 auctions and around 20 private treaty listings. He used to always push for auctions but has changed his thinking and these days, carefully considers what is best for each listing. In terms of the numbers from an income point of view, Mat says, "My business partner, Trevor Hamilton and I split everything 50/50. Jaimie gets 10%, two buyer agents get 6% each, then Trevor and I split what's left. We've also got two admin team members who each get paid a set wage - $55K for the PA who's just joined us and $65K for the more established PA. The plan is for both of them to end up being on around $75-$85k each."

The beginning

It hasn't been an easy road for Mat - he started right at rock bottom. He says, "Most people know I was homeless and a drug addict before I started in real estate. An ex-girlfriend suggested I get into it, so I took her advice on board and gave it a shot. A friend bought me some dress pants and a good pair of shoes, and I rang everybody in the area to see if they had a job. A lady gave me a start in a little town called Killarney Vale. I had no car, so she told me to walk the streets and knock on doors. I did as she suggested all day every day, door-knocking and asking people if they wanted to sell their house. I door-knocked non-stop for years."

It paid off - Mat found his passion.

Mat recalls, "Maybe six months into it, I rang a mate of mine and said, 'Deano, I'm going to be the best agent in Australia. That's what I'm going to do.' And that's exactly what I did. No one taught me cold calling or anything. I thought to myself, 'If I could call people instead of just door-knocking every day, that might speed things up.' So I used to do both. Then I used to drop letters off as well. I just thought of these things along the way myself."

About 10 months into his career in real estate, Mat was offered a job at the agency across the road. He says, "I went

across the road to another small agency. I was just so active that the whole town was asking, 'Who's this guy?' We didn't have RP Data back then. The only company that had RP Data was McLachlan's. They were the biggest agency at the time. I used to ring a salesperson that I knew there and ask if he could print me off the RP Data sheets so I could prospect from them. I just knew that the key was to get in front of as many people as I could. Ever since then, I've stuck to that same formula. A lot of real estate agents are lazy. It doesn't take too much to rattle the trees. Everywhere I've gone, I seem to have led the race."

Through determination and an understanding that he was in the business of building lifelong relationships, Mat started kicking major goals.

A defining moment - teaming up with Jaimie Woodcock

Meeting Jaimie Woodcock when they worked together in a small LJ Hooker office changed Mat's life. Mat says, "I felt an instant connection to Jaimie. I didn't have a great family life growing up, and I think he was like the older brother I never had. He's always had my back. He's also a very smart guy with a great business mind. I've always been more sales-oriented. We're different, but we go together really, really well. I'm all instinct, whereas he will ask me to show him how something works before he will make a decision. Essentially I will come up with an idea and he makes it work. This balance makes for a great partnership."

In the year 2000, the day before the Olympic Torch came through Terrigal, Mat and Jaimie opened their first office - Raine & Horne. Their sole employee was a secretary and they had just two phone lines. The pair flourished because their relationship brought together different strengths. Mt explains, "When you're a business owner, if you're not a great people manager you're not going to be a great business owner. Jaimie is a fantastic people manager. That's his strength, whereas it has never been mine. That's why he has always been the one to handle that side of the business. When we started opening new offices I would have nothing to do with it. For instance we opened an office in Toukley and I haven't been there, even though I own part of it. That's the blend we have, and we recognised that early on. That's the reason we've done so well."

Teaming up with McGrath

Mat married, had children, supported his son's dream of becoming a pro surfer and tried to juggle his personal and professional responsibilities. While all this was happening, the market on the Central Coast nosedived. Mat says, "The market went down in a big way. Fortunately Jaimie and I had worked out how to handle a market like that. We actually grew our business four-fold during that period. It was hard at first. We had to make many adjustments and bring our spending right back because our business was costing so much to run. But we seized every opportunity we could and ran with them."

Mat continues, "We were doing really well. We were always eager to learn and we loved John (McGrath) and his vision. We got to see what he was all about. One of the things we were looking for at the time was leadership as I believe sometimes you think you know it all and then suddenly realise you've still got a lot to learn. We loved the brand and what it stood for. One day I rang John and asked, 'Would you be interested in franchising?' We knew each other reasonably well at that stage, however he responded that he was years away from going down that path. Not fazed by his response I pressed on. 'But our franchise agreement with Raine & Horne is up. We really want to work under the McGrath banner. Is there any opportunity?' To my great surprise he agreed. We made it happen in 60 days. We had no agreement. We basically worked on a handshake for the first year or two."

"People would come into our office when we converted and ask us, 'What's McGrath? Is that a hairdressing salon?'

They just had no idea. Felling a little concerned by this, I asked Jaimie, 'Have we done the right thing?' It was totally different from the usual coastal real estate office. There wasn't even a window display."

Before long the community began to notice the quality of the brand. Mat says, "We wanted to learn how to run a better business, and we've learned so much since being a part of McGrath. People expected to pay more with McGrath as well. They would say, 'Now you're McGrath, obviously the fees will be higher, but that's fine.' They were actually happy to pay more. The perception of quality was and continues to be very strong, especially in those early days. John's philosophy is clean business. That's what he stands for. I think people feel that."

Even though he was enjoying great professional success, Mat admits he struggled in his personal life. He says if he had his time over again he would have taken more time for himself. He says, "I have dedicated my whole life to this."

and now...

Finally after years of almost making it and a period of complacency Mat cracked the number one position. Despite achieving this most prestigious McGrath accolade Mat says he simply got on with it the very next day. He says philosophically, "I reckon the juice is actually in the journey. It's not in the achievement. The achievement's great, but sometimes we're so quick to get somewhere that we forget to enjoy all the moments along the way."

The relationship between Mat and Jaimie is as strong today as it's ever been. But at the end of the day, it's all about what's best for the company and the brand for Jaimie. Mat says, "Jaimie runs a very tight ship. If I place an ad, I get charged for the ad. If I send a letter out, I get charged for the letter."

Mat's immediate focus is on his team and building a great company. He says, "Their goals are just as important to me as my own goals. I know all of them on a personal level. I want to help them become financially successful. I want them to invest well like Tara, who's just joined us, has. She's saving. She wants to buy a property. I've got her list of goals on my phone. That's what it's about. And that's why I'm super keen for them to earn what they need to fulfil their goals. I want them to go home and go and know they're in the best space they can be. As for me, my long-term goal is to speak around the world and write books. For now though I believe what I am doing is a great platform for my future aspirations. Right now I just want to build a great company."

Mat's advice for agents starting out

1. Have a vision

The more energy you give to your vision the more it amplifies and the closer it will be to becoming fulfilled. Remember the journey is as important as the destination. I used to body build. An old body building coach once told me, "If you don't get out of bed now, you'll never get this time back." His words made a real impression on me. I learned early on that what you do, think about and picture in your mind, actually happens. In other words, what you picture, you become.

2. Understand that we are in the business of marketing

Working in real estate means you are in the business of marketing. As real estate professionals, WE are the product. If you're young and just starting out, do something that's a little bit different and memorable. You don't need to go and spend thousands of dollars trying to brand yourself. Just let your own point of difference do the talking.

3. Listen and be coachable

I'm very coachable. I understand that I don't know everything, and I want to learn everything. I've relied on other people

to help me hone my expectations and what I see. I could see early on in my career that structure is important for listing presentations for example. I'm naturally very shy, so I was never a good presenter, especially in the early days. I was always friendly though. I think people would connect with me but I had real difficulty understanding what to say to people. It always felt like I was trying to be someone else.

I once had to give a speech in primary school, and I was so nervous I didn't go to school that day. I managed to avoid it for months; that's how anxious I was about talking in public. I think that experience scarred me. Later when I went to somebody's home to give a listing presentation, I was so nervous. I didn't know what to say. But then I began listening to Lee Woodward's coaching CDs. I listened to every single one of them; I couldn't get enough. Lee also personally coached me a lot in those early years, especially in how to put a good listing presentation together. With Lee's help I finally put together a blueprint that came from my heart. That worked really well.

4. Be self aware and humble

Know your strengths and weaknesses. If your strength is selling - stick with selling. I think sometimes agents get too caught up in their own self-importance. John McGrath stood in front of a seminar a couple of years back and he said, "Guys, do not fool yourself; all you do is sell houses. That's all you do. Leave your egos at the door. Help people buy and sell a house. That's all you need to do." I love that.

Be humble. I am always conscious of the fact that my job is to provide a solution for my clients that they feel is the right one for them. There is a lot of power in that. I just cut to the chase. For instance if I sense that someone is concerned about the price (and let's face it, most people are) I'll say to them, "I think price is important to you. Why don't we start there?" And when they agree, I'll spend 20 minutes talking about the price and the rationale around the price and how to get the best price. I think when you have that client-focused conversation rather than a conversation that's all about you and closing, people sense your desire to help rather than treat them like a transaction.

5. Have low living costs

When you're starting out, live with a friend or your parents rather than rent on your own. Refrain from eating out too often. Drive a clean, reliable but basic car, and own it if you can. I surf with a guy who's 55. His name is Kev and he started surfing when he was 50. Kev's a mechanic and he bought his car for $1,000. It's a Mitsubishi station wagon. When I asked him why he bought such a cheap car he simply said, "Mate, she gets me from A to B and she carries my boards. What more do I need?" That's a great attitude. No one gives a crap if you pull up in a BMW. You are not going to win business from your BMW, mark my words. It will only cause you stress later.

6. Have a long-term view

Treat what you do as a career not a job. Too many agents have one foot in, one foot out. Be smart about your spending and your growth pattern. Put in the hard yards, especially at the beginning. I literally went into lockdown mode for the first five years.

7. Listen to good people

There are so many people out there giving you advice on real estate. Be selective. Listen to people who have done it before - who are great at it and who actually have your best interests at heart and don't just want to take your money for coaching. That's why I chose to be coached by Lee (Woodward). He worked in real estate sales before starting his own training company (and was very successful), so he has walked the talk. He genuinely cares about the industry and puts his heart and soul into everything he does. That's the type of mentor you should seek.

8. Be great at prospecting - see it as creating future business

Call an owner every day. Whatever you do, just get great at it and other opportunities will come. Learn to be amazing at

prospecting.

9. Have an online presence but don't mistake it for building future business

Like anything great in life, building relationships takes time. Everything takes effort. Whether it's letters, cold calls, knocking on doors, or building your online presence, just get started and gradually build your presence over time. I've been creating videos for 15 years and they're only now generating a reasonable following. It's taken a long time to get to this point. Many homeowners watch my motivational videos. I think of it as prospecting. I had an owner come up to me recently while I was negotiating the price on her house and she said, "Mat, I've watched all your videos, so I get what you're saying." I was trying to tell her that the first couple of weeks of a campaign are the most important and she remembered seeing me talk about that in one of my videos. So she understood where I was coming from and agreed to accept the offer.

10. Write and deliver great letters

I built my career on letters. They cost nothing. All I had to do was type them up, print them off, fold them and place them into envelopes on the dining table and personally hand deliver them. The cut through is in the personal delivery. Unfortunately very few agents these days are prepared to get out there and put in that effort. I guarantee you that hand delivering your letters will help you resonate so much with your area that you'll feel like you've earned the next listing. I can't stress this strongly enough - hand-deliver your letters every single day.

11. Deliver the CMA

It's been the delivery of the Comparative Market Analysis (CMA) report that's helped me smash it out of the park. When you've walked the streets, day after day for years on end as I have, people within your community get to know you. You earn their time because you've put in the time. So when I would deliver the CMA report, people were interested because it came from someone they felt a connection with and someone they knew wasn't pushing for a listing. I've never chased the listings. I've chased the opportunity to see someone or meet someone and then see where it goes. So rather than telling less experienced agents to go out and get listings I say, "I'm going to teach you how to take care of your farm and nurture the best crop so in the next couple of years you're going to have an abundance of food."

12. Don't stress about your listing presentation

You can only work with what you've got at the time. If you're a young agent getting started and all you've got is a simple A3 page containing a few steps you've grabbed from a more experienced agent, then that might be all you need. As long as you've got something that you follow with a prospective vendor; something that shows a beginning, a middle and an end and why they should choose you, then you really don't need much more than that. Over time, you'll learn more and hear new ideas and little by little your listing presentation will evolve.

13. Take care of people

This point centres on buyer management, an area often neglected in real estate. You have to care enough to help find the right property for them. I think I've been really good at that over the years. I've really taken the time to learn what buyers want. I hear complaints from buyers all the time that they get shown properties they're not at all interested in. It's clear that those agents didn't listen.

When my boss in the second Killarney Vale agency I worked for went on holidays I managed to sell 12 properties in his absence. On his return to work he couldn't believe his eyes as he looked at the tally on the white board. Normally they only sold around four properties a month. It all boiled down to taking great care of people, especially the buyers. It's not hard to ask a buyer to write a list of all the addresses they would love to buy - whether those properties are on the market or not is irrelevant. Armed with that list, I would approach those owners and say, "Hey Mr Owner, I've got a

buyer here who wants to buy your house. Are you interested?" I still do that today. I think sometimes we over complicate this whole process. We had a buyer who said, "I want a property in those four streets, but I've got to have a pool." One of our agents went on Google Earth, found all the houses in those streets with a pool, door knocked them all and found an owner who was prepared to sell.

14. Have faith

People aren't always going to make a decision that day. I think there is a misunderstanding in the industry that if you don't sign the business on the day you have failed. I personally prefer to leave what I call my 'energy print' behind and keep the prospective listing alive with professional follow-up in the days that follow. In my experience people make a decision on day 3 and because of my active follow-up and the fact that they would still be feeling my energy at that point, it's like I am still there in their living room with them when they make that decision. So my advice to you is, don't despair when you leave a listing presentation without the listing. Have faith that the way you presented yourself and the manner in which you will follow-up over the coming days will show them that you are the best person for the job.

15. Consider the power of a team

Being part of a winning team is where the greatest power lies. If I played basketball I would want to join a team like the Chicago Bulls, not start up my own team. If I moved to Melbourne, I would get on the phone and call one of Melbourne's best, James Tostevin and say, "I'm coming to Melbourne. Can I either work on your team or get a job in your agency somewhere?" The momentum that already exists in a winning team can't help but propel you in your career. Sure it's great running your own show, but when you do, you're responsible for absolutely everything. Running a business and selling houses are two totally different things. It's all about profit and cash flow. You can be a brilliant agent running a business within a business, make $800,000 a year and buy a property a year for the next 20 years. You have the potential to become very wealthy in this industry. But you don't have to work on your own for that to happen. Consider the power of a team.

Powerful techniques

1. The process of negotiation

The following tools are at your disposal when you negotiate. Use them wisely!

-
- Time
- Emotion
- What you say

It's important to use the right tool at the appropriate time. Sometimes an agent will go straight to tool number 3 and respond too early. When this happens, the buyer will usually feel like the agent is overly keen and a bit pushy.

Steadiness is the key to leading a successful negotiation. The moment you lose your steadiness, panic sets in and you come across as too urgent, too keen and as though you are trying to manufacture the outcome. It will never be the best price.

It's important to see things through the buyer's eyes. Unless you understand what they see, you won't be able to determine the best move to make next. It's like playing chess; you always have to be a few moves ahead. That's why you need a bit of space and time. I ask a number of seemingly unrelated questions as I'm taking a buyer on an inspection, all designed to get to know them better and uncover their emotional triggers. Just ensure your questioning doesn't come across as an interrogation. Gently and subtly dig for information and have a plan in terms of the direction

you want the conversation to take and how you want it to end.

The following is an example of my questioning technique while conducting a property tour.

Finding an opening by asking the right questions

Mat: Where do you currently live Lee?

Lee: I'm from Point Frederick.

Mat: Cool. Why are you moving over here?

Lee: We really want to be close to the water, and we're looking at beachfront properties.

Mat: Awesome. Have you sold your home yet?

Lee: No.

Mat: No, okay. How come? Are you just sort of looking around or ... ?

Lee: Yeah, we missed out on one. We don't want to give up where we are until we find something.

Mat: Excellent.

(Pauses and continues walking around the home.)

Mat: So you're thinking of buying before you sell or ... ?

Lee: Hopefully not. We'd hopefully get ours sold in time.

Mat: So if you find the right one, you're willing to make an offer.... ?

Lee: Yeah, we'll go ahead.

Mat: Where was the one you missed out on?

Lee: It was just up the top end of Wamberal.

Mat: What street?

Lee: ABC Street.

Mat: Oh, is that the one that sold for $1.6m?

Lee: Yeah, that's the one.

Mat: Why did you miss out on it?

Lee: We just didn't go any further at the auction. We probably should have.

Mat: Do you regret it now? Was your wife upset?

Lee: Yeah, I do regret missing that one and Robyn was very disappointed.

Mat: What would you pay for it now out of interest?

With direct questions like these you can see the emotion in their eyes. I know from this conversation that if I find a

suitable property for $2 million, it will be a stretch for them but I also know they have a home to sell in Point Frederick so they would likely fall into that ballpark. I haven't seen or appraised their home yet (although I definitely intend to) but I'm just putting all the pieces of the puzzle together. I'm literally building my toolbox as we speak. When I find them a house, I will make those guys stretch. Urgency, emotion, the wife really wants it, remember how you felt when you missed the last one, and so on. I'll use all this later.

The 'Set to Sell' meeting

This is the meeting you have with the owner just before their property goes live on the market. The purpose of the meeting is to make sure they are happy with everything - the copy, the photos, everything. Once you receive their approval on everything, give them a clear indication of what to expect throughout the campaign - total transparency, including the things that could go wrong and how you would address them.

If you don't make these things very clear upfront, then later down the track when you raise the idea of a price reduction or you ask for a 5% deposit towards additional marketing the owners will be angry because no one's told them. Prevent that scenario - have a thorough, open and honest Set to Sell meeting.

Even no. 1 agents have room for improvement

Just because you take out the number one spot in a leading brand doesn't mean you have earned the right to be complacent. Mat openly discusses the main area in which he feels there is room for improvement in his own game. He says, "Established client campaigns are definitely the main thing I need to fix in my personal business and even within the company. For instance I could do a far better job during the exchanged to settled period. I put so much effort into getting the exchange and then all of a sudden a new property listing comes along and my energy becomes consumed by that and I neglect my client who has just exchanged. It's like I've done the deed and it's done. I am emotionally cut off. Relationship building is not something I'm naturally good at unless I'm focused on listing a property or negotiating with a buyer - then I'm brilliant at it. But I know that's not where it should end. Taking care of people after the sale is so important for sustainable success in this game. And that's an area my team and I are working on improving right now."