

Publication Date: 08 December 2022
YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 340. Brutally Honest Strata Advice - from Vancouver

Listen to this podcast episode [here](#).

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.

Amanda Farmer: Hello and welcome to this week's podcast episode. I'm your host, Amanda Farmer, and this week I have two guests for you. Our guests this week are coming to us all the way from Canada. I'm chatting with Brent Anderson and James Milne. Brent and James are both directors of Business Development with a company called FirstService Residential in British Columbia, Canada, where they're helping strata communities to transition to better strata management. And here's the thing, over in Canada, they do refer to strata. They use that term just as we do here in most states of Australia.

What's more, Brent and James co-host their very own strata podcast. It's called Stratagize, which sounds much better in a Canadian accent. You'll hear that in this chat. There's a link for you to check out the podcast in the show notes for this episode over on our website. That's the place where Brent and James are discussing the root causes of a strata corporation's biggest problems. Both Brent and James believe in the power of education to improve the experience of strata owners, residents, and strata council members, as they are referred to in British Columbia. And they are each doing their bit to deliver that education in an interesting, accessible way. So of course, we have so much in common and lots to talk about. I'll take you right on over now to my chat with Brent Anderson and James Milne. James Milne, and Brent Anderson, welcome to the show.

James Milne: Oh, thanks for having us, Amanda. We're really delighted to be here.

Brent Anderson: Oh, this is a real honour. I'm happy to be here as well, thanks.

Amanda Farmer: It's a pleasure to have you here on the show all the way, all the way from Canada. You're in British Columbia, and notwithstanding the distance, we have so much in common and so much to talk about strata-wise today. I'm going to ask you first to share a little bit with our listeners about you and your business way, way over there and what it is you're doing in strata. Maybe, James, we'll start with you.

James Milne: Yes, for sure. So Brent and I serve very similar purpose, we're both directors of business development for a company called FirstService Residential. And FirstService Residential is the largest property management company, in fact, in North America, Canadian run out of Toronto. It's a subsidiary of FirstService Corporation, but we're in every major market in North America. Brent and I specifically work in the British Columbia office, and we're very, a local company in BC and we're the largest strata management company in the province. So really what our purpose is, is to grow the business. We work in business development, so our primary focus is to bring on strata corporations that are not currently managed by our company and that we want to manage. But in doing that, there is a great deal of education. So not knowing what it's like in Australia, but maybe having similar challenges.

A lot of people who live in strata who own in strata, maybe even council members on a strata council don't know too much about the strata industry and how strata works and some of the challenges that the strata industry suffers in the province. So a big portion of Brent and I, what we do is education. So really educating about what strata is, educating about the different nuances and complexities of the industry. And what that did is that about a year or so ago, that was the birth of Stratagize, which is the podcast that I'll give Brent the credit for because he definitely was the one who spearheaded the podcast. But it's been great fun. We've been doing it now for about a dozen episodes. We record them as often as possible and it's been great.

So prior to that, we did a lot of webinars, we did a lot of in-person events. So really education is a really big part of what we do. I myself have been working for FirstService, I've been in the industry for just about five years. I've actually been on my strata council, so not even knowing I was ever going to work in this industry. I've been on my strata council for about seven years. So bit of a strata nerd for some reason, but I do enjoy it and it's a great business.

Brent Anderson: And as for myself, I'll just put a bit of detail onto some of the things that James had mentioned. Locally in the

YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 340. Brutally Honest Strata Advice - from Vancouver

market here we look after about 600 plus strata corporations at some 120,000 residents that we service on a daily basis. There's about 200 people in our office here that are providing services to strata and larger in the community with regards to staffing as well too.

Our office, that James and I both serve, we receive about 200 plus inquiries a year of strata corporations looking for support and information around transitioning from their current management situation over to something better. And that's sort of where we come in. Myself, I've been involved with strata for probably 15 years, but more on the vendor side. I've worked with various trades like painting companies or HVAC companies selling into strata corporations, providing services to them, and also working with strata managers to put those contracts together. And then a couple of years ago, I was fortunate to join this side of the desk and work alongside these colleagues that I'd worked with for years, but now I can work with them in the office and deliver services to our clients from that perspective.

Amanda Farmer: What I love about British Columbia in particular is that you use the same terminology that we use. In important respects, starting with the term strata, that is not used in many places around the world.

Brent Anderson: No.

Amanda Farmer: You refer and have referred many times to your strata corporations. You are a strata management company. So you use the term strata managers, am I right?

James Milne: That's correct. I think the only difference is that we refer to council where you refer to them perhaps as committees.

Amanda Farmer: Yes. In Western Australia we do have strata councils. In other parts of the country we have executive committees. In New South Wales, we have strata committees. So yes, not too much that is different. One thing that I did pick up there, you said Brent that you manage 600 plus buildings, approximately 120,000 residents. Now I quickly pulled out my calculator, and that's an average building size of what we would call 200 lots, or 200 units. So these are to us big communities. Our average building size is around 20 lots. So 600 buildings might not sound a lot to some of our bigger companies here, but 120,000 residents is huge. Am I right that you are managing these larger style communities?

James Milne: Yes, our primary focus for our company is a hundred units or more. Yes, Brent and I will speak to smaller properties and sometimes smaller properties can be a fit. But we're a large company, we carry overhead, we employ a tremendous depth of resources that we use to support our customers. We have a lot of departments for just about everything to help to support our managers, to make sure they have the resources to manage the day-to-day operations of their properties. And really because of the resources we have, obviously we carry an overhead which causes us to have minimums. But also all those resources and stuff really makes sense to larger properties. So we manage, our average property size is probably in the realm of about 150, our largest is 620. And then we have several, we manage some of the largest in the province for sure, probably... Well, downtown Vancouver, if you Google it is just a sea of high rises and we manage about 60% of the residential high rises in the downtown core.

Amanda Farmer: I haven't managed to visit Canada at all yet. I have many friends and colleagues who have, including strata colleagues who would be very familiar with your setup there. I certainly have it on the list. Brent, you use the term vendor, and if I understand it correctly, what you were referring to in that context was what we would call suppliers, suppliers to the strata industry. So those who serve and service, anything from lawyers, to painters, to accountants, to engineers. So is it similar to what we experience here where there's quite a close, often symbiotic relationship between strata managers and vendors and very much your vendors are involved in your industry, your education, your events? Does that happen in BC?

Brent Anderson: Yes, it's actually a large part of our business. We have a vendor program, there's something to the tune of 450 or 500 different suppliers as you would call them, that participate in our program. Lots of them provide educational content to our strata managers. There is no shortage of people that are actively always trying to get on that list because like I said, we represent a large book of business with 600 strata corporations in our management. And so vendors are always trying to find ways to get on our list so they can have access to our book of business. And then yes, it's a symbiotic relationship. The nice thing with our vendor

Publication Date: 08 December 2022

YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 340. Brutally Honest Strata Advice - from Vancouver

program is that it takes the legwork away from the strata manager to have to invest their own personal time to meet and vet the suppliers for things like insurance and work safe compliance and even quality of work and references and things like that.

We have a team in our office that does that for the benefit of the manager because managers receive somewhere to the tune of 4,000 to 6,000 emails a month here. About 20% of that is vendor communication and a lot of it is vendors outreaching to try to work with a manager they've never worked with before. So the vendor program really cuts that time short, that the manager has to invest on their own time to vet those suppliers so that they are provided with a list of people that they can actively just forward to their councils or their committees for quotes and they don't have to worry if they've been vetted or not, that's been done for them.

Amanda Farmer: Yes, I heard James talk about the education piece and the importance of that education piece. It sounds like both for your owners and for your vendors. Tell me about the podcast, how that came about. Brent, it sounds like you are the mastermind there and how you're going with it. It's the only other one in the world that I'm aware of that is devoted to strata property, other than this one right here.

Brent Anderson: Yes, I've been an avid listener of podcasts for years, probably since the first few came out. So for me, it's probably the main source of media that I consume and it's just wonderful. Whatever your interest is, there is a podcast or multiple podcasts on it, with the exception of strata management because it's such a niche industry, it doesn't really apply to any other province in our country. And then certainly things that are related to strata in your country might not relate to our audience here in British Columbia. There really wasn't anyone doing this, and I thought that was such an opportunity to bring the conversations that James and I have on a regular basis in terms of educating our clients and try to get ahead of the curve a bit.

Like my dream for the podcast is that clients, when they're interacting with us, they start to ask more informed and more educated and better questions. That's what my goal is that we can provide that level of education and insight to the people who live... There's 1.5 million people that live in strata properties in our province, and there's not a lot of information that's accessible to them. There's company websites, there's a few associations, but in terms of accessible content, like a podcast where it's on demand, listen to it wherever you are, doing the dishes, drive a new car, there's nothing. So I just thought it was a great opportunity to bring those conversations to this format.

Amanda Farmer: And James, are you enjoying the podcast?

James Milne: Yes, absolutely. And I got to give Brent the credit for getting it to where it is. I was not too well versed in the world of podcasts prior. I'm more of an audiobook guy, although I have definitely taken to podcasts over the past year. But no, it's been a lot of fun. When Brent first started doing it, I didn't see it coming to fruition. I really just didn't see the path to getting it there and we're there and it's been a ton of fun doing it, so wouldn't have been able to do it on my own. So thanks Brent. There's my little compliment to you.

Amanda Farmer: Just a little one, just one for today.

James Milne: Just one for today. That's all he gets.

Amanda Farmer: Brent, I just have to pick up there that you said you have 1.5 million people living in strata in the province. We have two million people living in strata in the country. So that just gives you a bit of an idea of the scale of what you guys are working with compared to what we work with here. Tell me this, James, what do you love about strata?

James Milne: I look at strata as, it's funny, we had a lawyer on the show a little while ago that called strata's micro democracies, and I liked that description of them. So this is very much what they are, they're just small democracies. And I joined my strata probably about a year after I bought my place. I joined the strata council again, not knowing that I was ever going to work in this industry, but I joined it because this is my biggest investment. I saw the demographic on council. There was one other person who was moving out, my neighbour was moving out and leaving and I thought it was important to have a wide variety of demographic on that strata council, so I joined it. I don't always love it. It's a lot of work. It's obviously volunteer work, but to me it's a very

important function.

And what I really love about what I do in my job now that I work in strata management is I love the aha moments. I love when we're talking to councils and they begin the process with really no idea how to buy strata management services. And you educate them on the industry and you make them understand what they need and what they're looking for. And then ultimately make a good buying decision. Something that is beneficial to their community, whether it's us or whether it's staying put or whether it's going to a different management company, its just helping people through the process.

I guess I've been in sales for a very long time, and what I really love about this specifically and working in strata is the consultative sales, helping people through education. I used to do a lot of business-to-business sales when I did a lot of selling to CFOs and informed purchasers. But strata we're very much like, I call it B2V where we're selling to volunteers and we're selling to people that don't necessarily know how the buying process works and they're such an educational component. So that's really what I love about being in the industry, both on sides. Both being a strata council member, but also working for a strata management company, selling strata services.

Amanda Farmer: There are a few gems there, micro democracies, B2V, business to volunteers, I really like that. I just want to pick up the micro democracies there James. We here in Australia often refer to strata as the fourth layer of government. And we have here three recognised layers of government, federal at the top, state in the middle, local council at the bottom. And then we have strata, that fourth layer of government within which we have a little micro democracy. So thank you for adding that.

Brent Anderson: Oh, I like that. I might actually steal that one too.

Amanda Farmer: Go for it. Hey, I wasn't going to tell you, but I'm stealing all of these. Brent, what do you love about strata?

Brent Anderson: I've been in sales since my first job as a teenager, so I just... It's hardwired in me to help people. Where I find I do best when I'm selling something is when I believe how it can help somebody. A real challenge is trying to force it when it's the other way around when I'm trying to take something and there's not a lot of value, where I can't really quantify how it's going to make a difference for anybody. And working from the supplier side for a number of years, stratas are so quirky. Every group of people is so different and so unique. I'm constantly on my toes, managing and navigating different people's personalities and how to communicate with them and how to resonate with them. So there's never a dull day for sure.

So I think that's probably what gets me out of bed, is that I know that these are, as James says, it's most everybody's most important investment and people deserve to have a home that they can feel comfortable and safe and taken care of in. And if I get to be a part of making that happen for somebody, that's the coolest part of my job. Is that elsewhere in strata management, people are just dealing with problems all day. The strata managers, I call them problem managers, that's all they deal with all day is problems. I get to deal with the fun part, with the solutions, from taking them from a bigger problem over to where things are going to be solved. So I think that's what I like a lot of what strata.

Amanda Farmer: Now we have some of the same terminology, we have some of the same driving forces I think, that encourage all of us to be serving this industry. I'm wondering, I think I might know the answer, but I'm wondering if we have some of the same challenges. So if we could narrow it down to maybe two or three big challenges that are facing your strata industry over in BC, what are they?

James Milne: So one of the biggest challenges that we have as an industry is just the shortage of strata managers. There's very strict licensing requirements, so it takes eight months if you're vigilant or up to a year to get licensed. Then once you are licensed, there's a very large learning curve and it's a thankless job, and it has a lot of turnover. I mean, you could be doing... I mean Brent can rhyme out all the statistics, but you could be doing upwards of a hundred meetings a year just to put... I'll let maybe Brent speak to the more specifics of the manager, but if you want to look at a broad spectrum, there are 34,000 strata corporations in the province of British Columbia and there are 1,300 licensed managers. Now of that, there are definitely those strata corporations, two, three, four, 20 units that are self-managed. But of the 1,300 licensed managers are the ones like Brent and I who are

Publication Date: 08 December 2022

YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 340. Brutally Honest Strata Advice - from Vancouver

licensees, but we don't manage properties.

So we kind of figure, we throw some numbers around, we don't know exactly what it is. We figure there's probably about a thousand managers to manage about 20,000 properties, and that's a pretty terrifying statistic if you look at the workload that's necessary for one property, let alone having 20 in your portfolio. I know Brent, this is one that you're passionate about. Do you want to provide some context around that?

Brent Anderson: Yes, you've set it up well James. So certainly the portfolio size, when I have conversations with clients, a lot of the challenges that they're describing can be traced back to just the fact that their strata manager doesn't have enough time to effectively do their job. They're working very reactively. If you have 20 properties in your portfolio, which is quite realistic, unfortunately, you have on average two hours a week to dedicate to any given property.

And we all know that things don't work out that way. Some property's going to need a lot more of your time, which means that you're taking from somebody else to give that time to another property. So people are getting left behind. Of those 20 properties, you're at least a hundred to 120 meetings a year. That's at least two sets of minutes per week, eight hours of after-office time dedicated to driving to the property, conducting the meeting, driving back home, getting home at 10, 11 o'clock at night and then writing the minutes for that. So certainly it's a daunting industry for young families when you have commitments to raising children. One of the most terrifying stats is that of the 1,400 licensees, about 560 of them are about to retire out of the industry in the next 10 years. They're in the baby boomer generation and the replacement rates of strata managers coming into the industry are nowhere meeting what's leaving.

So we're really going to see a real problem here in the next 10 years, where we're going to go from probably a thousand managers down to maybe 600, 700 if we're lucky. And that's just if current replacement numbers stay the same, we're already short. So I'd say the staffing is a big challenge here. There's reasons for that, I think. So lack of managers, we have the staffing, portfolio size, and then the other third one would probably be door rate. I don't know if that's a terminology that you use, but that's what we use to average out the average cost per strata lot or per unit, what they are charged per month. I think I spoke to somebody else from Australia earlier this week, and I think you in Australia look at it on an annual basis, what each strata lot contributes to the management fees. We look at it at a monthly basis. So Amanda, does that sound right for you? Is that how you guys look at it, is that annually?

Amanda Farmer: There would certainly be strata managers tuning in here who would be able to answer that for you. Being a strata lawyer as opposed to a strata manager, it's not something that I'm across. But I know yes, absolutely, there would be a formula. How it's done and what it's called, I'll leave it for somebody to post a comment under this episode and let us know.

I just have to pick up there Brent, you mentioned meetings and a manager who may be managing 20 buildings, may be attending upwards of 120 meetings a year. That sounds like a lot to us where we have some buildings that will only have one meeting a year, an AGM, maybe a further general meeting if something big comes up. But many, many buildings that are just not meeting at all or regularly enough I say. And I talk a lot on the podcast about the importance of regular committee meetings. Do you have in BC mandated meetings and meeting times and is that the reason why your managers seem to be attending so many meetings?

Brent Anderson: No, not really. I think there's a lot of legacy strata corporations that are 20 or 30 years ago, they were set up to meet monthly and there's a lot that are just continuing that form of business and haven't really changed things. Certainly, when we look at properties that are around a hundred units or less, you're going to have a meeting, a council meeting once per quarter and then you'll have your annual general meeting once a year to approve your budget and whatever resolutions that you have. And then depending on the size or the age or the complexity of your building, it can go up from there. So to put that in perspective, a 400-unit building or 500-unit building will probably be meeting monthly with the council and the strata manager all coming together for a minuted meeting in addition to the annual general meeting.

So they'll have 11 council meetings plus the AGM. But you'll see a lot of smaller buildings that just go back in time. And the way that they were set up back in 1992, they were running monthly meetings and that's certainly not the way to be efficient today with

Publication Date: 08 December 2022

YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 340. Brutally Honest Strata Advice - from Vancouver

the advancements in technology and whatnot. It's a challenge to walk some of that back because they're so used to conducting business the way that they have been for so long.

James Milne: That's a big part of what Brent and I do through our sales and education processes. When we are talking to a property that's around that hundred units, 80 units, that wants to meet monthly, it's just making them realise why that's a total waste of their time as much as it is a waste of the manager's time as well. An efficiently managed property with a competent manager and good technology resources doesn't need to have meetings every month. And there's really no reason why a couple of virtual meetings a year should be sufficient to run those properties.

Amanda Farmer: I find it bizarre that I'm constantly talking about communities needing to have more meetings and be more engaged and be on top of issues. And you're talking about buildings trying to give your buildings to have less meetings. The other thing I can't ignore here is that your strata managers go through a process that I think you've said is about eight months of education before they can be licensed. I nearly fell off my chair. That certainly doesn't happen here, and it's something that the industry has been working on to increase education, to increase training, skill development, professionalism for our strata managers. Do you see that what seems to me to be a reasonable good length of time in training and qualification results in more professional, more competent strata managers delivering a good service?

James Milne: I think the licensing requirement is important. In Toronto, for instance, Toronto and Ontario has had licensing far shorter. They've only had licensing for five years, they brought it in when I joined the industry. It's something that we are going to, we're evolving and something that's constantly getting better. I think the challenge that we have with licensing is it's tied heavily to the real estate industry. So it's regulated by the same people as real estate agents. And much of the licensing is really focused on real estate sale, not real estate management. And that is from an educational perspective, they're not necessarily... For an eight-month to a-year course, you learn a lot of stuff that's relevant to real estate agents but not necessarily strata managers. So I think it has a little ways to go, but it is important.

Amanda Farmer: So that's one challenge and it is one that we too experience here in Australia, staffing. Any strata manager you talk to here will say staffing is probably their single biggest challenge, especially at the moment or as post-pandemic as we can get. Other challenges you want to share with us, Brent?

Brent Anderson: I think one of the biggest challenges is really the strata councils having expectations that don't line up with the service package that they've signed up for. And I have a saying when I'm in conversations with my councils is that either way they're going to pay a price. They're either going to pay with their wallet or they're going to pay with their patience. And when strata managers are having upwards of 16, 20 plus properties in their portfolio, it's important to recognise that the strata manager can not be responsive. It's not that they don't want to be responsive, it's that they can't, they're just simply underwater with so much workload. And a lot of the councils, they just don't understand that. It's that volunteer side of it. They're wrapped up in their own careers, they get together three or four times a year to have a meeting about strata management for their property and they don't think about their strata manager until the next meeting.

So I think the challenge is really an education piece around what it really takes to provide strata management services. Then understand that the way that we're currently operating when people are having 16 and 20 plus properties is that really unfortunately is a low service model, is what they're receiving. Now, on the flip side of that, if councils were more open to paying with their wallet, they could certainly reduce the sizes of portfolios and get more one-on-one service with their manager. But that comes with the tag. And at some point, it, unfortunately, takes a great deal of pain and experiencing pain to realise that it's easier to pay with your wallet than it is with your patience. And that just takes time, unfortunately.

James Milne: Yes, that just goes back to what Brent said earlier about door rates and how we have such a challenge there, when the average in the province is anywhere from \$20 to \$25 per month, per door for strata management services, that's not a lot of money. So we recently just did an episode of our podcast with a gentleman who's head of one of the major advocacy or organisations for the industry, and he thinks that we should be at \$55 a door, the manager should be making \$180,000 a year in managing six properties. That's where the service is. That's where you're going to get the level of service. But strata management,

Publication Date: 08 December 2022

YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 340. Brutally Honest Strata Advice - from Vancouver

companies that want to be profitable want to be scaled. I mean, we're a little bit lucky being a larger company that we are a scaled business, that we have X amount of customers, but a lot of the companies in the province are mom and pops and they need to pile on properties in order to pay their salaries. And at \$20 a door, that's why you see 16 to 20 properties per manager. And it's just a snowball effect.

Amanda Farmer: Do you see management companies attempting to diversify into other areas? We certainly have exactly this problem here with the model being a difficult one to make profitable while also providing a high level of service. And we have seen some management companies attempt to innovate. I see it as a way to address the failings in that model and extend into building and facilities management services, some insurance services. Does your company dive into those areas?

James Milne: Yes, we're actually probably one of the only ones just because of our size that does have ancillary services. So we have a property services division that does concierge and building managers and onsite staff for larger properties. We do have, well it's a sister company of ours that does strata insurance. Not our company, but it's a company that's under the same corporation that we are part of. We also do rental management, so we do individual rental units management, we do rental building management. So we do that. A lot of companies do do that. A lot of companies do do rental, but we're the only ones that do a lot of additional staffing. A lot of the concierge service that you would typically outsource to a third party. We have internalised that, we brought that in-house. But definitely not as common. I think that there's, with the licensing and regulation, there is a lot of rules around what companies can do and what services they can provide to avoid things like conflict of interest and whatnot.

So yes, we're definitely in that space to a certain extent. Our parent company, which is FirstService Corporation, they do have their hands all over the place as I'd mentioned. Insurance, they also do restoration companies. Well, they started as a facilities management company of managing recreation centres and pools. So they're in that space as well. They own a big, California Closets it's called. It's a big closet manufacturing company. So they're well diversified. But management companies primarily stay in real estate. Some of them do have trading licenses, so they sell real estate. But for the most part, it's strata management and then rental management.

Brent Anderson: Just to add on to what James was saying there, and one of the reasons why I think we don't see more people playing in that space is that the human resources requirement to staff properties is immense. These jobs like janitorial or building manager, or concierge, they're not necessarily incredibly high-paying roles. I mean they're not bad, but they do see a certain amount of turnover, which requires retraining. And that's a big resource drain for a small mom-and-pop shop that's even having a hard time staffing strata managers, then to think about providing staffing and training resources to a whole new vertical market of support staff for properties. So I think that's probably why we don't see more, is that it's just simply too big of a lift for them to be effective in it.

James Milne: That's a really good point. At any given time we have up to two to three full-time recruiters on staff, just making sure that we can fill our onsite positions.

Amanda Farmer: And when it comes to having expectations met, Brent you've said there that you either pay with your wallet or pay with your patience. I saw you post that on LinkedIn earlier this week, and if anybody's not following Brent Anderson on LinkedIn, I suggest that you do. There's always some great strata conversation and insights, and just Brent's point of view happening on strata over on LinkedIn. Brent even refers to himself as Vancouver's most brutally honest strata advice.

Brent Anderson: Yes, I've never been afraid of telling people the truth. So I think there's things that people don't want to hear, strata councils don't want to hear that they're complicit when it comes to receiving bad service. I'll sit through meeting after meeting of councils talking about what their expectations are of the strata management, and there is a real lack of awareness for them to ask the same question. What can we do as a council to make the experience better? Right. So when I'm in these conversations where they're continually throwing their incumbent manager under the bus, I don't play that game with them. I'll actually, if it's appropriate, I'll stand up for that other company that I don't know about that I'm competing against and say, it sounds like the situation they deal with, I don't know that we would actually do it quite differently.

Publication Date: 08 December 2022

YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 340. Brutally Honest Strata Advice - from Vancouver

There's a responsibility on councils to participate and to be, I guess, effective in their management experience as well. So for example, I mentioned earlier that strata managers receive 4,000 to 6,000 emails a month. We know from our own internal statistics that 30% of that is from just council communication. So of 6,000 emails, that's almost 1,800, 2,000 emails that's just coming from council members. And this includes things like council members just CCing each other on a back-and-forth conversation about a topic and carbon copying their manager into that thinking that they're doing that person a favour so that manager is in on the loop on what they're talking about, but the manager doesn't need to be involved in that. They just need to know, is there a question you need to have answered or is there a directive you need to have action taken on?

And one email and seven full council members replying twice, that's 15, 16 emails that the strata managers are receiving, and then they complain that the strata manager's not responsive. So I call it brutally honest strata advice because I will actually hold councils gently accountable for what they could do to improve the response levels of their other strata managers.

Amanda Farmer: Nice one. And the other place that our listeners can hear more from Brent Anderson and James Milne is over on your podcast, so let us know where's the best place to tune into that. We'll make sure that we've got links to discover you under this episode in our show notes.

Brent Anderson: Yes, we're in all major podcast players, so Spotify, Apple, and a bunch of other minor ones as well. Stratagize is the name of our podcast, so we had some fun coming up with that name. You can find in all of our episodes, we have links with our show notes to have ways of getting in contact with us. So feel free to explore an episode and reach out to us that way. We'd love to hear from you.

Amanda Farmer: Excellent. Now, we could keep talking for hours and one day we might do that in one country or another, but we need to wrap up today. Is there anything that you really wanted to share with our listeners that we haven't got to, that you want to leave us with?

Brent Anderson: Yes, I would say, whether it's strata managers who are listening to this episode Amanda, or whether it's people that live in strata corporations. I think it's just recognising that I think every strata manager... Well, first of all, let me back up. I don't think there's a single strata manager that wakes up, whether they're in Australia or in British Columbia, wakes up in the morning and says, I want to do a bad job today. I think everybody wants to at least do an adequate job or a satisfactory job. Some people have the drive to do an amazing job, but I don't think anybody wakes up intentionally wanting to do a bad job. And I think that they do get the short end of the stick sometimes when it comes to the response that they receive from some of their clients that they serve. And everybody has different things going on in their lives that leave them frayed and fragile.

But I think if we can just work from the assumption that your strata manager is probably trying to do the best with what they have and then just to foster a conversation with your strata manager as opposed to reactions, I think is always going to be a best path forward.

James Milne: Yes, I would certainly echo that. Be nice to your strata manager, it's important. But also get to know the industry. Hey, we know there's at least two podcasts in the world that you can learn a lot about strata management through local associations, through advocacy groups, however, you can. Especially if you're sitting on a strata council, or a committee, or a board, or whatever it's called. If you're involved in that, take the ownership of yourself to become educated and to understand the industry, to understand what the manager has to do, or the manager company actually provides and work with them. It's important. It makes everyone's relationship go better.

Amanda Farmer: Sounds like good advice to me. Thank you James and Brent for joining me on today's podcast, and I hope to meet you in person sometime soon. Wouldn't mind doing that over in Canada, that would be fun. And no doubt we'll have you back to keep sharing this strata wisdom from the other side of the world. I love it. Thank you.

James Milne: Awesome. Thanks, Amanda.

Publication Date: 08 December 2022

YSP Podcast Transcript: Episode 340. Brutally Honest Strata Advice - from Vancouver

Brent Anderson: Pleasure, thanks, Amanda.

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?



Demystifying the legal complexities of apartment living.