IF I HAD My time Again

Real Reach speaks with Martin Hood

#REALREACH

MARTIN HOOD

RE/MAX Riverside

Martin Hood Lists and Sells Properties. In a career that has almost seen him span over two decades and \$300 million in sales; he remains in the elite status in his field. Martin has enjoyed a highly successful and rewarding real estate career which followed on from a strong base of banking and finance, conveyancing and residential building.

With such a solid background all centred around property and customer service, it is no wonder Martin has taken out some of the most prestigious international, national & state awards for Real Estate Groups that he has been part of and his database reflects that.

Martin Hood has the genuine foresight to market property working together with both Buyers and Sellers to ensure that everybody wins.



Interview facilitated by Kevin Turner of Real Estate Uncut [Real Estate industry thought leader], with comments from John Knight and Jacob Aldridge of businessDEPOT [Real Estate industry business advisors].

KEVIN: My guest is Martin Hood. Martin is the principal of RE/ MAX Riverside's two offices, as we'll talk about.

Hey, Martin. Did that bring back some memories for you, that song?

MARTIN: Absolutely. Very fond memories. I continually play that music.

KEVIN: The reason why I used that was because you were kind enough to send me through a piece that your daughter wrote about you, and she mentioned that group in that article. It obviously has had a big impact on you, your career, and your life.

MARTIN: Absolutely. Growing up, obviously, you need to find out what your personal style is and what your purpose is and which direction you want to go – we're all looking for the next big thing – and how you want to be seen in the general eye of the public. At the young age of 16 or 17, I started buying magazines from the UK, because we immigrated to Australia when I was only eight years old. I used to buy magazines, and you might know them: New Musical Express and Melody Maker.

In those magazines, there used to be a lot of shops out of Carnaby Street in London, and it was selling a lot of clothing of drainpipe trousers and polka-dot shirts and all that sort of thing. I just started ordering clothes from overseas, and I dressed in the Brisbane climate in these clothes, which is a little bit hot at times, but adapted it as the music came through in different film clips and things, and away I went. I was one of The Jam's mods, if you like.

KEVIN: I should have mentioned right at the outset there that the group is called The Jam, and that particular song is "When you're young." And yes, as I said, we played that because, obviously, it's had a big impact on your life, which we'll talk about, because one of the things that your daughter mentioned in that particular page she wrote about you was that you are her style icon, which is a wonderful thing for a daughter to say about her dad, I think. MARTIN: Yes, I was quite surprised when she asked me, because, obviously, there are so many people that you can pick, but I think we are definitely influenced by our family. If I look back to my own influences and my brother and sister, my parents were very young at heart, and my father still is. He was a Teddy Boy back in the day, wearing nice straight suits and very much into music. And the Brits very much loved their fashion and music, and yes, I guess it's a bit of a guide.

So, we look for those mentors, I suppose, in life as well as in what we do in real estate.

KEVIN: Yes. I'm really looking forward to my chat with you, because I have known you now for a number of years. I first met you when you were actually with another group. I don't know if you want to mention that or even talk about it, but it is going to have to frame part of the conversation, because one of the things I want to ask you about is when you change from, say, one group to another, or you start a new office, those challenges that you have. So, we'll have a look at that a little bit deeper into our conversation.

As I like to do with all of these interviews that I do in this particular series, I have to ask you straight upfront, if you had your time again, what would you change knowing what you know now about running a business?

MARTIN: Sure. I guess if I did have my time again, I wouldn't worry so much about what people thought of me. I'd have more confidence and faith in my decisions and direction. That would certainly lead me to where I need to be with my goals and lifetime goals.

> "While we all want to learn from the experience of others, and listen to (as Martin says) those Mentors in life and in business, it's also important to process their wisdom for ourselves and have the confidence in our own instincts."

> > - Jacob Aldridge, businessDEPOT



KEVIN: It's interesting to hear you say that. I'll just pick you up on that point, because it just seems to me that people who are deep into fashion are very concerned about what people do think about them. That's why they dress, and they stay very fashionable. Surely, that was an important part of your change or your growing up.

MARTIN: Well, I was always trying to find my place. And I guess, the fashion, and personally, music, obviously, was my driving force and helped me to get to a state of mind of where I needed to be. It sounds a contradiction, but it is what it is.

I tend to be like a lot of real estate agents who do worry about what goes on and how the public does see you. I've stories over the last 20-plus years where people do make up a story about you even if they haven't even met you. And you can't control that. You have to control the controllable.

KEVIN: Yes, very true. I have to say that in the years that I've known you, I wouldn't have thought that you've changed all that much. In other words, the way I see you now is the way I saw you when I first met you: very stylish, very purposeful about your business, a very strong direction, and it would seem to me to be very high standards.

MARTIN: Thanks. Those are very kind words, Kevin. And look, it's not something that I haven't been told in the past, and people who do work alongside me, they see similar stuff. And I hope they continue to see that, because that's my mantra.

KEVIN: Well, I've looked at your branding. Just before we started to talk, I had a quick look at your video that's on the RE/MAX site. That says a lot about you, it says a lot about your business, but also, it says a lot about your people, the team.

MARTIN: Very important, the team. You work with these people for so many hours in a week, and it makes it so much

easier if everyone's on the same page. I'm very transparent in my leadership. I say to them constantly, I'm not their boss. I work alongside them, and I'm fortunate enough to be their leader and make decisions. But it's their choice to work in that environment, and it has to be a non-threatening, friendly, and supportive environment.

KEVIN: Martin, I've taken you off-track just a little bit here, and I'll get back to that question about what would you change in the business, but let me pick up on that point you just made about your team. You said to them, "I don't want you to see me as the boss. We're working side by side."

There is a time, though, when you have to be the leader. At the end of the day, it is your business, isn't it?

MARTIN: Absolutely, yes. And everyone wants a mentor or a coach. We all need that guidance somewhere along the line. I had it myself. You find someone who you feel is of similar nature to you, and you can take bits and pieces from different people you come across and peers that you work alongside. And then you form your own self, if you like.

I guess, yes, I've always tried to be there to support the team, whenever they need their guidance. And positive acknowledgment of your success is so vital along your journey, and it allows you to stay on track. Yes, I do get a buzz out of helping.

"One of the great benefits of working with your own coach, or mentor, is learning how they operate and some of those coaching skills you can then take back into your business and provide to your team."

- John Knight, businessDEPOT

KEVIN: Back to my original question then: is there anything else you'd change in the business? I think you said that you would not be so concerned about what people thought about you.



MARTIN: Yes. I think selling as a selling principal is tough. I think that people who go out into a business, they don't see all the pitfalls; they see all of the positive stuff, which is how we're built in real estate – let's face it. We have to remain positive and get back up again when we get knocked down, and this is what it is.

But I was fortunate to have a business partner who groomed me with his experience, and I'm forever grateful for that time and appreciative. But it also teaches you what you want and what you don't want. And I had many partnerships after that.

Would I change that? Probably not. In that situation, I would recommend that partnerships are a great way to start out a business, because you have, generally, a common goal, and you learn to support each other , and you try to take up the weaknesses that one might have, and as I say, you work together for that common goal.

"Partnerships aren't for everyone, but just because you've heard of some partnership horror stories doesn't mean they always fail. Many of the best real estate businesses I've seen work so well because of the complementary skills of the partners. "

- John Knight, businessDEPOT

KEVIN: What do you think today's successful business owner looks like?

MARTIN: It's changing all the time. I look at a lot of younger people... I sound really old and my children say to me I'm becoming a grumpy old man, and I see myself becoming that way, but I guess I just cut to the chase a lot more. I'm a bit more direct in some things.



MARTIN: I see a lot of young people coming in, which is a fantastic thing because they're the future. I believe they need to dig a bit deeper though and not be so... What's the word? It's not "shallow," but something that's they just don't seem to go deep enough to be able to understand what is actually involved, what comes with the job. There's a lot of stuff on the surface that once you get through there, there's no substance.

I think you have to be really, really careful of knowing where your limits are. The public just won't tolerate it, Kevin. You mustn't get too arrogant with success, because they expect professionalism, they expect confidence, and they just won't abide arrogance.

KEVIN: When you're talking about arrogance, are you talking about bragging?

MARTIN: I'm talking about... We live in a world where there is a lot of instant recognition and gratification. The social media network is driven by us and what we put up. And not everyone wants to be part of that. We're encouraged to be using these levels of communication more and more, and I'm a firm believer that it's face to face. You need to be part of the community and you need to be able to put up information that's pertinent that people want.

But everyone's too quick to throw information out that's probably not needed to go out. A picture can tell a thousand stories, but you also need to be able to pick the phone up and also go and talk to someone and actually see what they want. Because ultimately, our goal is customer service, and we are guided by customer service.

KEVIN: Yes, I think you've touched on a point that we've made a few times in the shows that we do, and that is that technology has allowed us to be a lot faster in terms of building relationships but maybe we've lost that ability to have that personal contact with people.

MARTIN: Correct. One of my mantras is "nothing changes, nothing changes." You have to move with the times, and technology continues to help us, doesn't it? The fundamentals of success typically haven't changed, though.



KEVIN: Yes. Just very quickly, I'd mentioned at the outset there that you had changed and you're now with RE/MAX running a very successful operation, but how do you go about building your new business from the ground up or even changing your profile with a new brand? What are some of the tips you'd give us?

MARTIN: Well, it can be very destructive, because your time is not yours and – if you're a selling principal, particularly – you're trying to continue your sales business, and all of a sudden, you have these extra hats and extra head space that you have to find to be able to then create your next move.

Every brand and every franchise has its obligations that you must meet. And you then have to find your script and dialogue, if you like, and way forward of how are you going to change you and how you've done business and adapt to the new regime as such?

KEVIN: Yes. What would you say are the steps to building a business from the ground up? This show is all about learning from the experiences of people who've done it, for those who may want to do it. So, what are the first few steps you would take?

MARTIN: Look, you have to show immediate impact but you can't rush that. You have to be able to plan everything out. If you don't put it on paper and run through it and run it past some of your best confidantes and try to establish your path and how you're going to go forward, then, you're planning to fail, aren't you? "You fail to plan, you plan to fail" are so true.

KEVIN: I have a question here that I actually put a question mark beside because I wasn't quite sure if I was going to ask it, but we've gone into it, and that is about developing a business plan. Do you have one? Do you believe in that? And did you have one from day one?

MARTIN: I've always had a business plan, not always on paper. My head's an interesting place to go to, mate. I do hold on to a lot of stuff. But your partner in life is always a good sounding board, and I'm fortunate enough to have been married for 30 years and Louise has offered so many good options. And you can come home and the fact that she does work in the business now in one of the offices is a great asset, and it's always nice to have another person in the business with the same surname.

> "One of the most valuable questions I have as a business coach is "What does your spouse think about this?" Invariably, they have the insight and wisdom to know what's best for the business and the Principal, whether they work in the business or even if they don't! "

> > - Jacob Aldridge, businessDEPOT

KEVIN: Yes, very much so, whether it's your wife or your partner or daughter or son or whatever.

Have you got a mentor?

MARTIN: I've always used Dr. Fred Grosse. My first mentor, actually, was John McGrath. I went to see John at a Questsponsored event back at Southbank 23 or 24 years ago. He'd just had an article on 60 Minutes about being one of the youngest millionaires, if you like, and my eyes and ears pricked up and I thought "Oh God, who's this guy here?" Similar age, similar sort of background, he came from virtually nothing; and just had to build his business. I was very inspired by that.

My first book that I read in real estate was How to Win Friends and Influence People, which was actually... I was told to read this at the real estate course at the REIQ. And the second book I read was How to Sell Anything to Anybody by Joe Girard, whio is the guy who sold the most Buicks in The Guinness Book of Records.

I just kept on adding to it. I listened to tapes, and on it went, and I eventually found myself going to Dr. Fred, which is where John McGrath got a lot of his information from. I still tap into Fred every now and again. I sometimes fly to New Zealand and I do some training over there in day workshops. And I just get bits and pieces wherever I can on that journey, mate. I don't stop learning. I haven't ever stopped learning. It's so important to keep current.

KEVIN: Yes. One of the things I do want to talk to you about a little bit later in our chat is about motivation. It seems to me that you don't have one mentor who is mentoring you all the time, that you're basically tapping into Fred when you need it, or whoever you need. Is that what you do?

MARTIN: Not really, no. I haven't really been to Fred now for a couple of years.

I think you get to a level in real estate where you know... You don't ever know everything. And I don't ever profess to know everything, but you get enough on board that you know from your experiences good and bad, you've learned on the way, and then you can go back to those times and think "Okay, well, this time I'm going to go this direction or this pathway. That feels right."

I'm very much a gut-feel person. If it doesn't feel right with me, I don't go there. But I can make a quick decision. And most sales people are easy to sell to, because they do just go off on a whim, and that's just the way they are and that's just how they're built. But I tend to try and focus on the business planning side of things, but I also have that other side of me; it's just the way I'm built.

KEVIN: When you start out in business, everything looks rosy and great people make things look very, very easy, but you've been through some partnership changes, which would have had their challenges, ups and downs and so on. How do you remain focused on the business in the tough times? It's so important to actually keep the business moving forward.

MARTIN: It is, yes. The business, at the end of the day, is vital for your survival, isn't it? So, you're in control of that destiny, and partnership changes, brand changes, people do come and go in your business who might have been a great operator, and that's just life; you can't control that. What you can control is what's in your head and how you go forward.



I always remain a very positive person. I always treat people how I want to be treated and how they want to be treated. And I've always kept that same mantra going all the time. I just continue to get up and I just keep going for it again.

It is distracting when things do happen, and you have your good and bad days, but look, if you keep thinking and over-thinking it, all of a sudden you become it. You can't afford to do that in this industry, you have to keep going.

KEVIN: Let's talk about staff, just for a moment. Do you conduct one-on-ones with them?

MARTIN: I do, but not a rigid time. I've tried that. I've gone to them and said "Okay, well, I'll give you a 'take ten,' a 'take five,' or whatever and let's do this on these days." They don't come; they get busy. So, what I do is I always have an open-door policy. I'm always there.

Unless I'm on the phone or in a meeting, I always make time. Like yesterday, I had two fairly new staff – one a couple of years in and one who's less than six months – and I individually went through them with some guides on scripts and dialogues and listing presentations and white-boarded it all, and gave them some opportunity to really dig a bit deeper in where they were falling down on certain things.

So, I'm always available for that. I'll get my team ring me and say, "Marty, this is where we're at. Where do I go from here?" And I'll try and provide the dialogue that can then help them go forward and see it, maybe, with different eyes.

KEVIN: Yes. Remaining that involved in the business, too, and doing that one-on-one training and even taking the call like that reminds you how much you know, sometimes, doesn't it? And it also is really good motivation for you, because sometimes we forget how much we know.

MARTIN: Yes, it is, mate. But it also makes you feel old, and sometimes I feel like I'm the grandfather of the business.

KEVIN: Nothing wrong with that. Just get used to it, because it happens. You can't fight it.

Talking about staff and recruitment, you said you have a couple of new people who you've brought on. Have you ever made a mistake with someone, like thought you had someone who was good, they turned out to be a gorilla? And if so, what did you do about it?

MARTIN: Yes, it's very hard, because you just don't know how they're going to turn out. They might come with all the assets that you think are going to make them successful, and they're not turning out to be that way, and it's very disappointing because you have to back them, and not just financially but in time. And obviously, the vice versa. Sometimes you think "God, this person is not going to make it," and all of a sudden, they're there three years later.

But you talk about the success, and you become quite knowledgeable on the journey. I look back with, actually, great admiration. I've trained a number of principals who are almost direct competition to me now. They have their own offices, they're running their own businesses. And there's at least half a dozen like that. In some little way, I've probably taught them something, and hopefully they'll continue to use some of the ways that I've instilled in them or showed them how they can do real estate.

It's a nice thing. It is competition, but it's nice to know that everyone's on their own journey and they're all trying to achieve their lifetime goals. And there's enough business, mate, for everybody. It's just about attitude.

> "This is such a great attitude to have. As you grow your business, of course you'll be training future Principals. And maybe they'll become your partners, or maybe they'll become "competition", but if part of your leadership style is empowering others than even if they do leave you'll be celebrating."

> > - Jacob Aldridge, businessDEPOT

I'VE TRAINED A NUMBER OF PRINCIPALS WHO ARE ALMOST DIRECT COMPETITION TO ME NOW.

KEVIN: Do you hold sales meetings for your team?

MARTIN: We do. We hold a fortnightly sales meeting now. We used to do it weekly; it was becoming too much for the two offices, so...

 $K \in V I N$: Too much for you or too much for them?

MARTIN: Too much for everybody, I think. You don't need to cover off on too much. Because I'm such an open-door person, we cover a lot of stuff anyway, so we don't need to physically meet all the time.

We do minutes from that meeting and that's shared amongst the team, so anyone who can't make it... And I'm not going to grill them, because they're out there trying to make some money and do the right thing by their clients, and I understand that . Sometimes you have no control over that.

KEVIN: Yes, interesting point, that. I've been to some bloody awful, very boring sales meetings in my time, and I've actually conducted a few as well. What do you do to keep your meetings interesting enough so people want to come? And how important is that?

MARTIN: It's important, particularly the process. It still has to be there in the background, because in essence, the staff are looking for that leadership, they're looking for that direction. They want to make sure that there's a framework there that they know they're not over-stepping the line, they know that they're protected by that. No matter how good they are, they all still want to have some leadership.

And we tend to go over... If something has reared up that is a process that's fallen down, well I look at that as our mistake. As an admin person, we have to look at that and go "Okay, well, we'll take ownership of that. This is what we do. Everyone needs to be there, because we're talking about this subject, it's come up a few times, and this is going to be the process forward." So, we then document that for those who can't make it, and then they also get up to speed with it.



MARTIN: That could just be a process with an insufficient deposit to cover commission, for instance, and how the responsibility of tax invoices or making sure that you have adequate conditions in your standard conditions on your contract.

KEVIN: It's a beautiful, clear definition of leadership you've given us there, which is where you've identified a problem, you've discussed it with the team, you've come up with a solution and say "This is the way forward." That's leadership.

MARTIN: Yes, I guess so. It is leadership, but I tend to just be me.

KEVIN: Yes, well, it's better if it comes naturally.

MARTIN: Yes. The genuine approach, mate, is what I'm all about. And as I said before, I work alongside my peers; I don't profess to be their boss. I never want to be called a boss.

KEVIN: It's interesting that you've used that word a couple of times now in this interview, and that is "genuine", and it's obviously very important to you. And I think a very important character in a leader is that they are genuine and that if you do seek the counsel of other people you're really going to take on board what they say.

It's not as if I've made a decision and I want to hear what do you think and then I'll do what I want anyway. You have to be adaptable.

MARTIN: You have to be adaptable, because otherwise what happens is you're just going to make the other person irritable and they'll eventually end up leaving or whatever. But everyone has to have their say in something.

Obviously, ultimately, it comes down to you, how you deal with that. We do have a fairly extensive policy and procedure manual, which we update every year. And that's something that I try to circumnavigate any issues, with the obvious one, which is often around conjunctions and commissions and all the rest of it and how that works. KEVIN: The last couple of questions: the best things that you've been taught about leadership, about management, about running a business?

MARTIN: Good question. My career-wise, it's about balancing the team, and making sure that the service offering to the community always stays current because it's paramount to continued successes.

Multiple offices is certainly challenging because you have to separate your time between the two . I feel I do that quite well, but still, from a selling principal point of view, you have to have some time to yourself and run your own business, because often enough, when you're a smaller business, for those small businesses out there, you need to have those personal sales to help prop your business up.

And it's very, very important that you don't ever forget that, because the old "List, sell, and negotiate" is alive and well. If you don't prospect first, none of those other three will happen. So, you have allow yourself some time, and – what's the word, Kevin – you have to have a little bit of time, your time.

"Stepping up from one office to multiple offices, with or without business partners, does create a whole new challenge for a Principal. This can be exciting if done strategically of course."

- John Knight, businessDEPOT

 $K \in V I N$: Oh, down time, you-time, yes.

MARTIN: Yes, you need to have some breaks. This is a hard industry, and no matter what people say, to an extent, that's just how it is. You have to learn from your experiences. There are going to be mistakes you're going to make on the way. There are also going to be some great wins that you'll celebrate and you'll reflect on.

But if you continue to add to your skill set – your scripts and dialogue, which is really important in this industry.



MARTIN: Don't ever profess that you're going to know everything, because you have to continue to learn from your experts and your team, your customers, your peers. So many people have got some great ideas.

All that's really key. Just keep going. Because there's so much we made from the 80s. I do remember this one, and that's from the movie Romancing the Stone, I think it was: "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." You learn resilience, you have to have that, because if you don't have that you're dead in the water.

KEVIN: Yes, you talked there about growing, and that reminds me of something that I wanted to say a couple of minutes ago when you were talking about the way we do things and how adaptable you are.

If everything is done the way that you want it to be and that you're not willing to learn from others' experience or people on your team to help you shape how your business is going to go forward, no one grows in that environment.

MARTIN: Absolutely. You can't, because you're just doing the same old, same old, and expecting a different result. That's the definition of insanity, mate, isn't it?

KEVIN: That's right, it is the definition, that you're doing the same old thing and expecting a different result. It just doesn't work.

And another thing, too, you talked about there, and that was about real estate, how tough a business it is. It is. And I get frustrated when I hear someone say "I think I'll give real estate a try." I think you have to realize that you never give real estate a try; it will actually try you, and try you and try you and try you to find out what you're really made of.

MARTIN: That is so true. Yes, I think we approach everything the wrong way. It is a lifestyle choice, but it takes over your life. And the ones who are good at it and do well and stay in it for a long period of time, they live and breathe it.



MARTIN: How hard is it to go away on a holiday and not have to look at some property? You just do it.

And if we go back to the fashion side of things and music, I'm a lover of architecture. I just absolutely love houses and properties. So, I've always been that really good advocate that I genuinely like what I'm doing.

Obviously, there are pitfalls in every single job, no matter what you do in your career, but you have to love what you do and you have to be interested in it, because it shows through. People are not silly; they'll make their decision on whether they want to use you. If they like you, they'll use you. As simple as that.

KEVIN: Yes, well said. Mate, one final question, one word of wisdom from you: what do you wish someone had told you right at the start?

MARTIN: Just keep going. Going back to my first statement, opening statement: don't take on board what other people might think of you. You just have to go forward with confidence. If you don't have that confidence and conviction, then it's very hard.

You have to keep smiling. Stay true to yourself. Do your goals. Never forget why you're doing it all, whether it's a family, why you're out working those hours, and the hours are long, as we know.

You have to take good care of yourself. I do tend to not follow that one as well. It's probably the one area that I do lack, and I just have to have some more me-time outside of the business. And you have to look comfortable with who you are and be who you are, because the ones who are genuine, who are approachable, people will want to use you. Happy days.

KEVIN: Happy days, indeed. And mate, it's been great talking to you. Thank you for spending this half-hour with us. It's been wonderful. Martin, I appreciate your time. Thank you.

MARTIN: Absolute pleasure. Thanks, mate.



The Series

One of the greatest aspects of the real estate industry we all love is the abundance of supportive people willing to share their experience and reach out their hand.

But there's a flipside to that abundance. Sometimes, it's too much, and especially for new or future Principals it's hard to know which parts of a model business to replicate, or which past experiences you can still profitably apply.

Our mission at Real Reach is to cut through that noise, and bring context to all that content. Starting right here, at the beginning of great businesses, asking Australia & New Zealand's leading Principals what they would do ... if they had their time again.

Because if you're starting your agency today, you can't copy what the top agencies are doing today. You need to learn what they did when they began ... and more valuably, if those top Principals were in your shoes, what they would do differently.

We hope you enjoy the series 'If I Had My Time Again'. More importantly, we hope you can take some of the experiences shared and use them to guide your strategic planning, and the execution of your agency to achieve your dreams.

If you have any questions about this series, or the online coaching and training offered by Real Reach, please let us know.

- > Kevin Turner (Real Estate UNCUT)
- > Jacob Aldridge (businessDEPOT)
- > John Knight (businessDEPOT)



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