

00;00;03;29 - 00;00;26;04

HOST

Welcome to the People Property Place podcast with me, your host, Matthew Watts, Founder and Managing Director of Rockbourne. This is a podcast where I share the stories, views, opinions and career journeys of the movers, shakers, innovators and leaders in the real estate industry.

00;00;26;06 - 00;01;13;08

HOST

Welcome to another episode of the People Property Place podcast, where we speak to the movers, shakers, innovators and leaders shaping the real estate investment management landscape. Today on the podcast, I'm joined by one of the UK's leading dealmakers, Bradley Goldenberg, Managing Director of Goldenberg Real Estate. Bradley has traded over 3.5 billion pounds worth of UK real estate across all commercial and residential sectors, and he boasts an enviable client book of global institutional investors, UK and overseas property companies, private equity houses and both global and domestic ultra high net worth investors.

00;01;13;08 - 00;01;17;05

HOST

And it gives me great pleasure that he joins me on the podcast. So Bradley, welcome.

00;01;17;12 - 00;01;18;18

GUEST

Hi, Matt. Thank you very much.

00;01;18;21 - 00;01;40;07

HOST

Not at all. Well, look, as you know, I speak with a lot of institutional clients, but I'm really excited to kind of dive into your background as a kind of more niche player in the space, someone who's transacted a phenomenal amount of real estate and someone who boasts billionaires as clients through to, institutional, clients as well.

00;01;40;10 - 00;01;53;12

HOST

But before we kind of get on to kind of the present day, where do you see the market and a little bit about, what you do day to day. Can we throw it back and can you give me a little bit of early context, to kind of how and why you got into real estate?

00;01;53;15 - 00;02;17;19

GUEST

Well, really, I, I didn't have much choice. My father, my uncle were in the business they set up in 1972. And the interesting story there was that my my uncle was studying estate management at Redding, and my father had left school at 14, was a hairdresser, hairdresser to the stars in those days of the Jayne Mansfield, one of his clients and the Lady Mayoress of Westminster and all sorts of all sorts of people.

00;02;17;19 - 00;02;39;05

GUEST

And he was doing very well, but developed a kind of reaction to some of the chemical treatments that he was using. And it basically got to the point where it wasn't possible for him to continue. So my uncle was just as I said, he was just qualifying from Redding, and at the same time as working in a West End estate agency, commercial estate agency, and decided to he was setting up on his own and said to my dad, you can't do that.

00;02;39;11 - 00;03;04;14

GUEST

Why don't you come and join me and we'll set up together. So in 1972, they set up what was then called

Goldenberg and Company, and my father became probably the leading not, if not probably certainly the leading agent for the prime retail market in central London. So he transacted almost every building at one stage of his career in the likes of Bond Street, Stage Street, Regent Street, etc., etc. predominantly on the tenant side.

00;03;04;14 - 00;03;27;07

GUEST

So acting for the likes of Gucci and Van Cleef and Graff and Prada, all of these sorts of top end brands that most of which are still in Bond Street today, will be having moved up and down the street probably a few times. So I was brought up in that property environment, and as a kid in the school holidays, I used to go into the office with him and learn quite a lot, and people never quite believe me.

00;03;27;07 - 00;03;51;12

GUEST

But it's true that I offered my first property to a prospective tenant aged seven years old, seven so I was walking down Carnaby Street with my dad and there were various empty shops there, and I said, dad, wouldn't it be amazing if Arsenal, I'm a big Arsenal fan. They've also had a shop here in Carnaby Street selling football kits, or even if England had a shop selling football kits.

00;03;51;12 - 00;04;10;19

GUEST

He said, well, I tell you what, why don't you offer them, offer them a couple of these shops? So I went back to the office and I sat with his secretary and we between us, we created a letter which was sent to both of those entities, to Arsenal and to Ted Croker, who was then the, I think, the chairman of the Football Association, and offered them these shops.

00;04;10;19 - 00;04;29;12

GUEST

And obviously I signed the letter after as being very, very grown up and very proud of myself. Unfortunately, they both wrote back, subsequently said they weren't interested, albeit of course, many years later, the retail world of football kits has become quite a big one. So that was my first foray into actually interacting with a client, even though I suppose technically there weren't clubs because I didn't do deal.

00;04;29;14 - 00;04;49;13

GUEST

And anyway, I carried on the school holidays. I really did enjoy spending time with my dad and learning from him. And then actually, when I was 14, in the summer holidays, did my first deal completely, where I left an office at 138 New Bond Street in the summer holidays, having learned from, you know, from my dad, my uncle and other people in the office what to do.

00;04;49;16 - 00;04;58;11

GUEST

It was a Friday. Friday afternoon. Everyone else was out having lunch. But of course, you know, I they wouldn't let me in the guinea when I was just down the road.

00;04;58;11 - 00;05;00;09

HOST

So the guinea was still the hotspot back there.

00;05;00;11 - 00;05;07;12

GUEST

Always has. Yeah. Yeah. Our office was in Bruton Place. The family in those days. That's where the office was. Bruton Place I it was. We were pretty close to the gate.

00;05;07;18 - 00;05;11;19

HOST

They wouldn't they wouldn't let you out. But you can look out the window or something like that anyway.

00;05;11;19 - 00;05;32;06

GUEST

So I'm sitting having a sandwich. And in those days you used to this is you used to advertise one of the private places to advertise properties. That was the Evening Standard. So the classified ads at the back. So this chap comes into the office and I could hear, I could hear the voice outside talking to the receptionist, and he came in with a copy of the paper and he said, I'd like to take, I'd like to see this office.

00;05;32;08 - 00;05;47;12

GUEST

So the receptionist brought him into the office of the room that I was in, introduced me, and he said, can you take me? I said, well, the chap dealing with it's now at lunch. Could you wait a bit? Because now I need to go back to Hungary, which I was from this afternoon, and so I want to see it now.

00;05;47;18 - 00;06;01;19

GUEST

So I took him to the office, showed him round and he said, I'll take it. So he said, okay, let's go back to your office. So he came back to the office and I again, and I was hoping that the guy that was doing the office lettings might be back from lunch. But you know, sod's law of Friday.

00;06;01;21 - 00;06;17;13

GUEST

No, not not much of a chance of him coming back early. So the guy said look I want to get on with it. So I kind of knew what was required. And I filled out some forms and dictated some letters in this that the other. And then when they came back from lunch, I said, oh, by the way, I said, well, theoretically, Bon Street's on offer now.

00;06;17;16 - 00;06;19;24

GUEST

And the deal happened. And that was my first deal.

00;06;19;26 - 00;06;21;15

HOST

What was that? What was their response when you.

00;06;21;15 - 00;06;28;12

GUEST

Said I they were they were they I think they thought that was I was writing them up, but they became good, became good.

00;06;28;15 - 00;06;30;11

HOST

Hungarian chap became good on his promise.

00;06;30;11 - 00;06;39;13

GUEST

And he came good did the deal. And from memory his business bureau. You stamp collector. He was a big stamp dealer, basically.

00;06;39;16 - 00;06;52;12

HOST

And so did you. First deal at 14. I think that might be a record. On the podcast. And so what, dropped out of school and carried on, or did you kind of finish finish your formal education before getting formally into the real estate space? Well, I.

00;06;52;12 - 00;07;12;26

GUEST

Did my obviously GCSE and A-levels started off at university, but to be honest, academia wasn't wasn't my favorite. My favorite route I, I probably made a mistake and I have many regrets, but one was probably the fact that I decided to stay in London to do university because it was a missed out on the student life, but I did a year at East London University study estate management.

00;07;12;26 - 00;07;27;13

GUEST

I used to drive in through the East End, through some of the Hackney and some of the factories around the clothing factories, and I used to found some ways to sort of buy and sell and trade things. And when you then turn up at uni and everyone's kind of strapped for cash, and you got a few hundred quid in your pocket.

00;07;27;18 - 00;07;28;17

HOST

Because you've been.

00;07;28;19 - 00;07;34;13

GUEST

Selling stuff, it got to a point where I just couldn't, I couldn't. The motivation to continue studying just wasn't there.

00;07;34;16 - 00;07;44;22

HOST

Then you said you knew the writing was on the wall, right? In terms of what you were going to go on to do. Well, that was so was it a case of do I really need this qualification or do I need to go to university cos I know what my life's calling is going to be?

00;07;44;25 - 00;07;58;01

GUEST

It's really interesting because of course when you study estate management, there are so many parts to it that aren't necessarily relevant to trying to be successful and to make significant money, basically, you know, unless.

00;07;58;01 - 00;08;01;27

HOST

You obviously want to be a value and you need a professional qualification. Yes, in order to do that. Right.

00;08;01;27 - 00;08;21;03

GUEST

Yeah. But that was never that was never, ever going to be my intention. My intention was always going to be to try and do deals. At the time, did I know what that looked like? No. I didn't know whether I'd be a retail agent, an office agent, investment agent, or had no idea. But what I did know was knowing about some of the sort of more technical side of what I was being taught didn't excite me very much.

00;08;21;05 - 00;08;41;07

GUEST

So on the one hand, look at something doesn't excite me. I see something that, yeah, earning some money down the road that did excite me. And so that's the route that I decided to go down. And it wasn't it

wasn't smooth sailing. I never the intention at that point wasn't to then go into what was then, I suppose, a family business, because I didn't feel that I deserved to go into the family business because I hadn't really done what I'd set out to do.

00;08;41;07 - 00;09;06;07

GUEST

And, you know, when I finished my A-levels, which was to study and get a qualification, a degree. So I went away that summer and did a bit of work here and there outside of property and traveling a bit, and then sort of I remember fighting my dad and saying, I've decided I'm not going back to uni. And I he was a best place, perhaps also for the fact I would have been the first member of the family to have gone to university or to have continued university.

00;09;06;07 - 00;09;22;05

GUEST

I think that said, I was. I set up, told them that I wasn't going to continue. And so yeah, I was kind of in a state of flux for a bit. And I think talking to a few people I knew in the industry to try and position myself to get a job. And then my dad and I had this conversation and, and my uncle as well, and they wanted me to to go and work for them.

00;09;22;05 - 00;09;32;29

GUEST

And it didn't really sit that well with me. The possibility of getting to work for a rival company and being that wouldn't really be in competition because I was only a youngster, but nonetheless working for someone else didn't seem like they're in the same industry. Didn't see.

00;09;33;03 - 00;09;54;12

HOST

Yeah, it's interesting because some people who, I've spoken to over the years whose parents or there's a family business of sorts, they go straight into the family business and that's just all they've known. And others, it's very much a you can't join go, go into your education or your schooling elsewhere. Go and see that there's a world outside and go and learn some other skills, and then come and join at the appropriate time and bring bring those learnings to us.

00;09;54;18 - 00;09;56;11

HOST

You went straight in did you?

00;09;56;13 - 00;10;11;15

GUEST

Yeah, I did, I did, and it was interesting because I think a lot of people probably think that if you I suppose there are two ways it can go. If you work in a family business, you can go either you really are there at the bottom grafting like anyone else should, or for some people they go in and the privileged will.

00;10;11;15 - 00;10;17;24

GUEST

I definitely have the former, not the latter. And I spent the first few years, probably longer than others may actually, just.

00;10;17;24 - 00;10;18;14

HOST

To prove the point.

00;10;18;15 - 00;10;35;02

GUEST

Yeah, probably the sort of, you know, learning a lot. So I did a lot of I sort of went around the different sort

of departments that we had at the time. So I did retail agency, office agency, industrial agency. And it's to be honest, in those days, that was all it was. There were no alternatives, people to invest, investing in other things or do other things.

00;10;35;02 - 00;11;04;26

GUEST

But it was mainly occupational work initially, and I did occupational work in those three disciplines for probably 4 or 5 years, and then suddenly got attracted to the idea of investment. And then and I suppose the benefit and it's still a benefit today, I suppose, of having really understood the office market in terms of lettings, the retail letting market, industrial letting market is I could understand occupational how properties were occupied by tenants and that sort of thing.

00;11;04;26 - 00;11;09;23

GUEST

And that enabled me then to be but more broad brushed when it came into dealing with investment.

00;11;09;29 - 00;11;19;10

HOST

Because you've got the perspective of an occupier and how they would look at a particular building, and then that will inform how an investor could fundamentally make money out of it.

00;11;19;12 - 00;11;40;10

GUEST

Yeah, exactly. Exactly, exactly. And I suppose it particularly helped because what I then did go into investment, I found that you get to sit with an investor and they tell you what they would want to buy, say, I remember getting to see the particular investor in Mayfair and him explaining to me, I want to buy Mayfair office buildings.

00;11;40;13 - 00;11;53;19

GUEST

And so I would send, you know, we'd find Mayfair office buildings that could be source either on the market or off the market, and speak to him on the phone or fax him through whatever it was in those days, telex even maybe. And then you sort of get no feedback. And I chase up after a few days or a week or whatever.

00;11;53;19 - 00;12;15;13

GUEST

I said, well, I've sent you these buildings with lots of feedback. Be good. Please. Now, I'm really, really sorry. I just bought shopping center in Manchester and I've learned from that moment on and it kind of stood me in good stead. A thing that the majority of investors, not all, but the majority of investors are entrepreneurial. They are opportunistic, and they'll buy it doesn't matter whether they buy offices, retail, industrial, hotels, student data centers, they don't really care.

00;12;15;15 - 00;12;29;14

GUEST

It's just about making money. And I think that that gave me the ability then to having the full back, having understood those sectors. Oh, admittedly, they were all in London, but ultimately the same idea that helped me enormously as I navigated the path into investment.

00;12;29;21 - 00;12;33;04

HOST

And so the business was called Goldenberg Real Estate. So.

00;12;33;06 - 00;13;05;04

GUEST

You know, originally it was called Goldman Company. It was called Goldenberg and Company from 1972 into the early 90s. I'm not sure why we then we then rebranded to Goldenberg Real Estate. And then when my father, my uncle retired, I just basically kept well, I had the option, I suppose at that time the business also did very high end residential in sort of Mayfair, Belgravia, Knightsbridge, and we had a sort of a team of staff in this that the other, but that wasn't really my I didn't really want to get sidetracked from actually doing deals to actually managing people in departments.

00;13;05;04 - 00;13;27;08

GUEST

And therefore, you know, you kept it. I kept hearing about people. They ran businesses. But in actual fact, they Dennis paid me like 40% of their time. They'd actually be transacting. The rest of the time they'd be managing people. And that that wasn't that wasn't my thing at all. So when they retired, whenever that was, I kind of think now mid 2000 or something like that, I think I had the opportunity, as I said, to be the carried out or just effectively just do what I did and that's what I decided to do.

00;13;27;08 - 00;13;32;16

GUEST

So we wound up all of those different bits and pieces down, and I just carried on doing doing investment deals.

00;13;32;17 - 00;13;40;24

HOST

So the business when you joined it was mainly occupational transactional work. Did they have an investment arm or did you set that kind of investment arm up?

00;13;40;28 - 00;13;53;21

GUEST

No, we did have an investment arm, but it was a very, very small part of the business and it was predominantly acting for sort of small family trusts. So more conservative types of investments and so on. But it wasn't a hugely significant part of the business at that time.

00;13;53;21 - 00;14;02;14

HOST

And what was it about investment that kind of drew you in over, kind of occupational agency? There was a particular interest that you wanted to focus on.

00;14;02;17 - 00;14;09;03

GUEST

I think the people I think it's exciting you're meeting, you know, really interesting people. Not that the tenants were interested.

00;14;09;03 - 00;14;10;13

HOST

I was going to say, you know.

00;14;10;15 - 00;14;37;29

GUEST

But they were really interesting people with a real entrepreneurial spirit. Spirit, but also in a sector that I understood. So, for example, it's all very well, you know, representing a retailer. But you don't really sort of understand their product intimately, you know, that they sell something and they want a shop to sell it and etc., etc. they'd all say that once you've done that, unless you're acting for a big chain, which we didn't because we did with our retail business in those days, as I said, were shops in Bond Street, in places like that.

00;14;37;29 - 00;15;00;15

GUEST

So unless you're acting for a big chain, you didn't get sort of continue work with those people. So you couldn't really create the same relationships. And if anything, my favorite part of this industry, as I'm sure everyone sits there and says the same thing I know is there are the relationships. It's incredible how you have a relationship with a client that just goes on for years and years and years, to the point that most of your clients are your friends and and you don't.

00;15;00;17 - 00;15;04;29

GUEST

I don't think you get that in occupation work because you do it. The deal might take 2 or 3 months and then.

00;15;05;04 - 00;15;18;00

HOST

You're on to the next. Exactly. Whereas on the investment side, it was the opportunity to buy well, invest well on their behalf and then find another deal that fits their criteria in terms of what they're looking to do and just build build that relationship and that repeat business over time.

00;15;18;03 - 00;15;37;21

GUEST

But also to take the effectively to almost see the deal from was the cradle to grave to a certain degree, from buying the asset to helping them, sometimes with their sort of asset management of the asset and improving the asset to actually then ending the business plan and selling it again. And so that's quite interesting. The sort of the pathway is, is quite exciting.

00;15;37;23 - 00;15;39;17

GUEST

It was that and it remains so today.

00;15;39;17 - 00;15;57;13

HOST

So if you if you cast your mind back to you kind of dropping, dropping out of university and kind of just working out what you're going to do and where you're going to apply yourself, what would you say? We all kind of like core strengths that you are particularly good at that lend itself to transactional work?

00;15;57;15 - 00;16;14;10

GUEST

I think I would say probably the core strength is my ability to and the enjoyment I get in meeting people, talking to people and so on. So I think the relationship building I enjoy, I've certainly got the ability to to find a way to talk to anyone about anything. And that's something which I think is to me in good stead, and.

00;16;14;12 - 00;16;20;26

HOST

That gives you energy. Whereas writing reports and, you know, being changed your desk drains your energy that I don't.

00;16;20;27 - 00;16;23;25

GUEST

Report reports very.

00;16;23;27 - 00;16;43;13

HOST

So yeah, I guess sometimes you have to do but I guess now it's all done over WhatsApp. Right? And you've already built up such good relationships with people. You're like, you've got to buy this. And

they're like, well, if you're telling me I'm going to buy it, I'll buy it. Tell me about kind of how you have gone about building your your relationships and your book and your kind of what is your patches as well?

00;16;43;13 - 00;16;44;22

HOST

And what does that look like?

00;16;44;24 - 00;17;11;15

GUEST

Well that's interesting. So my patch in terms of what geographically. So geographically I operate all over the UK. I have had spells where I've done business abroad, but the reality is that I think it's very, very difficult to to transact, globally from the perspective that everything's different in every country. So whilst I have done deals in, I mean, I've done I did a particularly exciting deed in France and a long time ago, but I particularly enjoyed that.

00;17;11;17 - 00;17;21;06

GUEST

But I've done deals in, in Germany, in France, in Belgium, in the US. But you're kind of winging it to a certain degree, if I'm honest. When you when you go to a market that you don't.

00;17;21;06 - 00;17;29;13

HOST

Know because we're in a state such a local market, it I guess people have to know, like the different streets and the kind of the story behind it. Right.

00;17;29;14 - 00;17;52;14

GUEST

Would you graphically it's very different, although I suspect it's much easier today, clearly with technology. But understanding local property laws, there are different, leases are different. Rent reviews are different. Everything's different. So I can't I can't really adviser with the same authority on an asset outside of the UK as I can in the UK. And I think that's basically I know lots of people do try to do that, but my, my decision was I didn't want to do that.

00;17;52;21 - 00;18;00;29

GUEST

And in those times where I was traveling a lot and missing out on the things that you're meant to be doing at home. So my preference, after all forms of what I was, was to not do that anymore.

00;18;01;01 - 00;18;17;02

HOST

See, focused on the UK and did you did you kind of think, I just want to be a central London expert, but you kind of had FOMO and missing out on other opportunities, or did your clients take you to kind of other parts of the UK? How did that kind of evolve and expand in terms of that being your kind of patch?

00;18;17;08 - 00;18;18;04

HOST

Well, I suppose different.

00;18;18;04 - 00;18;41;15

GUEST

Clients look for different things. So for example, most of the clients that say overseas clients, the majority of them won't go outside of London, some of them won't got Mayfair. I mean, they I mean it's really all about London for them. However, with funds and UK based investors, they'll be a bit more adventurous. So they will. But the real the reality is the the lot sizes are larger in London.

00;18;41;17 - 00;18;52;24

GUEST

The deal volumes are larger in London. So yeah, there's absolutely a big slant towards London. But I've done, you know, business in probably most of the all of the big cities and towns in the UK, probably.

00;18;52;26 - 00;19;09;01

HOST

In terms of kind of the business and taking it forward. Did you want to kind of run a team, build a team out and take a bit of a step back, or did you always want to be on the tools and what was the and it's and I'm assuming that is the case. What was the rationale behind wanting to, to not have a big, big team and run a big agency?

00;19;09;04 - 00;19;09;12

HOST

Well, the.

00;19;09;12 - 00;19;25;25

GUEST

Main reason I space is really based upon what I said before about when it was the family business, in that I think that having lots of people requires managing people, and that gets you away from really the the intention. When I get out of bed in the morning to try and do deals, and that's what I enjoy doing.

00;19;26;00 - 00;19;43;15

GUEST

And so whilst I have had over the years, I've had people, I mean, I've got a remote PA, for example, but in terms of people that actually Fiona's over the years I've had people working, working with me, but it's never been my most enjoyable time. No disrespect to those to those particular people, because they were very nice and I really enjoyed working with them.

00;19;43;15 - 00;19;53;00

GUEST

But it always resulted in me at the end of each day thinking, well, I spent this much time get a coaching him to do this. Whereas have I missed out on.

00;19;53;03 - 00;20;03;09

HOST

An opportunity if I could just do it? Yeah, do it yourself. And I guess if you're not looking to kind of build next to business, there's no need to to do that. And have you ever thought about going and working for a kind of a larger agency?

00;20;03;11 - 00;20;07;24

GUEST

But I've had over the years they've been approaches from people, but it's not like it would ever.

00;20;07;24 - 00;20;09;28

HOST

Interest me because.

00;20;10;01 - 00;20;21;29

GUEST

All you hear about in the big firms is all of the, nonproductive moments that they have during a day, and it just goes back to the same thing. It's just doesn't, doesn't, doesn't interest me to, to to be down to.

00;20;22;04 - 00;20;25;15

HOST

Just being sat in meetings for meeting sake or playing the political game.

00;20;25;15 - 00;20;27;03

GUEST

No, no no no me.

00;20;27;10 - 00;20;38;18

HOST

That was not you at all. So talk to me about how you've built up your client book. Does the client book come first, or the sourcing the deal and building your relationships with other agents and finding product come first.

00;20;38;25 - 00;20;57;19

GUEST

Now, I think the clients come first because if you know what the client wants, you can find them. The do the other way around that I don't think works as well. It works as well for me. I think the reality is when you're doing business and you can demonstrate the deals you're doing, people always talk to you. If you know what someone wants to buy and then always talk to you.

00;20;57;21 - 00;21;23;16

GUEST

And that's the approach that I had initially, because of course you got to start start from somewhere. And so those relationships would then lead to either doing other deals with those people, then introducing me or the number of people that would approach me off the back, a deal that a back of a deal that I've done, which actually nowadays is very interesting because when you're looking at things like LinkedIn, social media, etc., etc., people are hearing about deals that you've done sometimes and they'll say, oh, you sold this building.

00;21;23;16 - 00;21;28;26

GUEST

I'd also like a building in that street or in that area, or a building like that. So, so.

00;21;28;26 - 00;21;32;11

HOST

They want to tap you for your expertise, knowledge, connections, etc..

00;21;32;11 - 00;21;32;25

GUEST

Yeah.

00;21;32;28 - 00;21;54;03

HOST

And how how is that from a mindset perspective? How is a how what kind of like high net worth individuals? How do they differ in terms of their kind of thoughtfulness around a deal compared to an institution? And I guess there's lots of different types of institutions, different risk return profiles and characters from a high net worth perspective must be quite interesting from a wealth preservation.

00;21;54;03 - 00;22;03;21

HOST

Or they're looking to kind of flip things quite, quite quickly. Is it hard to kind of badge everyone or are there kind of distinct traits that you can kind of marry up and match to a particular investor type?

00;22;03;27 - 00;22;10;26

GUEST

Yeah, I think most sort of high net worth investors often are looking for wealth preservation.

00;22;11;00 - 00;22;15;05

HOST

And what what do you mean by high net worth. Are we talking multi hundreds of millions.

00;22;15;05 - 00;22;38;28

GUEST

Yeah yeah yeah. So ultra high net worth. Yeah. That sort of thing at that. Sort of. Yeah. Base level I suppose traditionally that have made money outside of property, that have made money in whatever it may be, their tech, finance or whatever, they will then have money that they want to invest in real estate because it's obviously a sensible asset class and they will want to normally buy with the intention of keeping forever.

00;22;39;01 - 00;23;01;22

GUEST

And so that's very, very different to a fund manager, for example, who is buying to get a particular return for his investors and then exit and, and pretty good to be proud of himself and promote or whoever it may be. So the overseas investors, most of my clients that are overseas investors tend to be on the high Wentworth side, tend to prefer sort of just much more vanilla asset.

00;23;01;23 - 00;23;12;13

GUEST

So, you know, prime central London freehold buildings let with and stuff that allows them to sleep at night rather than having to worry. Whereas a fund manager doesn't mind that little bit of pain because that's how they make.

00;23;12;15 - 00;23;26;22

HOST

That's how they make outsized returns. Whereas the high net worth individuals you normally deal with, they just want to. Is it an ego and is it an ego? Play some some of the times in terms of being able to say, I own that building, or it might not be the best commercial investment, but there's a lot of ego to it.

00;23;26;22 - 00;23;43;06

HOST

But then the other part is just being able to lock lock that money away, sleep easy at night, know that there's a strong, safe legal system in place. It can't just be lynched or taken from them and they can just click their their coupon on a quarterly basis. And that often their their jets and their yachts and their lifestyle.

00;23;43;08 - 00;24;03;16

GUEST

I suppose for some it may be there may be an ego play, but I think I think as the years have progressed that's become less so. I think that they're buying because they genuinely want to buy an asset that is safe and secure, all the things you've just said. Whereas I think not that, you know, maybe ten, 15 years ago, people used to think of it as as an ego play.

00;24;03;16 - 00;24;18;02

GUEST

But I think there's a lot less of that now. I think the reality is, if you're ultra high net worth and you want to buy the best property, you're going to be buying a property that will people will think you're buying it because you want the ego. But the reality is location, location, location, and people want to buy the best.

00;24;18;08 - 00;24;33;01

GUEST

Because if you're in that sort of realm where you've got money's no object for anything, those tend to be

those types of people tend to buy the best of things. So whether that's the best shoes, the best car, the best boat, the best plane makes sense to buy this property to.

00;24;33;03 - 00;24;35;06

HOST

And they want the best agent representing them as well.

00;24;35;09 - 00;24;36;26

GUEST

That's why I chartered them.

00;24;36;28 - 00;24;43;19

HOST

So in terms of kind of lot sizes, then what's typical range that you, you kind of deal with or is it is it hard to say.

00;24;43;26 - 00;24;57;02

GUEST

It's I don't think there is a range of such. We'll help a client by building or sell a building for a few million pounds, up to hundreds, millions of pounds. It doesn't. It's not about the lot size. It's about facilitating the client and getting them what they want.

00;24;57;09 - 00;25;12;24

HOST

And do you do you spend a lot of time where clearly you must spend a lot of time having to protect your own time and only spend time with people that are actually going to transact or are actually serious. So you must have to do a fair bit of kind of your sussing out to work out who you're going to allocate your time with, because that's what you're trading.

00;25;12;24 - 00;25;30;18

HOST

Fundamentally, you don't want to be a busy, busy, full working or represented people that actually never going to come through. How do you reconcile that and how do you try and work out who spend time with versus who, who not to and how to manage your own, kind of diary because I yeah, obviously I'm a headhunter. I'm an agent.

00;25;30;18 - 00;25;39;00

HOST

I mean, it's a similar kind of skill set and process. And also the other part to that is who's your like client avatar as well in terms of who you focus on.

00;25;39;02 - 00;25;57;25

GUEST

But I suppose the reality is nowadays it's much easier to know whether you're working with people who are actually getting to transact. I think that over time, as with anything, I think you kind of get to learn and read people's body language and understand what they're saying and trying to work out what they really say rather than what they might be saying and what they might be thinking.

00;25;57;28 - 00;26;19;00

GUEST

And I think nowadays, obviously with the technology, it's so easy to research people and they whether people are a straightforward but at the same time, you know, you come across, do you come across people who are less scrupulous, so you might not want to do business with you, maybe say they've got the money and they haven't, or they've got a bad reputation because they they like to behave correctly in deals or they'll pay, you know, or all, all of those sorts of things.

00;26;19;00 - 00;26;43;01

GUEST

And, and thankfully, as the years have progressed in the world's become more transparent. It's much easier to, to sort those out and to understand who to work for and who not to. I think I think what's interesting is now that technology is such a big part and again, going back to things like social media and these different things, I feel as they get a lot less unscrupulous people because it's hard for them to hide anymore.

00;26;43;05 - 00;26;51;25

GUEST

You used to get that a lot. You really used to get people who, you know, they just talk a good game, but you can check someone out in a minute. Now it's quite easy to do that.

00;26;51;27 - 00;27;26;15

HOST

Quick one from me. If you haven't already subscribed or followed this show on the podcast or app where you listen or watch, please do. It takes 10s and helps tremendously. I've got really big plans for people Property Plays podcast, and that one small action really, really helps grow the show and the present and enables us to keep doing what we're doing.

00;27;26;16 - 00;28;00;16

HOST

So if you haven't already, please follow or like on the platform you watch or listen to. Thanks so much. And so in terms of then being able to focus on the types of deals, it's actually building those relationships and checking those people out to know what they're after and then committing the time, effort and energy. Once you've built up that relationship to actually go and transact or find the types of deals that they're after, and you do that through your kind of extensive connections and network of agents who kind of bring on market and off market properties, or what are the other kind of methods that you use to try and deal source?

00;28;00;20 - 00;28;01;03

HOST

Well, I suppose.

00;28;01;03 - 00;28;26;14

GUEST

There are two things. The agency, the agency world is, is incredible. I mean, it's a very close knit community, despite the fact that there's clearly a lot of investment agents out there. It is a very close knit community and a lot of transactions do obviously happen. Agent to agent. But then at the same time, the beauty of having been involved in the industry for so long and being able to go back to my dad's day and my uncle's times, are that those relationships are really deep.

00;28;26;16 - 00;28;44;22

GUEST

And so often, often when we're involved in a deal because of those deep relationships, there will be a connection on the other side, whether it's having a good relationship with the with the seller or their agent or their lawyer or something, and tapping into those relationships really do help boil the wheels of the transaction and make it run more smoothly.

00;28;44;24 - 00;29;05;23

HOST

AI is obviously coming thick and fast, right? And there's there's commentators in the market that talk about it kind of revolutionizing the way that the real estate market operates. And I've got no doubt that it absolutely will do in some aspects. One of the things that technology has tried to infiltrate is the is the

agent network. The agents have been quite reluctant to adopt that.

00;29;05;28 - 00;29;14;05

HOST

How do you see technology or AI being able to kind of improve the experience, and do you think it will ever replace the need for agents as well?

00;29;14;08 - 00;29;47;02

GUEST

I don't think it will ever replace the need for agents. I don't believe that at all. I think that it's a very vital embracing technology in anything is important. If you don't, you just get left behind and it's enabled us to do a lot more things. It's quite ironic, really, because I enables you to do your sort of due diligence a lot and other technologies to do your due diligence in a much swift way, but it hasn't done just only is enabled the deal once you've got the deal agreed to actually make the due diligence process speed up.

00;29;47;07 - 00;29;56;05

GUEST

So the irony is we've got all this technology and AI, but every deal takes it. Deals take now take longer than they ever used to. And which which is kind of doesn't make any sense, does it?

00;29;56;13 - 00;30;02;22

HOST

Is that because people are overanalyzing or over synthesizing or overthinking or there's just layers and layers and layers of investment committee to get it through or.

00;30;02;26 - 00;30;08;03

GUEST

But it depends, because the investment committee is only really relevant to funds and provocations and so on.

00;30;08;04 - 00;30;09;13

HOST

The high net worth.

00;30;09;15 - 00;30;29;25

GUEST

You know, the investment committee is them. No, it's not that. It's really that I think the least the legal process, which doesn't make sense, still makes no sense because and I should be able to readily read a title report on it and do it all pretty much instantly. And even though lawyers are using those AI for doing that, so those functions, they will still exist, as I said, longer than ever.

00;30;30;02 - 00;30;49;05

GUEST

So, you know, I haven't quite got to the bottom of it. I think anyone has. But it is a big frustration we've got at the head on at the moment, for example, where I think we agreed to exchange contracts in five days and that was seven weeks ago and it's all just been snarled up in little different bits and pieces that have come up, which really should be solved.

00;30;49;08 - 00;30;51;03

GUEST

And you'd think that technology.

00;30;51;03 - 00;31;05;21

HOST

Would be able to grease that and make it make it a little bit smoother. Exactly. Do you think in part, you

know, anything is to do with agents reluctance to be kind of cut out or lose that kind of interpersonal? You help me, I help you. We feed kind of deals and, self preservation or.

00;31;05;23 - 00;31;27;23

GUEST

Look, I think I think there are different agents work in different ways. You know, might some agents get to the point where they feel as though that once they've agreed heads of terms, that job's done, that those guys will struggle? That's that's not how it works anymore. It was like that for the majority time because lawyers actually, the lawyers and the lawyers didn't really like agents being involved.

00;31;27;23 - 00;31;58;02

GUEST

But nowadays, the relationship between a lawyer and an agent, I think is, is really vital to it to transaction success. And that's particularly relevant with clients from out of town. So quite overseas clients because lots of overseas clients remember they've been successful in whatever it is they want to buy an asset in London. But again, like I said before about me not wanting to go to transact in other countries anymore, when people come here and they see what they think are issues.

00;31;58;09 - 00;32;13;05

GUEST

But I know in the Lord knows these are just bog standard problems. We just got to get around it. Can make them think, actually, I want to give up. So traditionally what would happen is the the lawyer then would report the issues to the client. The client would be like completely flummoxed. I don't understand what that's about. This is too much trouble.

00;32;13;06 - 00;32;24;12

GUEST

Let's just drop it. Whereas if the relationship between the agent and the lawyer is strong, then when the when a problem arises the law, the lawyers will speak to the agent. And between us, we'll try.

00;32;24;12 - 00;32;28;12

HOST

And give a heads up and come with solutions rather than just problems. Exactly.

00;32;28;15 - 00;32;45;24

GUEST

And and that's the way that's the way that I work. And I would say that a big, tight part of my day is problem solving is firefighting to to solve an issue to, I can present the present, the solved problem to the client, because it's not going to tell them about the problem. All that, albeit often they're not actually problems.

00;32;45;24 - 00;32;50;23

GUEST

They just, you know, little quirks in our in our landlord tenant law or whatever it may be.

00;32;50;25 - 00;32;54;18

HOST

Have you ever felt not being kind of Emmerich's qualified has ever held you back?

00;32;54;20 - 00;33;16;02

GUEST

Because because I'm not I'm not I'm not involved with technical. They're the technical parts of a transaction. And it's not it's not what I do. I don't do building services. They don't do these sorts of things. And I think to be an investment agent is a it's entrepreneurial. And I think that, you know, you've got to be able to, you know, move quickly, think quickly, be agile.

00;33;16;06 - 00;33;16;10

GUEST

Yeah.

00;33;16;10 - 00;33;25;23

HOST

As you say, what are the best? What are the best traits of the of the best agency you've worked with and seen? What do people really have to excel at or exhibit to be able to to succeed?

00;33;25;25 - 00;33;40;05

GUEST

Well, I think when you, when you're an agent, the, the I suppose the, the first it's, it's a bit like when you talk about first market. So you become aware of, of a building or you see a building that you think can be bought. And the first thing that sort of gets your head right, who would this suit.

00;33;40;08 - 00;33;57;18

GUEST

And you want to get to the right buyer before before someone else because it's competitive. You know, if a building is on the market and it goes on the market and 100 agents see this building, then you want to be the one that gets to the right buy first. So the bit the most important trait to me is being able to decipher immediately.

00;33;57;18 - 00;34;02;00

GUEST

Right. These this is the parameter of this deal. This is where it is. This is what it is. This is what that looks like.

00;34;02;02 - 00;34;03;25

HOST

The return profile, the business plan.

00;34;04;03 - 00;34;07;28

GUEST

Who's the best buyer. And that, that that to me is the most is.

00;34;08;01 - 00;34;18;01

HOST

And so is that just like your brain's ability to be able to problem solve and kind of recall information really, really quickly and match that, or is it a case of having a really good database or, well, how do you do that?

00;34;18;05 - 00;34;27;16

GUEST

Obviously I have a database, but my quickie database is, I think, one in my head because I think you do have a knack, after a while to think to straight away, to be able to remember who's best for that.

00;34;27;16 - 00;34;29;21

HOST

Asset and be able to place place deals. So that's.

00;34;29;21 - 00;34;30;07

GUEST

The idea.

00;34;30;11 - 00;34;36;03

HOST

Out of the 3.5 billion pounds worth of deals you've transacted, which is your favorite favorite deal you've ever done?

00;34;36;06 - 00;35;00;18

GUEST

There's a few, probably. I mentioned one before in Paris. That was that. That was a fund. That was I really enjoyed that too, because it was just kind of different. But basically it was I'm going back quite a while, but we acquired the staff accommodation in Eurodisney Paris, and it was a portfolio selling leaseback actually from Eurodisney. And then we bought it and then broke up, broke it up into different packages and sold it.

00;35;00;20 - 00;35;17;12

GUEST

And that was that was quite an exciting deal, because this is the only time ever that you go to a meeting and then finish the meeting often in a, in an amusement park. It was it was quite bizarre. I think there were three of us in suits walking down Disneyland looking, rather strange. But we went for this meeting in the morning and the train back wasn't till evening.

00;35;17;12 - 00;35;34;18

GUEST

We thought it would be a longer meeting and it wasn't so. Well, what do we do? And they said, well, would you like to spend the day at Disneyland? That was quite bizarre. But I think I suppose another one was I was involved in the Harrods Depository in Trevor Square. This was kind of 2002, 2003 or something like that.

00;35;34;21 - 00;35;55;12

GUEST

And so obviously you had Harry's department store, Brompton Road, and then on the other side of Brompton Road, it's Trevor Square and there's a there was actually a tunnel that linked, and that was the depository where they would stall their stock, and there was a tunnel that went underneath Brompton Road so that they could easily get the goods from, from A to B.

00;35;55;14 - 00;36;17;13

GUEST

And Mohamed Al-Fayed was looking to sell depository. And it was a complicated deal because he wanted to keep the sub, the basements to store to, to still service the store, but wanted to sell the rest of the building above. And so I had a kind of the time. He was really a great developer, and he ran the investment arm of a middle eastern investment bank.

00;36;17;16 - 00;36;35;08

GUEST

So the property arm of a middle eastern investment bank, and he was a super bright guy. And I looked at this deal and I thought, and this wasn't on the market. And I thought, this is perfect for him. This is this could be the greatest block of residential apartment block in London. And I went to see him and he was an accountant by qualification.

00;36;35;10 - 00;36;51;13

GUEST

And I literally it's the first time I was just blown away. I went there with the information, with some plans, with a schedule of areas, and he basically did an entire development appraisal in his head in about five minutes. And the figure he came out with, the figure he came.

00;36;51;13 - 00;36;51;28

HOST
Up the ass.

00;36;51;29 - 00;37;18;25
GUEST

Was exact was exactly where we needed to pay to do the deal was. And I hadn't told you the price yet and that that was remarkable. And then off the back of that, we ended up buying it, developing it. It was probably London's first super luxury large, multi-unit scheme. I think it had 40, 40 or 42 units, mostly flats and some houses, some townhouses and I think we sold them at 1,200 pounds a foot, which is pretty much by today's standards.

00;37;18;26 - 00;37;27;15
HOST

So you bought you bought the building, advised on the development and then ended up selling them for £1,200, a quid a square foot. Why did you lead on that as well.

00;37;27;20 - 00;37;43;17
GUEST

Yeah. So, so basically we bought the building for I think it was like 50, 52.5 million, something like that. And then it was predominantly these residential units. This for 40 odd, I think it was 42 units in total. Some as I said, some houses, some flats. And then there was an office building and a retail unit on Brompton Road.

00;37;43;19 - 00;38;00;25
GUEST

And then we were able we were brought in on the sales of the flats as well, which I think with one of the big global firms occurring, which and there was a show suite that was open every day apart from Sunday. I remember I remember one Saturday going into the show suite just to see how things were going, and there were these two blokes there who I'd never seen before, never heard of.

00;38;00;25 - 00;38;12;21
GUEST

And they, they basically as Rob as they put down a deposit to buy four flats. And I thought, wow, that's that's quite incredible, isn't it. And their plans to knock them together. These two brothers were the candy brothers.

00;38;12;27 - 00;38;15;09
HOST

I was about to say, let me guess.

00;38;15;12 - 00;38;26;10
GUEST

And, you know, that was presumably, you know, very early in their in their career, wonderful things they did after that. So yeah, it was quite, quite nice to, I suppose to a certain degree to be part of their, their early journey.

00;38;26;12 - 00;38;29;27
HOST

And they, and they came good. Yeah, yeah yeah, yeah they came. So they bought those four.

00;38;29;28 - 00;38;33;20
GUEST

They bought them. They're not for into two and created for memory two duplexes.

00;38;33;23 - 00;38;52;05

HOST

And then doubled their money and off they went until they did well in Hyde Park came a few years later. No doubt. You must be. You must be full of full of kind of interesting stories. All kind of deals or situations that you found your, your self in. Can you elaborate and give me, give me a few further kind of anecdotes or.

00;38;52;07 - 00;39;13;11

GUEST

Well, I remember one time I was I'd gone under offer to buy a building in the West End. It was an office building in the West End for a client who had done a lot of business with and was always incredibly reliable, and he had a joint venture partner, and he we agreed to buy the building from one of the institutions and it was off market.

00;39;13;13 - 00;39;33;07

GUEST

And he said, look, I just need my partner to come along, but don't worry, he only ever agrees with everything I say. So I thought, well, okay, limits risk. There. And so the guy, Middle-Eastern guy, and he turned up and he double parked his Ferrari on the double yellow line outside the building, came inside, I think, looked at one floor and said, no, I didn't like it and I was gobsmacked.

00;39;33;09 - 00;39;47;13

GUEST

Have agreed this deal off market. We were all in. We agreed, had two terms. Everything was meant to be a rubber stamp for it anyway and he what he decided didn't want to do it. So I phoned up in time. I said, look, do me a favor, please don't take this to I've got someone else that will buy it.

00;39;47;15 - 00;40;03;21

GUEST

You've kind of let me down. Now you're going to pay me back. But basically was the the kind of theme of the conversation. And he was like, no, that's fine. I want you to earn your fee and buy the building. So there was someone else I knew who, also like that particular street in that sort of area I knew of.

00;40;03;21 - 00;40;19;28

GUEST

I didn't actually know him, but I knew of him. And I phoned him up and I said, look, we don't know each other, but this is the story. Would you be interested in this building? And he said, yeah. He said, I'll come down and see it. I can come down to see it tomorrow. So I said fine. So I'd arranged to meet him the next day.

00;40;20;00 - 00;40;39;06

GUEST

And then I was meeting with think in the afternoon, and then the following morning I met with a again first meeting with a quite a well known investor in London. And it turned out, unbeknownst to me at the time, that he actually owned several buildings in the street. So he said, look, I know that building really well. I want to buy it.

00;40;39;08 - 00;40;53;02

GUEST

And I said, well, do you want to buy it? The simplest thing to do, because the seller doesn't know that the first guy's pulled out. It's literally takeover that his, his, his position take over his contract. He'll let you in. But your cover, the legal fees, they won't be out of pocket. He'll be happy. He said, okay. He said, I'll get it.

00;40;53;02 - 00;41;09;20

GUEST

Let's go see it now and I want to buy it. So I thought, well, if this is a bit of a problem because I've got the other guy coming down in the afternoon and the other guy, he liked it, but he wasn't like majorly as gung ho as this guy. The issue was if I didn't transact the building, get on the market and then dip below the competition.

00;41;09;22 - 00;41;14;02

HOST

Which means that into the view from a personal perspective, getting your fee much less likely.

00;41;14;10 - 00;41;15;17

GUEST

Well, probably.

00;41;15;19 - 00;41;20;17

HOST

But also reputational damage from your perspective as well. You wanted to protect it.

00;41;20;17 - 00;41;40;15

GUEST

Funnily enough, when you're an agent, even I often say to people, an agent said he's going to his client because you don't. The agent's not the one writing the check. The ages of them are buying it, but by buying the property. So but but bizarrely, in the marketplace, when a deal doesn't happen, for some reason, the agent seems to get just as much blame as the as the investor the pulls out.

00;41;40;21 - 00;41;56;28

GUEST

So, you know, more abortive deals are no good for anyone. So anyway, so I thought so myself. What we're going to do here, I've got this guy coming this afternoon. He wants to go see the building now and wants to buy it I don't want it's not fair to get the guy come down. So I called him up and I said, look, I'm really sorry we can't get into the building, which was a good call.

00;41;56;29 - 00;42;11;15

GUEST

He said, well, he said, actually, he said I was going to I was going to call you because in actual fact, we haven't quite we haven't quite got the funds to buy this building. I was hoping that we might be able to see, but I've realized it's we spoke that we wouldn't. So thankfully I've made the right decision.

00;42;11;15 - 00;42;18;05

GUEST

And the guy that I was having the meeting with when we went to see it and we actually we exchanged contacts like 48 hours later. So that was that was going that was good.

00;42;18;07 - 00;42;22;11

HOST

And he was like, just play real life monopoly, just buying up the wider street.

00;42;22;13 - 00;42;23;20

GUEST

Basically something like that.

00;42;23;22 - 00;42;29;05

HOST

You must meet some proper personalities and characters, and you must be an expert to be able to read people instantly.

00;42;29;07 - 00;42;44;04

GUEST

But it takes a lot of time. I'd like to. I like to think I can read people instantly, and I do think that I've developed that, that ability. And it's important because absolutely, in this business, don't want to be wasting your time with people who, can deliver.

00;42;44;06 - 00;43;06;04

HOST

Should you have a preference from dealing with kind of US to UK pension funds to billionaire high net worth, is there a kind of a type of investor that you particularly like working with, or do you just like the variety and the kind of you kind of eternally kind of curious about different types of deals and structures of deals, and we touched on earlier the kind of investable universe was office, retail, industrial.

00;43;06;04 - 00;43;12;13

HOST

And obviously it's it's exploded. It's much more expansive than that. Now, do you have a preference? So I'm not I.

00;43;12;13 - 00;43;33;11

GUEST

Wouldn't say I have a preference. I think that I think that the reality is you probably have more chance of success once you've agreed a deal. The chances of success are probably greater with people who, have raised money because they've got a vested interest in the success of it. And so they raised the money they wanted. They wanted to deploy that cash.

00;43;33;14 - 00;43;58;10

GUEST

And so they will kind of fight a lot harder when problems come up to solve them, rather than a high net worth. You might just think, as I said before, this is a lot of hassle. But having said that, I do prefer dealing with the entrepreneurial guys in the high net worth because they just fascinating. You're not just talking to them as property investors, they are business people who have been successful in other areas, whereas getting stuck with property, if we just talk the property people that so they know.

00;43;58;10 - 00;44;09;12

GUEST

And so but having said that, there a set of some great characters in the business and as I said earlier, the personalities and the relationships are really the most important thing.

00;44;09;14 - 00;44;28;09

HOST

Have you any stories about kind of international capital coming into the UK and trying to convince the kind of vendor that this international party that they might not be known is legit and they are actually going to transact. And you're kind of in this in this state of trying to convince people, even though you you don't know yourself if they are or have you, have you found yourself in a position like that before?

00;44;28;12 - 00;44;54;17

GUEST

But in actual fact, I was introduced around about 2018. I think it was a client of mine called me up from Singapore, and he said to me, he wants to introduce me to a friend of his who had a desire to to build a large UK portfolio. And the ultimate intention was to create the first Singaporean REIT that was dedicated solely to UK real estate.

00;44;54;19 - 00;45;22;17

GUEST

And it was it was most really fortuitous because I would I'm not exaggerating here. I think about half an

hour before this phone call, I'd had an email come through from CBRE who were marketing a portfolio called Hay Hill Portfolio, and the Hay Hill portfolio was comprised 98 assets all around the UK, owned by what was then called Telia or Trillium, and who had done effectively certainly spent with the government some years before.

00;45;22;19 - 00;45;40;07

GUEST

And the portfolio was as it was and it was 98 assets, all it to the Department for Work and Pensions, all all around the country. And it seemed it seemed like the perfect opportunity for these guys. I really couldn't believe the timing. So I said to him, actually, I've got the perfect opportunity and this is the bare bones of it that set up a call.

00;45;40;07 - 00;45;56;10

GUEST

Introduce me to these guys. So he did, and we had a call, I think the next morning, early in the morning and sort of took they we just danced around to who they were, who I was and what usual stuff. And then they told me what they wanted to do. And I talked through the portfolio and they said, look, we really like this.

00;45;56;16 - 00;46;16;22

GUEST

So okay, so tell me about your UK experience. What else you done here? This is all we've actually we've never bought a property in the UK before. First of well have you got any knowledge of the market. No we don't we've just but we're very good at setting up rates in Singapore and we're very good at managing properties in Asia.

00;46;16;24 - 00;46;37;17

GUEST

Okay. So let's see I was kind of slightly concerned about how this was going to play out, but thankfully due to the relationships that I had within the transaction, we were able to get effectively to the front of the queue, able to convince the seller that I was doing more than just breaking the deal. I was yeah, we got to a point where I said, look, this is a live situation.

00;46;37;17 - 00;46;52;00

GUEST

There's a lot of moving parts. It's not just about understanding the assets. You've got to think about structure. You've got to think about how you could have finance that. You've got to think about a lot. They didn't even have a lawyer. I mean, it was it was really starting. But something told me that they were legitimate, even though they're telling me a story.

00;46;52;00 - 00;47;10;19

GUEST

Lots of people come to the UK market. They tell you a story and you don't often know how legitimate the story is or how if there's a little bit of poetic license, but I my, my feeling was straight away, these guys are really serious. And I think that they, they sound determined and focused and they want to do this.

00;47;10;21 - 00;47;24;11

GUEST

So I sat with the guys at CBRE and explained to them who they were, what we were doing, what my role was, etc., etc. and then they had first round bids. We got through that and then second round bids. I mean, maybe they didn't have any other bids. Yeah, but it's a.

00;47;24;11 - 00;47;26;20

HOST

Government led government, that portfolio. Right.

00:47:26;22 - 00:47:44;23

GUEST

I'm just I'm joking. They, I know they have this because we knew they were from you know, got to a point where you're thinking this is this is going this is going very well. And then thankfully, we managed to basically we we were successful. And that was that was their first deal. And it was 295 million pounds. And then subsequently for another couple of hundred million for them as well.

00:47:44;25 - 00:47:51;18

GUEST

And they converted the portfolio of everything they said to convert it into a rating. It trades very nicely in the Singapore Stock Exchange.

00:47:51;24 - 00:48:11;06

HOST

Amazing accountancy firms, the big four. There's that saying that you're not going to get fired for kind of instructing one of the big four when it comes to kind of a big project. Have you ever felt as a kind of a small niche agent, have you ever felt that you've missed out on opportunities because you're not a global name, and it's a safer bet to go with a household name?

00:48:11;08 - 00:48:20;26

GUEST

Definitely. No doubt about it. But does it bother me? No, because the reality is there are certain entities out there who will only ever go with those big firms.

00:48:20;29 - 00:48:21;19

HOST

The name.

00:48:21;21 - 00:48:38;03

GUEST

Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah. Now often we've done, we've worked in conjunction with a larger firm because we're able to explain the differences about how they work and their reach versus how I work and my reach. But yeah, it of course it of course it happens. And and there's no way around that. But I think one bit. Yeah.

00:48:38;07 - 00:49:06;10

GUEST

But sort of a big advantage if you like, of, of the market is that there are a number of smaller niche firms who perform really well and do really, really good business. And I think that in other sectors I'm not sure in other industries, I'm not sure you see that as much. I mean, you talk about accountancy. I mean, I don't know if you looked at the big four accountants, I wonder what percentage of sort of global auditing, for example, is with them versus mid-range firm or smaller firm, and I would imagine is very much tilted towards those big firms.

00:49:06;10 - 00:49:15;22

GUEST

Yes, of course, the big firms do the most amount of work, the most amount of business, but clients are not always getting the same, the same service perhaps as as they would be dealing with the smaller firms.

00:49:15;22 - 00:49:34;10

HOST

Yeah. And I guess people are spun out of big firms and set up very reputable kind of leading niche practices. Do you do you think the agency landscape is changing? I know we touched on tech a little bit earlier, but do you think that's going to happen more and more and more in terms of kind of niche agents

coming to the fore in this kind of maybe more social media or kind of democratized world we live in?

00;49;34;13 - 00;49;46;11

GUEST

I think it's easier for, I think because lot sizes have got bigger, I think it's easier for people to, to do deal to, to, to, to be successful because you don't necessarily need to do that many deals to.

00;49;46;11 - 00;49;48;04

HOST

Do to do well in terms of a fee.

00;49;48;09 - 00;50;02;00

GUEST

I think some of that, I mean, there are some amazing people out there who've come out of the big firms, as you said, started on these firms. And they've not only if they take it on the big firm, but they've beaten them, you know, they're doing they're doing more business in that sector than the firm that they then the larger on the left.

00;50;02;00 - 00;50;19;01

GUEST

And that's incredible. But I do believe that most of those people, the place where these independents get learned the most is when they are with the large firms. And I think that those guys come out, they learn fantastically well, and that pedigree really sets them in. So it sets them up. I think very nicely.

00;50;19;06 - 00;50;30;24

HOST

Lots of commentators are saying it's kind of the end of one cycle and the start of a new cycle. As we sit here today towards the end of August, what what's your take on the market and where do you see the the opportunities?

00;50;30;27 - 00;50;49;06

GUEST

But I think there's obviously a lot there's a lot a wider breadth to the industry nowadays. So, you know, it's not just office, retail, industrial. We've got all of these other sectors such as new student data centers, hotels, life sciences, all these different things. And I think the yeah, those themes are definitely gathering pace. There's no doubt about it.

00;50;49;06 - 00;51;12;02

GUEST

There's a lot of uncertainty still, albeit perhaps it's probably misguided. But around the office, office and retail, markets probably. Well, the office sector I think is more misguided. I think I think that the I think they those that sort of felt and called the death of the office a fast learning. That's not the case. You just need to go into into buildings now and see how welcoming they can be versus how they used to be.

00;51;12;05 - 00;51;24;01

GUEST

And I think people have learned that productivity doesn't improve by sitting at home. And so, you know, I think that's important. So I think I think we're definitely starting to see much more interest to get it in offices.

00;51;24;04 - 00;51;43;15

HOST

Have you, as well as being an agent and a broker within the real estate space, have you ever forayed into kind of ownership yourself? And I guess using the fees to kind of invest in, in real estate that you know so well in taking kind of a I guess it's not passive, but but taking kind of income to supplement the, the kind of

the more up and down investment fee revenue that you work across.

00:51:43;15 - 00:52:01;22

GUEST

Yeah, sometimes, sometimes there are opportunities that that present themselves that are too good not to not to not to have a go out. So yeah, there are instances like that. But I mean, one thing would never do is look at something that would otherwise suit a client because, you know, one can't be in competition with one's clients.

00:52:01;25 - 00:52:11;13

HOST

Makes complete sense. Otherwise you'd be doing yourself out of, out of work, outside of work. Talk to me about the Ace project, and why you set that up. What is it? And why did you set it up?

00:52:11;19 - 00:52:30;13

GUEST

So the Ace project is a community interest company, which I set up during. Well, it came about during Covid, actually. It was around the time that Marcus Rashford started campaigning for food and things like school dinners and support for children that couldn't afford and families who couldn't afford them. And my son said to me, dad, it's really interesting.

00:52:30;13 - 00:52:48;16

GUEST

We've got, you know, Marcus Rashford is doing this, but, you know, we don't see we see lots of kids looking up to footballers, but most of them aren't role models. Most of them, they're not all. They're not people that you want your kids to become in many. So not all footballers, but in many circumstances. You see lots of bling and all the rest of it.

00:52:48;18 - 00:53:09;27

GUEST

And kids aren't. Kids have got to a point off the back of that where they think success is instant. And the reality is there's no such thing as really instant gratification. And he said it would be really good if sportspeople could show youngsters that the path to success often has a lot of bumps on the way. And that coincided with a post that I saw is bizarre.

00:53:09;27 - 00:53:31;15

GUEST

How things kind of come together. But there was a post I read on LinkedIn that day by a chap called Les Rowe, and les is the dad of Emile Smith Rowe, who was a fantastic Arsenal player, a graduate of Arsenal Salient Academy, who unfortunately just recently moved to move to Fulham. What I'm fortunate for, for Arsenal fans anyway, very, very fortunate for Villa fans because he's a great player.

00:53:31;21 - 00:53:50;12

GUEST

But anyway, let let wrote this piece where talking about how his son Emile had done something charitable with Lee Williamson, who's the England the Lionesses captain. And I thought, well, this is, this is really impressive that they've done this and he's talking about it. So I just sent a cold LinkedIn message to to les, and he came back to me and we got talking.

00:53:50;19 - 00:54:08;27

GUEST

And ultimately that formed the birth of the project. And the premise really of what we do is we creating what we call resilience videos. So we've had the different sports does not necessarily big names, but people are sort of up and coming in sport in various different ways. But yet you have probably a Paralympian, someone for us, a boxer and so on.

00:54:09:01 - 00:54:19:28

GUEST

And we create these videos that then go into settings with young, young people. So be it their kids. It's in school or it's in youth clubs or whatever it may be, is just basically to help educate them that that life.

00:54:19:28 - 00:54:38:27

HOST

Is life is tough and is tough. And it's not 0 to 100 in a in a straight line. Yeah. Well look at Bradley. You've had a, a fascinating career. You've done some phenomenal deals and I know you've got an insatiable appetite, so I can't ever see you slowing down or stopping. A question as we draw this to a close is if I gave you 500 million pounds worth of capital, who are the people?

00:54:38:27 - 00:54:42:04

HOST

What property? In which place would you look to deploy that capital?

00:54:42:06 - 00:55:10:13

GUEST

Well, a lot of money, 500 million. But I think there are three areas that I would probably feel safest in, and I think they are, I suppose, as follows. I'm a big proponent of single family housing. I think that the way that the residential market's evolving and we're kind of almost veering towards being a nation of tenants rather than pension of homeowners, the obvious and we're seeing a lot of in the built at the BTR space and so on.

00:55:10:20 - 00:55:32:24

GUEST

But of course the next evolution of that, I mean, obviously people are doing it, but not in the way that I would anticipate. But the big evolution of that is once people move out of their flat, they normally move out of a flat because they want to maybe have a family or whatever and then move to houses. And I think that if people are now in the world whereby they're never going away, and a lot of people unfortunately don't have to give up the chance of ever owning a property.

00:55:32:26 - 00:55:53:15

GUEST

So I think I'm definitely in a deploy a chunk of that cash into, into single family home estates, probably. I've got this sort of vision of single family home estates with amenities and so on and so forth. So that's one area. Social infrastructure I think is safe and secure it. When I spoke about social infrastructure, I mean things like schools and schools and medical facilities.

00:55:53:18 - 00:56:10:27

GUEST

Yeah. I think that's very safe because people will always need education and they'll always there'll always be doctors. So those sort of investments I think are very safe and secure. And then finally it would have to be super prime assets in the likes of Bond Street and so on, because my belief is that they will always be there.

00:56:10:29 - 00:56:15:08

GUEST

And there'll always be liquid because there'll always be wealthy people who want to buy them if you have any.

00:56:15:11 - 00:56:37:15

HOST

So you've got a nice, portfolio there across the risk return profile, and diversified. Well, look, I'm excited to

see what you, go on to do over the, the next ten years and take advantage of this next real estate cycle. So thank you so much for joining me today. Thank you very much. Thanks for listening to this week's episode People Property Place podcast.

00;56;37;15 - 00;56;59;16

HOST

If you found it insightful, feel free to share it with a friend or colleague. Give us a rating like or comment. It helps tremendously. It'd be great to hear from you on LinkedIn. I'm super open minded to recommendations of guests we should have on the show or areas of the market we should explore further. So do drop me a message.

00;56;59;18 - 00;57;27;04

HOST

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00;57;27;06 - 00;57;30;14

HOST

Have a great day wherever you are, and I look forward to catch you next time.