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YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 065. An insight in to community
management in Dubai – with Neville Mawerera

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Intro: Welcome to Your Strata Property. The podcast for property owners looking for reliable, accurate, and bite-sized information from an experienced and authoritative source. To access previous episodes and useful strata tips, go to www.yourstrataproperty.com.au.

Amanda Farmer: Hello and welcome. I'm Amanda Farmer and this is Your Strata Property.

Neville Mawerera, is an assistant community manager with a combined nine years experience in community management and luxury hospitality operations in the Middle East. He has extensive experience with private community management firms and in house with a large scale master developer. He also has experience in the preparation of operational budgets and policy formulation for master plan developments and mixed use hotel resort operations. Neville has been a member of the Community Association Institute since 2013.

Today, I am delighted to welcome Neville Mawerera. Welcome, Neville.

Neville Mawerera: Thank you, Amanda. It's great to be on your show. Lovely to have you here, as well.

Amanda Farmer: Neville, you're coming to us all the way from Dubai. I am just so excited to have you on the show and to know that we have a big fan on the other side of the world. Hopefully more than one. You have taken the time out of your busy schedule to come and chat with us today and I thank you for that.

Neville Mawerera: That is kind of you. Thank you so much.

Amanda Farmer: Well, thank you for joining us. We're here to chat all things community management and we really want to hear your perspective on communities in the UAE and how they might be different to our communities, here in Australia. Neville, what are some exciting things on the horizon for community living in the UAE?

Neville Mawerera: Well, in community living in Dubai, we have kind of shifted our focus as an industry towards offering deliverables that are more aligned to what residents are looking for, in terms of personalised service, in terms of relevance in amenities being offered in communities. Well, because we come from a background where we now have a very advanced buildings, multi-component structures, that offer us a chance to incorporate the nice amenities that you wouldn't find normally in some residential buildings. But, now, what has happened is developers have tried to outperform each other, in terms of offering buildings that are, more fancier, luxurious than the other developer. It kind of gives us our work cut out already as community managers, in terms of what we have to offer to the guests.

So, in the horizon, I can see a bigger focus and greater success being made, in terms of delivering personalised service and-

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Neville Mawerera: Bespoke concierge services and communities. It's no longer the old kind of business of we have these rules, we have this community rules, this is what you need to do. Now, the focus is making every resident feel at home.

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Neville Mawerera: It's our job, as community managers, to make sure that we have as little turnover, in terms of residents, than we had in the past because the longer the residents stay, well, the more likely they are to be a good ambassador of the community, as well as the community management company, because they know the person, they know the structures, they know the policies, they know the way you treat the community. So, there's more of a personalised service than what we had in the past.



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combined our great focus in tourism hospitality in Dubai. It's slowly being absorbed into community management. We now have long-term residents staying in our communities.

Amanda Farmer: Yes. It's really fascinating. I think Dubai has a reputation, right or wrong, I haven't been there myself, but for having a very high standard of living and, perhaps, some very discerning residents and, certainly, visitors. It sounds like what you're letting us in on there, is a window into that world where-

Neville Mawerera: That's right.

Amanda Farmer: Your clients, the residents, are demanding a very high level of service from their community managers, and that focus on personalised service. I love there how you differentiate between the role of the manager, which is, perhaps, now an old-fashioned role, simply to know the rules and enforce the rules, and-

Neville Mawerera: Yes.

Amanda Farmer: Tell you what you should and shouldn't do. As opposed to the manager who is there to provide a high-level service. Concierge services, you mentioned there-

Neville Mawerera: That's right.

Amanda Farmer: I think that's something that we're seeing coming through here in our developments in Australia, as well. Certainly through the demands of the market. They want that more personalised service. You want to be able to have a place to telephone at any hour of the night when you need, whether it's food, or a massage, or tickets, or that high standard of living. I find it interesting that its' community managers in Dubai who are providing that service. Is that a fair summary, Neville?

Neville Mawerera: That's a fair summary. That's actually a summary today but, probably, will be an industry standard in the future. Probably, this is something that will be slowly be demanded, not actually expected, but something that you'll be demanded to deliver and your services as a community manager will probably be judged more on that level, because we now have greater levels of community engagement. Well, that brings me to the other point where, because of advanced technologies, and social media, and things like that, your performance as a body corporate manager or as a community manager, is something that is very fluid. The moment you are not able to handle one situation, it can blow up and ruin your reputation in a matter of seconds-

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Neville Mawerera: Whereas in the past, you could have these little problems pop up here and there, and you probably, in the worst case scenario, would have a board meeting that would be rocky or you'd have an annual general assembly that would be really bad, where people bring up all the incidents in the past. But, right now, your digital footprint as a community manager is available for everyone to see that-

Amanda Farmer: Yes.

Neville Mawerera: X, Y, Z is managing a community and he has done 1, 2, 3 things in the past, in this week and ... There's something a bit more, we have too many spotlights on the industry right now, so the pressure to perform well is getting higher, but also the rewards are getting bigger if you're really responsive to your community. It's really worth the effort, to be honest.

Amanda Farmer: Yes. I suppose increased standards mean there is a need for increased professionalism, which then, when you're operating as a professional, then you have the trust of your clients and you can reap the rewards of that and it's not just the trust of your clients but, perhaps-

Neville Mawerera: Yes.



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Amanda Farmer: Financial benefits, as well, and you're remunerated to the standard that you deserve if you're performing as you should be. Yes.

Neville Mawerera: That's true.

Amanda Farmer: What would you say, Neville, owners are struggling with in the UAE at the moment?

Neville Mawerera: Same things they struggle with in Australia. Parking, pets, and parties or...

Amanda Farmer: Parking, pets, and parties?

Neville Mawerera: Yes. We have a young market here quite, to be honest. Baby boomers and the millennials, they're mostly the people you see in our buildings and communities. Well, less of the baby boomers, to be honest, because we have more millennials staying with us. There's a unique challenge that we have. I wouldn't call it a challenge, I would call it an opportunity. It's ... We don't have much education into what freehold property is, how it operates, what's the relationship between unit 1 and unit 2 in the same building-

Amanda Farmer: Okay.

Neville Mawerera: What is the responsibility of the owner in the community and what is the responsibility of the tenant in a community, a freehold community? We have issues where owners assume or presume that we, as community managers, are responsible for in-unit repairs, and maintenance, and insurance, and things like that. We have some who don't understand what the service charges are supposed to cover, what community management entails, what is common areas, where does it start where this, end?

So this actually comes out when there is a crisis, a disaster, when there's a major leakage in an apartment and the owner is claiming you, as a community manager, to repair in-unit damages caused by any in-unit defect, using common area funds. Well, it's a bit of a challenge enough, this happened countless times to me, where you are standing in a flooded apartment, trying to explain what the owner's responsibilities are, what you can do to help them. Again, it comes down to a place where you personalise the whole thing and you, based on the relationship you have, you try and explain that. Most of the time they do understand, but it would be nice if people have a broader sense of and a more in-depth sense of what they're buying into.

Amanda Farmer: Yes. We absolutely have the same situation here in Australia, where a lack of knowledge and a lack of education about what living in strata entails, right down to how to read a strata plan and know where your lot ends and common property begins, to what by-laws are and how to communicate with your strata manager. So, in my mind, that all comes under the banner of education, so it sounds like, in the UAE, you have-

Neville Mawerera: Yes.

Amanda Farmer: The same difficulty with trying to get that education across to owners.

Neville Mawerera: Yes, it's true. Once we have that education done properly, I'm sure the rest will fall into place.

Amanda Farmer: Yes. Are there any plans to institute some educational programs for strata owners or managers? Is there anything on the horizon there in Dubai?

Neville Mawerera: It's actually available. We have RERA, our Real Estate Regulator Authority, that covers freehold regulations-

Amanda Farmer: Yes.



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Neville Mawerera: They're doing a great and fantastic job at offering ongoing training, which owners usually attend. I've attended a couple of trainings with owners, as well, on the board. So, it's available, if an owner is interested-

Amanda Farmer: Great.

Neville Mawerera: If they have a commitment, the trainings available. It's online. The community managers are willing and happy to help them. It's in our interest, as well, as community managers to educate them, as well. But yes, we have training available. It's readily available and most owners take advantage of that, to be honest. Yes.

Amanda Farmer: That's fabulous. That's great to hear and I don't think we're quite at that stage yet, here in Australia. There's a lot of talk about having education programs for committee members, but they are few and far between. They certainly don't sound as accessible as they seem to be over in Dubai. So that's excellent, to hear about that.

Neville Mawerera: Dubai is always leading in something, you know?

Amanda Farmer: It's great.

Neville Mawerera: This is Dubai, Yes.

Amanda Farmer: All right. On to the book question, Neville, you listen to the podcast so you'll be used to this one. What books have had the greatest impact on you and why?

Neville Mawerera: I love the book, The UnStoppables, by Bill Schley. It's a book for entrepreneurs, really. It's a book that defines the qualities that make sure that you step out of the ordinary and you get used to operating in the extraordinary.

Amanda Farmer: Great.

Neville Mawerera: It's a motivational book based on Economics.

Amanda Farmer: Economics?

Neville Mawerera: Yes.

Amanda Farmer: Okay.

Neville Mawerera: It's a really nice book. It's nice if you want to tap into your entrepreneurial power. It's really great. It's really nice resource book. I would recommend it to anyone who's looking at upping up their games, whether they're employed or whether they're self-employed. It's really fantastic. It's a really great book. Yes.

Amanda Farmer: Awesome. I shall be checking that one out. I'll put a link to that one in the show notes for our listeners, as well. All right. Well, Neville, how do our listeners find out more about you and is there anything you want to add before we say goodbye?

Neville Mawerera: No, well nothing to add, just lovely to have you here and this is a great resource for me and other colleagues, here in Dubai. I've introduced some of my colleagues to this podcast and they find it very invaluable-

Amanda Farmer: Wonderful.

Neville Mawerera: Well, we'll be probably hearing more of Neville in the future, to be honest.

Amanda Farmer: I really hope so, Neville, and thank you so much for reaching out. It's fabulous to hear that we have support

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over there in Dubai-

Neville Mawerera: Sure.

Amanda Farmer: It's really encouraging and we'll keep doing the hard work to keep our listeners happy. We would love to have you back and if you are ever in Australia, you make sure to reach out to me and let's catch up.

Neville Mawerera: Thank you, and I would love to see you, as well, in Dubai.

Amanda Farmer: Lovely.

Neville Mawerera: After all the hard work in Australia, you should come and unwind in Dubai.

Amanda Farmer: Yes-

Neville Mawerera: It's a very good place to-

Amanda Farmer: Sounds good. It's on the list, don't worry. Thanks, Neville.

Neville Mawerera: Most welcome.

Outro: Thank you for listening to Your Strata Property. The podcast, which consistently delivers to property owners, reliable and accurate information about their strata property. You can access all the information below this episode via the show notes at www.yourstrataproperty.com.au. You can also ask questions in the comments section, which Amanda will answer in her upcoming episodes. How can Amanda help you today?

