**TBP 265 HOF Edited\_Transcription**

[Daniel Hill] (0:05 - 0:34)

Welcome to the Blueprint Podcast. In these episodes, I'm going to share with you my life's work boiled down into simple blueprints that I use to build a 10 million pound portfolio and retire with financial independence at the age of 35. You can listen to these podcasts in any order, and I guarantee you that when you execute them in practice, you will see that success and failure are both very predictable.

Let's get into the next blueprint.

[Rachel Davis] (0:38 - 1:05)

Hello, and welcome to the next episode of Property Entrepreneur Podcast. I'm here with Chris Dornan, the winner of Advanced Property Entrepreneur of the Year 2024. Chris has gone from working in the business to on it over the past few years, and Chris has been super successful this year.

I just wanted to say a massive congratulations to you for winning Property Entrepreneur of the Year 2024 and winning your award. How does it feel?

[Chris Dornan] (1:06 - 1:17)

Well, it feels amazing, Grace. Thank you so much for having me on. It's an absolute honor to be here with you today and to have won Entrepreneur of the Year with Property Entrepreneur last year.

Brilliant.

[Rachel Davis] (1:17 - 1:34)

Yeah. And welcome to the Hall of Fame. You absolutely 100% deserve it because I was listening to your end of year presentation and it was amazing.

Thank you. So for the benefit of the listeners, can you just tell us who you are, what your company does and how long you've been on Property Entrepreneur?

[Chris Dornan] (1:35 - 2:10)

Yeah, absolutely. So yeah, my name is Chris Dornan. My company, I've got three main companies.

I've got Adaro Service and Accommodation, which is our main trading business. We've got Adaro Property Investments, which is our holding company that we sort of build our portfolio in. That was our original company that started out and does a lot of our development work.

And then we've got Devineer Plus, which is our coaching and mentoring business where we hold small in-person masterminds and we coach other entrepreneurs and property investors in really how to move through the wealth hierarchy and understand where they are on their journey and how to move through the different levels.

[Rachel Davis] (2:11 - 2:13)

Oh, that sounds really cool. And how long have you been on PE?

[Chris Dornan] (2:14 - 2:21)

So this is our third year on Property Entrepreneur now, just gone into the third year and it has been an absolute whirlwind of a journey. It's been amazing.

[Rachel Davis] (2:21 - 2:34)

Yeah. Yeah. Great.

Fantastic. So now we know a little bit more about you. You've got quite a few businesses there.

I would class you in, and I don't know whether you would agree with me, as a serial entrepreneur, because that's quite a few. You've got four businesses, haven't you?

[Chris Dornan] (2:35 - 3:43)

Yeah. So we've got a number. I mean, before, I mean, to give you a little bit of background, I started out life in the really early days.

My vision of becoming a developer was to get on the tools. I always enjoyed making things, creating things. My profile is Dynamo Creator Mechanic, and my vision of becoming a developer was really getting on the tools, learning how to actually get involved with the physical side of property.

So that's where I started out, and I had a main contracting business for a number of years, which is one of the big transitions that I've had since I've been on Property Entrepreneur, is actually realizing that was holding me back quite a bit from where I was trying to get to. So that was the first business I had. And in 2016, my business partner, Sen, who's on the board, and I started our investment journey together, where we got involved in rent-to-rent serviced accommodation.

And we started just building up the cash flow. We went from really making a loss in that winter of 2016 to really turning things around come February 2017, and we've just really scaled it from there, ran a very lean business, learned about systems, followed the blueprint via the podcast for a long time.

[Rachel Davis] (3:43 - 3:46)

Oh, did you? Before you joined Property Entrepreneur?

[Chris Dornan] (3:46 - 4:27)

Yeah, yeah. So we got as much results as you can get from listening to a podcast. It was amazing.

It really helped us get things on track, and that's what led us into Sen applied for the board and us both joining Advanced, and really getting involved in it. And that was a big turnaround for us, because we were able to go from, as you alluded to at the start, going from very much working huge hours every week, working in the business, to getting the right people in place, the right team in place, learning about the structure, and really getting that business on rails so that it could largely now, it runs itself. Sen and I check in, we sort of help lead the vision and support the team.

But really, we're working on that business maybe two hours a week each.

[Rachel Davis] (4:28 - 4:31)

Is that on the serviced accommodation side?

[Chris Dornan] (4:31 - 4:33)

Yeah. That's the serviced accommodation side. Yeah.

[Speaker 4] (4:33 - 4:34)

That's fantastic.

[Chris Dornan] (4:34 - 4:57)

We're still very much sort of in kind of storm stage with the mentoring and coaching side of things. Yeah. And that kind of made it past the startup stage, but we're still very much in that storm stage figuring out how we can best serve the investors that we work with, and really make that business a success.

But we're doing it in a structured way, following the blueprint, you know, the same way we did with the SA business.

[Rachel Davis] (4:57 - 5:27)

Well, see, I can tell that Property Entrepreneurs had a really big impact on you. I just want you to take another little step back. So before you went on Property Entrepreneur, what were the things that were happening in your businesses that were, you know, maybe, you know, that are different to what they are now?

Because I know you've gone from, you know, you're much more strategic now, you and Sen, and that's the things, the benefit of Property Entrepreneurs helped you with that. But what was, what kind of thing, you said you work in long hours, so just talk me through what it was like for you before you went on Property Entrepreneur, you know, how many hours were you doing?

[Chris Dornan] (5:28 - 7:20)

Yeah. Yeah, I was probably averaging between 90 and 110 hours a week at one point. Because one of the, you know, I guess it's maybe typical with my Dynamics profile, being a Dynamo, you take on every opportunity that comes your way.

And trying to grow all these businesses, I had three kids under three during this growth period as well, which was a bit of a challenge, which, well, you know, I wouldn't change it for the world. There was a lot of challenges all at the same time, growing the SA business, which was probably in about, you know, we went from four rent to rents in December of 2016, up to, we had 11 properties by the end of 2017, and we went from making a loss to making over 10 grand a month in profit during that year. And that growth continued for the few years following that, which took us up to about 2021, roughly.

And at that time, my building company that I had was in growth mode, which was going about 50% growth year on year, which in my naivety, I thought that was a great idea. And through listening to this and learning more about, you know, how to actually run a business properly, realized that was much too much growth across two different things. And you know, the net result of that was just spinning so many plates all the time, lots of balls in the air.

And, you know, ultimately, it was just running me into the ground, it was just, it was too much. And one of the biggest sort of game changers that we've had is really going through the process that Property Entrepreneur teaches, and actually like trying to slow things down a little bit coming towards the end of the year, and really give yourself time to think about what is important for this year, and am I actually putting the big rocks in my calendar first, so that I'm not just continuing to be a busy fool, spinning lots of plates and really just, you know, going in lots of different directions and spreading myself too thin.

[Rachel Davis] (7:20 - 8:00)

We talk about this a lot on Property Entrepreneur, don't we, about strategy, and it's this right time of year, isn't it, right now, because we go through this methodology, where we look at strategy in the autumn, and then we go into our businesses and fix things in the winter, we come out of the other side of that, build teams, and test the new systems, and then we go into like sales season in the summer. And I think, you know, what you're talking about there is that I think, for you, one of the major game changers, it sounds like over the last few years has been the fact that you've been able to do that strategy, slow down to speed up and think about things, because we just talked about this before we did the podcast, about you being in beast mode for years.

[Speaker 4] (8:01 - 8:02)

Absolutely. Yeah, yeah.

[Rachel Davis] (8:02 - 8:14)

And that's, you know, where you were, I think, from the sounds of it, we've talked about where you were before you started Property Entrepreneur, it's very clear that you were, like, if you were doing 100 hours a week, then you were in beast mode. Yeah. Absolutely crazy.

[Chris Dornan] (8:15 - 11:16)

Yeah. Beast mode was definitely my default mode. Yeah.

And, you know, that's why one of the things I saw, you know, resonated with Dan was, you know, he's very much been in that beast mode mentality for so long, and not knowing when to pull the cords. One of the podcasts he did, I didn't, I never recognized the trigger. So it was just go, go, go, go, go.

And that was just, I guess that's just how I was wired, you know, but doing that for so long, you know, you can get away with that in your 20s and 30s. I'm 42 now, and you can't keep pushing that same speed all the time without it starting to have a big effect. And while it did get results, you know, because Sen was very much in that same mode as well.

So we were both pushing very, very hard, you know, trying to get the SA business to the point where we really understood our customer avatar. We really understood the metrics of what made that business work without us just having to grind, grind, grind constantly all the time. And yeah, that's been, I think, one of the biggest things I've taken away from Property Entrepreneur and more so in the second year.

So I'm now going into my third year with PE. And last year, it was just a massive eye opener that you need to be able to actually be structured and strategic about how you're doing these things. And going so hard all the time tends to be actually detrimental to the growth of the business, because you can't think creatively, you can't think strategically, you can't lead your team efficiently when you're in that mode all the time.

So actually taking time to pull back from that. And just for this, one of the net results of me pushing so hard with that, ironically, my year of last year was peak performance. Yes, I remember.

The thing that was the, you know, really ironic part of that is I had massive insomnia last year, which I know loads of people out there can resonate with. But I was literally falling asleep at sort of five, half five in the morning and then getting up at half seven for most of the year, which had a big, big impact. And it was really largely with the support of Adam, you know, just checking in and just pushing me to put certain things into place that I was able to gain control of that and really pull back from being a baseball, be more strategic with the time I was spending and really putting the focus on efficiently delegating all the stuff that we learn on Yeah.

And to make sure that the business was more running on rails and was more without taking on without me. Yeah. Yeah.

And that was a big eye opener because as entrepreneurs, we always think that, you know, the business really needs us to be doing everything. And actually, quite often we're getting in the way of potentially slowing things down. And actually by being more strategic and thinking about how, how all the different sort of pieces of the puzzle come together.

And this was the difference from listening to the podcast to actually being in the program on advanced. It all started falling into place and we were able to really be strategic about how we were leading the team, the hires that we were bringing in and having the right people in the right roles, which was the big transformational difference for us and really being able to pull out.

[Rachel Davis] (11:16 - 12:08)

And interestingly, you talk about your obviously not achieving your year of personally because you wanted to be in peak performance, but you weren't because you need to be able to sleep to be in peak performance. But I think your year for the businesses was about getting them to be in peak performance, wasn't it? I think fundamentally for you, you know, I was just about to ask you this question, but I think you've pretty much answered it is that, you know, where you are now is that you've actually focused on systems, capacity, hiring people and strategy.

There's the three things in the right order. It's strategy first, then it's systems and then it's, and then it's capacity, isn't it? In the order of the methodology.

And you focus very hard on that last year. So you've got, it sounds to me that your, your businesses had a year of peak performance and getting them to peak performance, I think was probably the aim of the game, wasn't it? To get them running really well so that you could step back and slow down.

[Chris Dornan] (12:09 - 12:19)

Yeah. Yeah. It was.

Yeah. Yeah. A hundred percent.

A hundred percent. But I mean, just touching on what you mentioned there about me not meeting that year off, I still felt like I actually ticked all the boxes.

[Speaker 4] (12:19 - 12:20)

Did you? Oh, interesting.

[Chris Dornan] (12:20 - 12:32)

Right. I mean, other than the sleep, I got the weight, I got the weight down. I was hitting my training targets.

I was hitting the, I had one that was just keeping up with 20 year olds on the basketball court. I was able to do that. But you are such a beast mode.

[Speaker 4] (12:32 - 12:33)

I've managed to do those things.

[Chris Dornan] (12:33 - 12:36)

I've managed to do those things, like regardless of the sleep. Wow.

[Rachel Davis] (12:37 - 12:45)

That just shows you what you're capable of though, Chris. If you could do all of that on a lack, on insomnia, because I know how, what insomnia is like. It's really difficult.

[Speaker 4] (12:46 - 12:46)

Yeah. Yeah.

[Rachel Davis] (12:46 - 12:56)

And you still, you've got so much energy though, haven't you? That's the thing. This is why beast mode is your default because you're just full and brimming with like Duracell battery energy, aren't you?

[Chris Dornan] (12:57 - 13:46)

But you know what? It's just been great getting that balance. One of the things that really attracted me to sort of join in Adam's Mastermind was the focus on entrepreneurs really enjoying life.

And that was a big draw for me. And that became a huge part of the peak performance is really making sure that everything we've got going on with the different businesses, it was doing it in a way that it didn't completely over consume time. And we're able to pull back that time to spend with my wife and my kids, just doing little things like having monthly bucket list items, you know, things like that.

They were, they were the things that by putting the right people in place within the businesses and really helping them build the systems and helping them lead the charge with things. It allowed me the time to then spend that time. And that, that for me was a big part of peak performance and really, you know, focusing on what important things in life were.

[Rachel Davis] (13:47 - 14:08)

Yeah. Yeah. And I think that there's more to it than that, isn't it?

Obviously you've got the, like, it's very holistic what you're trying to do there. So do you feel now that you're through that year, and obviously you're now thinking about your next year, aren't you, to come, do you feel like, so you feel like you did achieve it in different ways and then over the year you did actually manage to get your sleep under control, didn't you? You did make some...

[Chris Dornan] (14:08 - 14:08)

A hundred percent.

[Rachel Davis] (14:08 - 14:09)

Yeah.

[Chris Dornan] (14:09 - 15:26)

Yeah. I had a great, great trip with the retreat out to Bali and that was actually the trigger point that time away. And what that sort of really sort of hit home was really focusing on what your purpose in life was and really reconnect, reconnecting with that vision and that goal.

And that really brought out a huge level of energy, brought more energy. But what it did, I felt like I came back from that trip feeling like a different person because we had the, all the businesses were in a good place, Sen and I were now fully focused on really growing our financial fortress, which is about acquiring blocks of apartments to work with support, especially supported housing providers. And so it was really about being able to go all in with that vision to create the financial fortresses, which then allows things like travel, it then allows things like getting to spend more time with the family and how all the pieces of the puzzle fit together.

And in doing that, we're thinking about, okay, who are the people that we need in all the businesses now so that we can really shortcut the journey that we had with the SA business to make sure that we can have the same level of growth, but doing it in a measured way with the other businesses. And that's been the transformation over the last couple of years, really, is really pushing that.

[Rachel Davis] (15:26 - 15:54)

Yeah. And it's great to hear that you've made so much progress and it's one of the things I've loved about your journey over the last couple of years is you're really starting to find yourself and win back all the things that made you, you or make you, you like the things you enjoy in life, like time with your family, you know, going to Bali, I, you know, it sounds to me like before you were on Props to Entrepreneur, you weren't really giving yourself any time to do any of these things. And now that you are, it's like rediscovering yourself again, which I think is really lovely.

[Chris Dornan] (15:55 - 15:59)

Completely. Yeah. Yeah.

That, that, that, that's been a big eye opener for me and just a big, big jump forward.

[Rachel Davis] (16:00 - 16:32)

Yeah. No, it's really nice to hear. So you are, obviously you instead of being super successful on the strategy, on the systems, on bringing in team members.

So to help the listeners, what four challenges have you had to really overcome, you know, before and after and during PE, you know, to get you to where you are now, because you're obviously in a really good place now. You've got you to peak performance, you've got the teams to peak performance. You know, what kind of, what big challenges did you have to, to go through to get there?

[Chris Dornan] (16:33 - 18:02)

Yeah. So I'd say the first big challenge that we went through was really growing too quickly and not understanding the, what commercial balance meant and doing that with sort of both businesses. And I guess, you know, again, touching back on the building company, which I've managed to close that business down now because it was preventing us moving forward with everything else.

But the, my goal had always been double turnover year on year, thinking that was a really great metric to work towards. And then actually figuring out that, you know, turnovers, vanity, profits, sanity, which Dan talks about quite a lot. At the time I had been, because we were trying to meet very tight deadlines, I kept replacing the same person, essentially.

I kept throwing more trades into the mix with things so that I could try and make sure that I wasn't having to be on site. So I could be focusing on the SA business and growing that and really just trying to lead the team. But I kept replacing the wrong person.

I didn't understand about the essence of commercial balance and having the right people in the background to support that growth. So it was very much, while I wasn't having to be on site all the time, I was having to do all these things that I didn't really enjoy in the background. And I didn't have the mental sort of bandwidth and sort of space to really see how the different hires could have helped me really systemize that business to the point of selling it so that I could really focus on the property side of things and the portfolio growth.

So that was definitely one of the biggest challenges that I went through.

[Rachel Davis] (18:02 - 18:10)

What did you tweak there? So with the hires, what did you tweak? What was the main difference you made to help with the back office?

Is it back office that you're talking about there?

[Chris Dornan] (18:10 - 18:52)

Like with that growth and that balance? So the biggest thing, well, with that business, I'd already started shutting that down. So when we hit 2022, that business was already in the process of being shut down.

But what it really, the learning journey from that made us really focus on actually having a finance team in the background that were keeping an eye on that. That was one of the biggest ones. Josh really helped us get that model in place, sort out where our finances were, because we had quite a few different properties in the SA business at this point.

And so bringing in the finance team massively helped. Getting a PA and an EA involved, that was a game changer for us, because there's so many little admin things that we were getting sucked into.

[Rachel Davis] (18:52 - 18:52)

Yeah, right. Understood.

[Chris Dornan] (18:53 - 19:41)

That just took so much off the plate. It was just like a snowplow in front of us. So that made a huge difference.

But really, we followed a methodology that's taught by you guys, but also in a book that we read called Buy Back Your Time. One of my favorites. It's an awesome book.

And it was just about creating these systems, creating these processes that you can then pass on to your team. You do the task once, really understand it, and then you can teach your team how to do that. And then essentially, effectively delegating that.

So that was one of the big eye openers that took us really from having to spend so much time in the weeds of it to getting those people in place to support us so that we could continue to grow, but in a way that it wasn't going to mean we were having to just continue to put more and more and more hours into that business.

[Rachel Davis] (19:41 - 20:16)

Yeah, it's amazing, isn't it, when you think about it, how much time managing people, if you haven't got processes in place, can take, and when you bring in more sales or more properties, all the extra admin and all the things that you have to do in order to make it happen. And you're talking there about bringing in gatekeepers so that they can run some of that admin for you and literally take all of that noise away. So you've just spent quite a bit of time, haven't you, just reducing the noise.

So you grew quickly, but then worked on reducing the noise that that created.

[Chris Dornan] (20:16 - 21:11)

Yeah, and so that's where the businesses that we've got now, we're really focusing on bringing those people in early so that we can make sure that those mistakes don't happen again and we continue with a more measured growth going forward. The other thing was we had an ops manager that was helping us run the SA business early on, and she was just very overloaded. And as we were growing, she was doing too many things, and we actually ended up splitting the role into two.

So we've got an ops manager and a property manager, and that's big enough for the business that we've got without anybody being overloaded. And we figured that that was actually the sweet spot that allowed the two of them to work very, very well together. But they know that they've got the finance team in the background.

They know that they've got our virtual PAs in the background that can help when we're out and about doing different things, that they can always get a quick response. So we're not becoming the bottleneck at any point.

[Daniel Hill] (21:14 - 22:11)

Just jumping in quickly with a opportunity for you. So in Props to Entrepreneur, we use a scorecard called the Life by Design Scorecard, and it shows you exactly where you are excelling in life and where you have the opportunity to improve. We created this two years ago, and it uses every single life mapping, matrix, and psychometric testing that is out there to rate your life and show you where you currently excel and where you have the opportunity to improve.

If you want to do yours now, go to the show notes and visit www.lifebydesignscorecard.co.uk now. There's a link in the show notes. You can click it.

And in less than five minutes, it's completely free. You'll get a full bespoke report, and it will show you exactly where you're excelling in certain parts of your life and which specific areas you need to pay more attention to. It's completely free.

We've never shared it before outside of Props to Entrepreneur. Go into the show notes now, click the link. It's www.lifebydesignscorecard.co.uk. Back to the podcast.

[Rachel Davis] (22:14 - 22:18)

That's a great one. So you grew too quickly. That was the first challenge.

What's the second one?

[Chris Dornan] (22:19 - 23:22)

Second one was having too many priorities, and too many priorities equals no priorities. So again, as entrepreneurs, we're very guilty for saying yes to every opportunity that comes our way. And I always wanted to try and make sure, like, you don't want to pass up on opportunities, but you'll all have heard this before, is that Warren Buffett says, you know, the most successful people become the most successful people because they learn how to say no.

They say no to almost everything. And that was a massive turning point for me personally. I went from saying yes to just about everything that came across my plate, because they all looked like exciting opportunities.

But like Dan says, we can do anything, but we can't do everything. Yeah, you're not wrong. Getting comfortable with saying no to things was just, I would say that's been one of the things that has allowed us to really step change over the last couple of years, is saying no to things that aren't quite right.

And being comfortable with saying no, you know, it doesn't mean we're never going to do them, but it means we're not doing them right now.

[Rachel Davis] (23:23 - 23:32)

Yeah. How did you get to say no? Because I know quite a few blazers and dynamos just who love saying yes to everything.

But were there rules that you put in place? How did you know that you needed to say no?

[Chris Dornan] (23:33 - 25:07)

So one of the things was actually coming up with a checklist of five things that I ran every decision through. And that was, you know, does it meet with my values? What's important to my life?

Is this moving me closer to my vision of what the ultimate long term goal is going to be? Is this having a positive impact on our revenue? Or is it potentially going to impact our revenue negatively?

Is it taking me away from my family? And does it still allow me to have time to focus on my health? Because one of the big things that we alluded to with the sleep factor was that it was impacting time with my family.

Yeah, it was impacting time for me to actually have fun. I'm one of these people that recharges through being an adrenaline junkie. I love snowboarding, mountain biking, like all these things.

Like, you know, I don't need yoga. I don't need meditation to recharge. I need to go out and scare myself to recharge.

And so actually being able to free up the time to do those things, really, that gives me the energy to keep pushing hard with the businesses and really stay connected to the driving why behind them. So that was a big one, really. And it was almost a challenge that I set myself to say no to pretty much everything.

So if it wasn't an absolute hell yes, and it really strategically aligned with what we were setting as our headline strategy for the year, and the support and objectives that we had for that year, if it didn't fall within that category, it wasn't something that was going to make it into the runnings this year.

[Rachel Davis] (25:07 - 25:12)

Did you have, Chris, as one of your objectives, it's a hell yes or a hell no, is that?

[Chris Dornan] (25:12 - 25:19)

I didn't actually. You didn't, but that's how you should have done, maybe. It was an unofficial one, Rach.

Yeah, but it's good.

[Rachel Davis] (25:19 - 26:05)

It's great for people to hear because I think actually, you know, having spent quite a lot of time with entrepreneurs on Property Entrepreneur, saying no to things for many blazes and dynamos is a very, very difficult thing for them to do, right? Because they want to say yes to everything. And what was really interesting there is that you actually had to do that.

You had a criteria and you're very clear on what that criteria was. Even now, you've just been able to, you know, list that off without any trouble at all. So you were very, you're very clear on what no, it was involved with, you know, you knew what you needed to say yes to because of it.

I think that's really interesting for people to hear because I think that lots of people are scared to say no, aren't they, to opportunities. But of course, conversely, what's happened for you is that saying no has helped you grow.

[Chris Dornan] (26:06 - 26:57)

It has very much so, yeah, yeah. I mean, even so now, I mean, in the last two years, our turnover has gone up, but our profit margins have gone up as well. We've been able to be really structured about, you know, the things that we let in, how, yeah, just everything about it, you know, how we lead the team.

The quarterly, the AGMs that we have, the QGMs that we have with the team where we get together, we review where we are on what we committed to at the start of the year. And it just means that both myself, Sen, and everyone on our team is really focused on what we're doing so that we know that, you know, these things come in like, great, they might work. They might be something we do in the future, but they don't fall into our 70-20-10 for one, and they don't fall into our headline strategy for the day.

So we park them, we'll keep a note of them, and we say, right, is this something that can feature at some point in the future, but it's not coming in this year because we know what we're doing.

[Rachel Davis] (26:57 - 27:52)

Yeah, and we, just so for the benefit of the listeners, so some people might not have been on the program or on advanced. So what Chris is talking about here is headlines, setting headline strategies, which are a direction of travel for your business, and then setting three supporting objectives for each business that you run. And that enables you to stay very strategic and stay on track, which is what you've used those years of and headline strategies to help you stay on target.

And that's what Chris is talking about here. And 70-20-10 is what we call on Property Entrepreneur, distribution of focus, which is you can spend, you have to have something that you spend the majority of your time off. That's right, isn't it, Chris?

70% of your time needs to go on one main thing, then 20% and then 10% because you get what you focus on, don't you? And that's literally what you've been doing, really getting what you've been focusing on, which is absolutely fantastic. So too many priorities was your challenge number two.

What was challenge number three?

[Chris Dornan] (27:53 - 29:27)

So really leading in from these two, these all kind of flow together really, was losing sight of what I saw as my purpose and calling in life. I was very clear what my end goal was. Even as far back as being in my mid-20s, I knew what I was trying to achieve long term.

And by taking all these different opportunities, it was really diluting my headspace to be able to think about how I'm actually working towards that vision and working towards that goal. And you can just very quickly get carried along and swept along in the motions of just being reactive all the time. And that was kind of where I got to with different things.

It was while things were moving forward, while we were still making progress and the business was still growing, I'd kind of lost sight of what that purpose was. And for me, sort of mentally, that felt like at times I felt a bit disconnected and a bit lost on what is my focus right now? Where's this all leading?

Am I doing the right thing? And really just following the process and just by being clear of what the direction of travel was, and then taking the time to then link that with how is that getting me from here to there, and being able to map out the steps of the journey that's going to reconnect to that vision. That's been a big thing for the past year.

And that was part of the peak performance last year, was really taking the time to see that, reconnect with that vision, and put the stepping stones in place. So going into this year, everything we're doing with the businesses is all leading in that direction.

[Rachel Davis] (29:28 - 29:56)

Yeah. I know we're not quite there finishing our headline strategies because we spend three months in autumn, don't we? So it's all coming together this December, really.

And then in January, we're going to present to all of our property entrepreneurs, aren't we, our strategy data and presentations. So we're not quite ready to formalise them just yet. I guess you'll do quite a bit of that over Christmas.

Have you got a sense of direction for the business next year already? Do you have your headline strategy yet? Or have you got a sense of where you're headed?

[Chris Dornan] (29:57 - 31:21)

Well, because we've got multiple businesses, we haven't fully identified them for all the different businesses. We know what the targets, we know what we're trying to achieve. The main headline strategy we're focused on at the minute is really in the API, the Adura Property Investments business.

That is really about creating our financial fortresses or taking that to the next stage. And everything we're doing with our coaching and mentoring, everything we're doing with our serviced accommodation is all feeding into that financial fortress goal. And our target with that goal has been adding 40 new letting units a year to the portfolio, which is all around acquiring blocks of apartments for specialist supported housing.

That's our main model. The thing that turned the SA business round for us was really understanding our customer avatar and working to their demands rather than following the sort of build it and they will come mentality of finding properties and then finding the tenants and the guests to go into them. It was, who are our guests?

What do they need? Where do they need it? And what's their price point?

Ah, do the way around. Customer avatar. Yeah, yeah.

And so we deployed that strategy in our SA business and now we deploy that strategy across everything we do. And so that has been our main one. Our main headline strategy was the same last year.

It's going to be the same this year because it's a long term goal to get 140 units in the portfolio, which will give us the equity pot that we're aiming for.

[Rachel Davis] (31:21 - 32:05)

Yeah, you've got very clear targets, which really helps because the more specific you are, the more likely you'll be successful, isn't it? You'll hit the target because you know exactly what you need. And I think that's, that's really important.

So it's really nice to hear that, you know, that your third challenge is losing sight of your purpose, but you've been able to, I think it sounds to me that because you've been so strategic across everything, personal life as well as business, that it's helped you reconnect with your purpose and your long term vision. Because you've obviously, as a dynamo, I can hear that in your voice. You've got a really strong vision, haven't you, for where you're headed in the future.

Does that play into your long game? Is it part of your long game or is it a bigger vision than that? Because the long game is about five years, isn't it?

[Chris Dornan] (32:05 - 33:25)

It's 100% part of the long game, yeah. And that's been the big thing is actually pulling that vision back into the long game. So my ultimate goal when I was younger, when I was first starting out in business, was to be creating luxury villas in different parts of the world.

Because going all the way back to training as a carpenter when I was in my teens, it is all about design, architecture, and creating spaces and creating an experience for people. And for me, creating those luxury villas was part of an experience where people can just transport themselves away from the day to day noise and really have a life changing experience. And so part of the purpose that was reborn when I was in Bali was, how can I create a lifestyle business that focuses on one, the design led approach, but also draws on the experience that we've had in the hospitality sector in focusing on working back from demand and actually really tying in health, well-being, and making sure that while that's such a big focus for me now, having lost sight of that for a few years, is how can I tie these things together to allow other people to experience some of what I experienced in Bali through design led architecture and development, but also tying in a lifestyle business where people can just really reconnect with themselves and go on a journey. So that's part of the vision.

[Rachel Davis] (33:25 - 33:34)

Yeah, and that's a really strong purpose, right? That's fantastic. So we've got a fourth challenge that you've experienced to get you to, from where you were to where you are now.

[Chris Dornan] (33:35 - 34:58)

Yeah, so I mean, yeah, the big one, we've already sort of slightly touched on it, but it was health and sleep. By being in beast mode for so long, it was really just put, you think you can just put these things to the side for so long, because you have to keep hitting the business targets and the losing sight of the thing that to be able to operate our optimal best across the board and be able to really drive our companies and be the leading light for the people that we have on our team and our families, you have to focus on health. And so that last year was a massive eye-opener for me because going through that, I learned a lot about the detrimental effects of insomnia and not sleeping and so really focusing on getting that back on track was a massive challenge and it was something that felt really out of control for a long period of time. But having found a way of getting that under control, it was just the importance of having a set morning routine and doing the things that allow you to feel in control of life generally, so that things aren't spinning out of control, things aren't just overwhelming you.

Like Dan says, you're not leaving crumbs, everything's getting ticked off and you're just feeling control. And that was the big thing that turned it around for me was actually thinking just getting all these things out of my head and putting daily practices in place that made sure that health was being prioritised.

[Rachel Davis] (34:58 - 35:07)

Yeah. Sorry, Chris, were there anything specifically that you did on that? Did you do meditation?

Did you go to the gym at a certain time? What did you do?

[Chris Dornan] (35:08 - 35:15)

Yeah. So that was a big part. It was getting to the point where I needed to get a few nights sleep before I could do this, just to clarify.

[Speaker 4] (35:17 - 35:18)

I'm very sympathetic.

[Chris Dornan] (35:20 - 37:00)

You've been there, haven't you? Yeah. But no, it was one of the things I always sort of thrived on and where I felt like I was operating at my best was getting up early.

So it was getting back to the point where I could be up between five and a half, five and get into the gym early, getting the workout in early so that by the time I was getting to eight, nine o'clock at night, I was tired. My body was tired naturally. But as well as that, it was being very focused on what I was setting as my priorities for the week, not setting too many things.

So by the end of the week, I was feeling frustrated that I hadn't necessarily done everything I wanted to do. But after the gym, coming back and doing some, I call it visualisation, but I suppose it's a form of meditating, just doing 10 minutes and just focusing on gym, meditating, cold shower, that little process every morning. It doesn't sound like a lot, but it made a big, big difference to feeling in control going into the days.

And then just having that time with my kids every morning. One of my big drive and whys is my family. Not one of them.

That is my big drive and why. And so being able to go from being out of the house at seven o'clock in the morning to be on site wherever I needed to be, or being out, doing viewings and whatnot, actually taking time to know the world can wait. I'm going to have breakfast with my family and then I'll start my day.

And I start the day with a focus session that is making sure that the important priorities are getting ticked off. We call it prime time. And that was just that morning routine, bedding that in, made sure that I had control of the start of my day again, which is the thing that going through I didn't have.

And so by getting that booked in, made sure that the rest of my day, whatever happened with the rest of the day, I'd started my day positively.

[Rachel Davis] (37:01 - 37:07)

Yeah. And got and felt in control so that you could sleep at night because you felt that you were, that things were under control.

[Chris Dornan] (37:07 - 37:21)

A hundred percent. And then not working in the evenings as well. Stop it, stop and work at set time and not letting it spill into the evenings.

Yeah. Setting boundaries and knowing, uh, knowing what my triggers are as well for when I started to feel burnt out. Um, that was a, that was a big one.

[Rachel Davis] (37:21 - 39:02)

Wow. That's amazing. So let me just, let's summarize these challenges that you've had.

Cause you've had a few and honestly, you have been amazing. I have to say that just the way that you've dealt with them, you've, you've got, you've faced up to them and you've dealt with them so well. It's amazing.

Um, so the first one was growing too quickly. The second one was too many priorities. The third one was losing sight of your purpose, um, from being too busy.

And then the fourth one is literally just be spent a number of years, not focusing on your health and wellbeing. And then, you know, that, that was the challenge. And then you had to get back to fixing all of these things.

And over the last few years, you've certainly done an amazing job at fixing and dealing with all of those challenges that you face to get where you are today, which is fantastic news that you are. It does sound now I'm convinced Chris. Now you are at peak performance now that you're getting your sleep.

I didn't realize you'd fixed that. So congratulations. I know insomnia is one of the most difficult things because, you know, we talked about this earlier.

Your health is the basics. If you can't put the basics in place and you can't perform. And this, that is one of the basics, isn't it?

It's really like, like as some of your family is too, you know, if you're not seeing your family, it's a basic, isn't it? It's what you do it all for a hundred percent. So congratulations on, you know, dealing with all of these devils that you've had at the different levels, as we say on PE.

Let's finish up on some top tips. So given your, you've got some fantastic, four fantastic businesses, all doing very, very well. You've got some clear direction for next year already, which is fantastic to hear.

So what three top tips for anyone who's listening, who is wanting to be like you, Chris, a serial entrepreneur with a number of businesses, what are the three top tips you would give them?

[Chris Dornan] (39:03 - 40:34)

Okay. First one is start with why, which I don't know if you've read that book by Simon Sinek as well. That's a really, really good one.

But understanding the, what your why is, what is getting you up in the morning, what you're doing all this for, and then really understanding what the goals you're setting means you at an emotional level. So the things that you're focusing your time on, the businesses that you're creating, property strategies that you're going to focus on, et cetera, making sure they all align with what your personal values are and what you stand for in life, what your vision in life is and getting that right and, you know, creating a vision board of some sort that really, really evokes a strong emotion to keep you on track.

So you can course correct if you ever feel like you're veering off, that's a big one. Really just aligning that, keeping it front and foremost. Second would be building the right team around you as early as possible and taking time at the front end to understand who are the people that you're going to need on your team.

Because quite often we see building a team as an expense to the business, but really, you know, as you guys teach in PE, it is all about, it is an investment in your business. And, you know, there's an old African proverb, if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

By building the team around you early on and the right team, it will really help you enjoy the journey more. It makes progress more feasible, really helps you support long-term goals and prevent burnout. That's a big one.

[Rachel Davis] (40:34 - 40:38)

Yeah, that's a great, that's a fantastic tip. I mean, they both are, they're great. What about your third one?

[Chris Dornan] (40:39 - 40:59)

Third one is life is a marathon, not a sprint. Make sure you're planning your big rocks in for the things you want out of life and then fit your business goals and activities around them to really allow you to support the enjoyment of the journey. Because the goal is a destination, but if you don't enjoy the journey to the destination, what's it all worth?

[Rachel Davis] (41:00 - 41:02)

Yeah, what's the point?

[Chris Dornan] (41:02 - 41:44)

Exactly, what's the point? You know, when you get to that destination, you realize that you're still going, it doesn't end there. So if you're not enjoying the journey, there's no point.

So even if that means extend the timeline of achieving your goal, which is something we've had to do a couple of times, you know, because we're all over ambitious what we can achieve in a year or three years and underestimate what we can do in five or ten years. And, you know, while we're always still going to push hard, I'm not saying don't push hard, you need to make sure that you're putting the really important things, which is your health, your family, your loved ones, the things that make you you, factoring those things into your year and then working out how's your business going to support that. And if you haven't got a business yet, how is the business you're going to create going to support that?

[Rachel Davis] (41:45 - 42:11)

Yeah, it's a lovely, it's a lovely concept that because it's about too many entrepreneurs delay gratification, don't they, for the big pot of money or at the end of the rainbow that they're building. And the truth is here that you have to enjoy the journey in the process because that's every day you're is every day, every day you're living, aren't you? And every day is part of that journey.

And if you're not enjoying it and you're sacrificing for this greater good later, you might not make it to the greater good later. There's that too, isn't there?

[Chris Dornan] (42:11 - 42:33)

Exactly, that 100%. That's why, just off that, it's really sizing up the iceberg because in doing that and really thinking about what you want out of life, you can be strategic about what property strategy you follow or that you go out and spend your time working on what type of business you set up. And by really understanding how those things fit together, you can make sure that you get involved in the right business that's going to support your vision.

[Rachel Davis] (42:33 - 42:49)

And support your life. Yeah, yeah, absolutely. That's fantastic.

So tip one, start with your why. Tip two, build the right team around you and do that as soon as possible. And three, life is a marathon, not a sprint.

And it's all about enjoying the journey, not the end destination. Does that sound about right?

[Chris Dornan] (42:50 - 42:51)

Absolutely, that's it.

[Rachel Davis] (42:51 - 43:00)

So if people want to get in touch with you, Chris, because you are an incredible entrepreneur, how do they get in touch with you? So let's tell everybody how to get in contact.

[Chris Dornan] (43:01 - 43:20)

So two things. My Instagram is at ChrisDornan82, which I put in the show notes, I guess. And then my Facebook is Chris.Dornan.127. Yeah, excellent. So they'd be the two best places. Reach out, connect. I'd love to speak to anybody and, you know, if I can help, you know, in any way.

[Rachel Davis] (43:20 - 43:24)

Well, you've got a coaching and mentoring business. So there's that too, isn't there? So there's that.

[Chris Dornan] (43:24 - 43:29)

We do. We do, yes. If anyone's interested in that, the company is called Devineer Plus.

[Rachel Davis] (43:29 - 43:30)

Excellent.

[Chris Dornan] (43:30 - 43:31)

Yeah, reach out, we can help you.

[Rachel Davis] (43:32 - 44:42)

Yeah. Well, thank you for that, Chris. It's been absolutely wonderful to talk to you today.

You have got a wealth of experience and a complete and utter abundance of energy. I thought I had a lot of energy, but you are like on another level with the energy. I love the fact that you've learned so much about the joy of living in the here and now, as well as living in beast mode and sacrificing for the future.

It's been wonderful to hear your journey from where you were before Property Entrepreneur to where you are today, because you are, you and Sen, both together, super, super successful entrepreneurs. And, you know, you are a lesson to all of us about how to get to, you know, just get to your dreams by putting in the hard work, but being really sensible, as you have been recently, about making sure that that journey is sustainable and balanced and that you're getting joy from it along the way. And still being, like you said, making lots of profit, being very successful, but in a way that doesn't mean you have to burn yourself out and sacrifice yourself in the process of it.

And I think that is very inspirational. So thank you. Thank you for that.

[Chris Dornan] (44:43 - 45:00)

Thank you so much. I really appreciate you having me on. It's always great to chat to you Rachel.

Life's a game, isn't it? You've just got to master it along the way and figure out what works, what doesn't work. So yeah, no, it's been an absolute pleasure.

I just love this, love this process and it's just a joy to be in this community. So thank you very much.

[Rachel Davis] (45:00 - 45:02)

No, no, no problem at all. Thank you very much.

[Daniel Hill] (45:05 - 45:48)

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