

grow.

TECHNOLOGY | BUSINESS | INFLUENCERS | DESIGN | LIFESTYLE



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It's not every day a technology company is on the eve of turning forty. And it's something we would never have achieved without you, our loyal customers. Every one of you has contributed to our success, inspiring us to innovate with a suite of property and strata management software, to win awards, and shape our industry.

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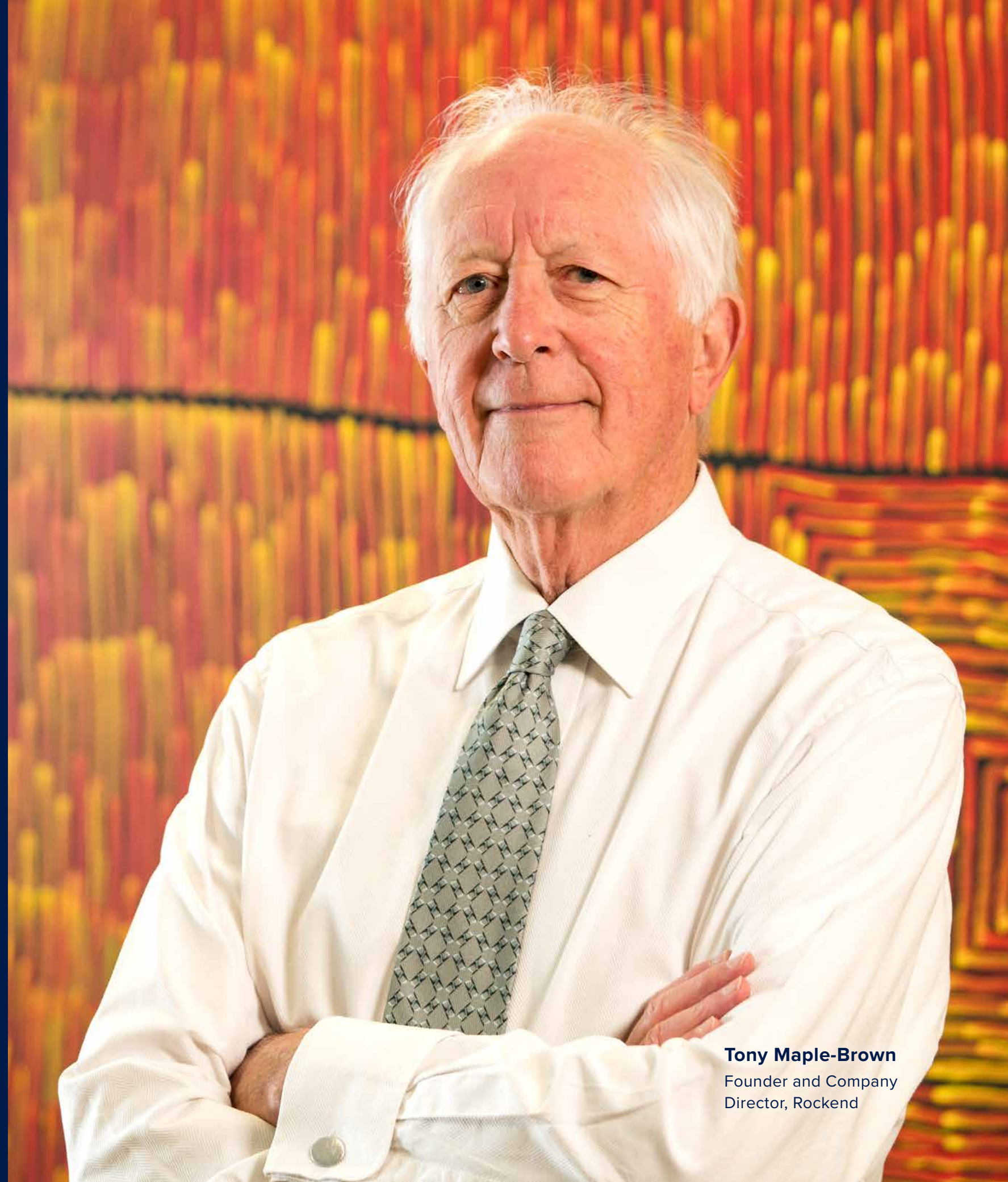
To us it's more than a change of colour or a website refresh. It's a clear statement about our commitment to continuing to delight our customers and lead the field. And it cements our intention to grow our family of software and services as part of our high calibre brand.

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Tony Maple-Brown
Founder and Company
Director, Rockend



CONTENTS

REGULARS

- 07 WELCOME
- 08 SNIPPETS
- 50 ROCKEND TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION UPDATE

TECHNOLOGY

- 10 **DEBUNKING DIGITAL MYTHS**
Sorting the facts from the fiction in the technology sphere.
- 12 **HAND TO MOUSE**
What's the secret to getting great digital renders?
- 16 **HUMANISING THE ANDROIDS**
Friendly robots in public spaces.

BUSINESS

- 18 **LEADING THE CHARGE**
How Rose Kelly's Leading Focus can help real estate agencies thrive.
- 22 **THE VESNA VIBE**
Meet the one-woman dynamo, Vesna Wells.
- 24 **KILL THE LONE WOLF APPROACH**
Peter Sheahan shares his winning leadership strategies.
- 26 **THE ART OF OUTSOURCING**
Aimee Engelmann explains the rise of Beepo.

INFLUENCERS

- 28 **THE CIMINO CONNECTION**
Michael Cimino keeps it in the family.
- 32 **A PASSION FOR PROPERTY**
Les Hoverd was an influencer before Instagram was even created.
- 36 **FAMILY TREE**
Melodi Brown and the rise of Ristic.

DESIGN

- 38 **CIRCADIAN RHYTHMS AND ARCHITECTURE**
Designing to maximise our connection to nature.
- 40 **DESIGNING INNOVATION INTO YOUR DAY**
Dr Amantha Imber reveals how to unleash your creativity.
- 42 **THE ONLY WAY IS UP**
How vertical schools are one solution to population growth.

LIFESTYLE

- 44 **CONNECTED MINIMALISM UNCOVERED**
The world of the working nomads.
- 46 **THE RISE OF THE STAYCATION**
When holidays begin at home.
- 48 **KRIS KRINGLE**
Office gift ideas to keep everyone happy.

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(niche:)

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WELCOME

Welcome to issue 10 of *grow*. I joined as the Head of Product in June this year and I've thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to meet many of Rockend's clients in their offices and at events during the short time I've been here.

A theme that stood out in these conversations is the ever-increasing complexity of the life of a property or strata manager. Customer expectations are increasing; there's more to do with what feels like less time to do it. Often this is with a team with less experience than may have been the case just five or 10 years ago. This is an area of enormous potential for our software to add value your business and the team and I are looking forward to releasing the enhancements we are developing to help you 'grow'.

It is great to see some of our Rockend customers – Michael Cimino from Inner Real Estate (IRE), Melodi Brown from Ristic RE and Les Hoverd – enjoying the benefits of our cloud-based software, not just from a business perspective, but also in the time they get back outside of the office.

This edition highlights the profiles and insights of all three of these valued partners, but we are also delighted to bring to you a range of other stories and articles to both inform and entertain you. In the following pages you can learn about the rise of the friendly robot, discover what goes into making a great rendered image in the property industry, and gain competitive edge business tips from the likes of Peter Sheahan (named as one of the 25 most influential speakers in the world by the National Speakers Association) and Vesna Wells (joining Les Hoverd as our Kiwi contingent in this issue).

We also delve into lifestyle topics such as the increasing popularity of the 'staycation' and what prompts people to take a holiday without necessarily travelling anywhere. And in a related topic, we uncover the world of the digital nomad, those who choose to work anywhere but in the workplace. With today's technological possibilities I could be writing this in Rockend's offices, from the comfort of my own lounge room or, indeed, on a beach in Tahiti... you'll never know!

In the meantime, with the little time you have, please enjoy issue 10 of *grow*.

Peter Crowe

Head of Product



“THERE’S PLENTY OF RESEARCH THAT SUGGESTS SPENDING ALL YOUR TIME ONLINE AND NOT SOCIALISING FACE-TO-FACE CAN HAVE A BEHAVIOURAL IMPACT.”

DEBUNKING DIGITAL MYTHS (PAGE 10)

“If you look at the people that are producing the highest results in real estate, most of them are taking a team-oriented approach and not just a rogue warrior approach.”

NO MORE LONE WOLVES (PAGE 24)

“He worked out I was good at making him money, rather than spending it, so he proposed.”

THE VESNA VIBE (PAGE 22)

“WE MADE THE MISTAKE OF TRYING OUT A COMPETITOR INSTEAD OF MOVING STRAIGHT TO PROPERTY TREE AND, I HAVE TO ADMIT, IT WAS A MASSIVE FAIL.”

FAMILY TREE (PAGE 36)

“THE SMART PLAYERS RECOGNISE THAT THE MORE THEY NICHE, THE MORE VALUE THEY CAN PROVIDE.”

THE ART OF OUTSOURCING (PAGE 26)

“There is massive inefficiency in most real estate businesses. Staffing costs are significant – often because of the poor logistics, poor adoption of technology, and inadequate training and management of teams.”

LEADING THE CHARGE (PAGE 18)

“It’s definitely a different environment when your colleagues aren’t related to you and you’re forced to bite your tongue a little more.”

THE CIMINO CONNECTION (PAGE 28)

“THE INDUSTRY HERE IN NEW ZEALAND HAS BECOME A LOT MORE CONTROLLED AND THERE’S MORE LEGISLATION AROUND WHAT WE CAN AND CAN’T DO.”

A PASSION FOR PROPERTY (PAGE 33)

DEBUNKING DIGITAL MYTHS

They're out there and all around – those nuggets of perceived wisdom about the digital age and what it means for us lowly humans. Techno whizz Anthony Caruana sorts some facts from the fiction.

Digital myths – the 21st century equivalent to old wives' tales – are shared far and wide and given extra credence when they're matched with some faux research or a clever image that adds to their dubious credibility. But there's plenty of research around that can help you navigate the waters of dodgy claims and digital myths.

MYTH #1

The cloud is unsecured and my email could be read by anyone

Ever since Hotmail, Yahoo! and Gmail became the most popular email systems on the planet, people have been concerned that their private communications could be accessed by almost anyone.

The question you need to ask when it comes to using cloud-based email services, or any other cloud service, is this: do you trust the service provider?

The providers of large cloud services typically employ the best security people on the market and have a lot more resources to throw at the security challenge than most businesses. If the cloud provider you choose has a good reputation and proven track record for not only being secure but dealing with issues, then it's likely they are better at security than you are.

MYTH #2

Blockchain is (or isn't) the best way to do everything

Many discussions about the efficacy of blockchain miss an important point. They are often carried out between parties that don't really know what blockchain is.

A blockchain is a distributed ledger system that relies on multiple parties validating the data that is stored. The contrast is with a traditional

database that is stored centrally. Blockchain does have some great business applications. In complex supply chains where the components that come together to make a product need to be tracked, blockchain can be an effective way of ensuring all the data is safely recorded and that it's accessible to the relevant parties.

But it's not a universal solution that works for everything. While it's secure, it's not fast, so it's not suitable for high transactional volume systems.

MYTH #3

Our wireless devices will give us cancer

This is still a controversial topic. International health agencies establish what they believe, through research, are safe levels of electromagnetic and other radiation. They publish those standards and the companies that make our devices must conform to those standards in order to sell their products.

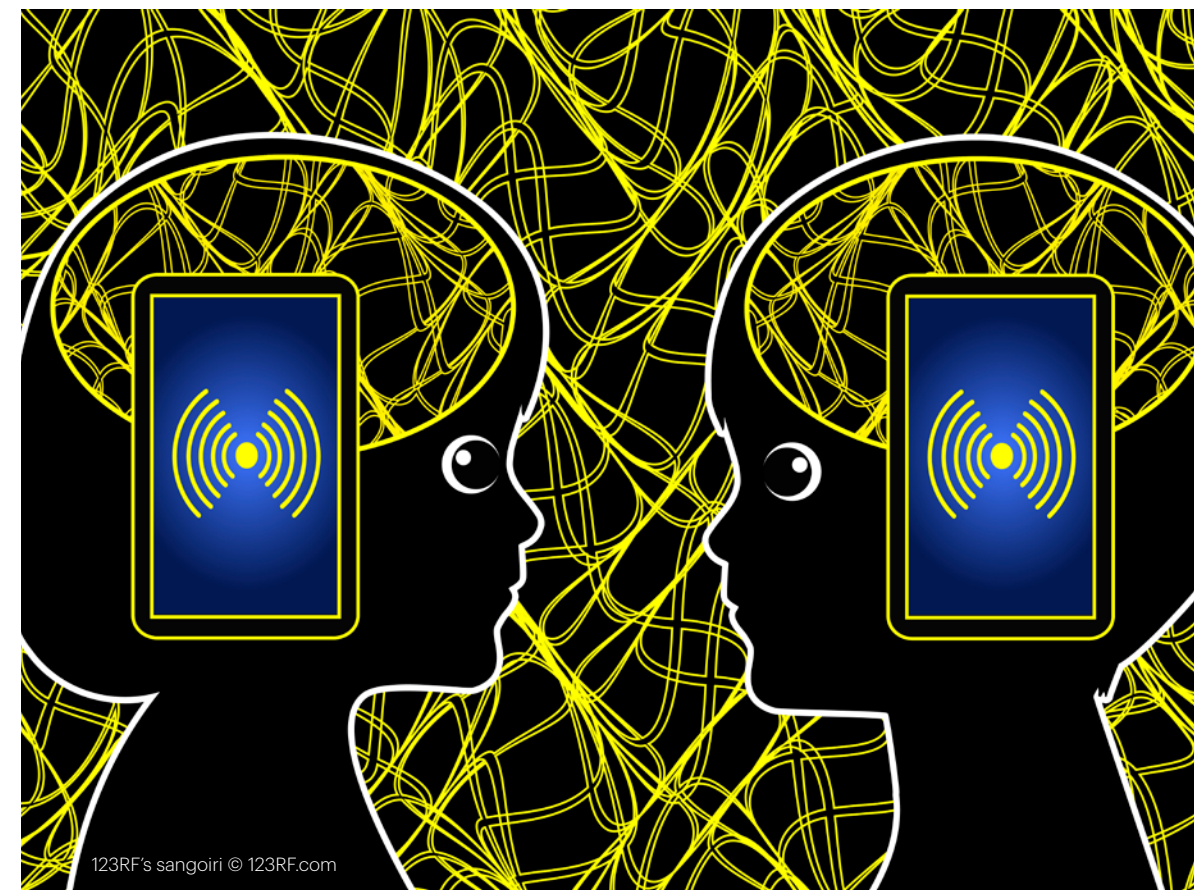
But we also don't have a lot of longitudinal data to look at the long-term effects of low levels of exposure. Mobile phones have only been popular for about 20 years and market penetration has only reached saturation in most western markets over the last five years or so.

While many of us are confident that the current data says the likelihood of digital devices giving us cancer is negligible, it's perhaps wise to also be open to the idea that we may not yet have a complete picture.

MYTH #4

Gaming leads to anti-social psychopaths and a shoot-to-kill mentality

This is an interesting one that has been researched quite extensively. When it comes to thorough, peer-reviewed research, there's a very large body of knowledge that suggests there is no causal link between violent video



games and the expression of violence. But it's also important to look at who is conducting and sponsoring the research. Many organisations have published research that strongly reflects their political and social agendas.

There's also plenty of research that suggests spending all your time online and not socialising face-to-face can have a behavioural impact.

The short answer is the development of real-world (the cool kids abbreviate this as IRL, or 'in real life') social skills requires practice. And that practice is hard to get looking at a screen and tapping on a keyboard.

MYTH #5

Our smartphones are making us dumber

Albert Einstein was well-known for forgetting seemingly important information such as his phone number. But that doesn't mean he wasn't a genius.

Many of us freely admit to not remembering our kids' phone numbers or remembering the directions to places we visit semi-regularly. Instead, perhaps we use the fast dial option on our smartphones or the GPS app to direct us along the best route.

Hopefully this doesn't mean we're getting less intelligent, but merely leaving room for more interesting information in our memories! But it's true that our digital devices are a distraction. Some research published during 2017 in *Psychology Today* found our ability to hold and process data improves if our smartphones are in another room.

So, if you want to concentrate better, it may be time to stow your smartphone elsewhere while you work.

MYTH #6

Artificial Intelligence and robots will make us all unemployed

Every profession will be impacted by 'the rise of the machines'. Some jobs will be done by automated software. But, once you get over the fact that many tasks will disappear from the work we do, the flip side of this is that we will have more time.

Many experts think this means humans will be able to focus on harder and more interesting problems to solve rather than spending their time on repetitive and boring tasks. In other words, we won't be unemployed – we'll be 'differently-employed'. ●

HAND TO MOUSE

For anyone working in the property and built environment fields the rise of the render has been hard to miss. But how are they created and what's the secret to getting them right?

Once upon a time, all architectural renderings were done by hand – in pencil, pastel or ink, if not acrylic or watercolour. Michaelangelo's drawings in red and black chalk, and Zaha Hadid's metres-long colour posters that described her early projects and the ideas behind them, are just two masterly examples.

But this century's rapid technological advancements have seen the exchange of traditional rendering tools for computer mouse and specialist drafting software. Consequently, most commercial and residential buildings are now planned, modelled and analysed onscreen with computer aided design (CAD) tools.

"I don't hand render," says Cykel Architecture director Stephen Geason. "However, I do use sketching, drawing and model-making as an integral part of the design process."

CAD in two or three dimensions

Computer rendering can serve two purposes. The first relates to planning and resolving an architectural design, while the second involves polishing a set of, usually three-dimensional (3D), renderings for a client presentation, bid or competition. As designs and plans advance, digital images typically move along a spectrum between simple, flat two-dimensional (2D) images at one end to rotatable, three-dimensional models, that approximate materials, lighting, interiors and building context, at the other.

The latter models, in their most finished and manipulated forms are termed 'photoreal' or realistic images, so named for being indistinguishable from photographs.

CAD advantage: accessibility

In the past, a small client group would have been presented with hand-drawn, scaled and coded 2D plans for an architectural proposal, and perhaps a 3D cardboard model.

OUTSOURCING 3D RENDERING – FOUR GOLDEN RULES

GOLDEN RULE 1 – *Provide the external renderer with complete information*

Submitted information should be at least 95 percent complete and final, and include accurate dimensions, floor plans, elevations and material schedule, with consistent naming conventions and drawings. These should be grouped logically in a series of folders (not just thrown into one).

GOLDEN RULE 2 – *Select a client group leader*

The outsourcing firm should nominate a project leader to act as the key decision-maker and point of contact for the external rendering team. This person coordinates thorough image reviews, feedback and approvals; i.e. from in-house interior, landscape and architecture perspectives.

GOLDEN RULE 3 – *Don't design by (outsourced) render*

Image review rounds (Binyan offers two) should be used to refine, tweak and edit the images or film, not to change a brief, update a design or introduce new information.

GOLDEN RULE 4 – *Nominate a chief art director*

The chief art director is often, but not necessarily, from the outsourced studio. They make critical decisions about images (rather than via inefficient decision-by-committee processes) and navigate away from classic 'render killers' such as: underexposed, saturated blue skies; over-wide angles; too high camera angles; and passé styling.

(Based on Binyan Studio advice to clients.)



Milswyn Road Sculpture © Binyan



"Today, computer tools make concepts very accessible for clients. A 3D render can be understood by a larger client or stakeholder group," says Nicky Adams of Terroir. "This is especially valuable when submitting a proposal when there won't be an opportunity to present." The immediacy of 3D renders also makes them perfect for marketing to lay audiences.

CAD advantage: enhanced communication and foolproofing

The relatively recent embrace of CAD tools and modelling is also attributable to their portability; digital plans can be accessed and simultaneously worked on by multidisciplinary team members, regardless of location, enabling more efficient dialogue and project development.

Further, inconsistencies or errors are more easily detected and rectified in 3D digital models, which represent architectural projects in a more literal way than traditional blueprints, with their colour and material coding, for example.

Choosing software

Many architects and building designers use different programs for 2D and 3D imaging. AutoCAD is, arguably, the most popular for 2D rendering, while ArchiCAD, Revit LT and SketchUp are some commonly used programs for 3D rendering, due to their more developed modelling systems.

"We use ArchiCAD in varied formats, SketchUp plus Cinema 4D and 3ds Max for a higher presentation level," says Geason. "Photoshop plays a large role in polishing the final product."

Meanwhile the international 3D rendering firm Binyan Studio primarily uses 3ds Max, V-Ray and Corona Renderer, and a suite of software applications, including Photoshop, to finish its images. "Autodesk (which produces AutoCAD, Revit LT and 3ds Max) is basically the Microsoft of the rendering world," says Andrei Dolnikov, Binyan's founder and CEO.

Photoreal rendering: an architect's perspective

Like most architectural firms, Cykel does a basic level of rendering in-house, and outsources when more polished, photorealistic 3D renders are called for.

"We supply photorealistic images at the end of the concept and design development stage if the project brief requires it," says Geason. "We outsource this task, as obtaining a professional realistic finish is a precise art requiring a high level of technical skill and expertise."

That said, Geason is restrained in his use of this project presentation style.

"3D rendering allows architects to present the essence of a project," he says. "However, when working with a client we try not to play the game of photorealistic images (too much) as it sets unrealistic expectations and has the capacity to limit the design solution." ●

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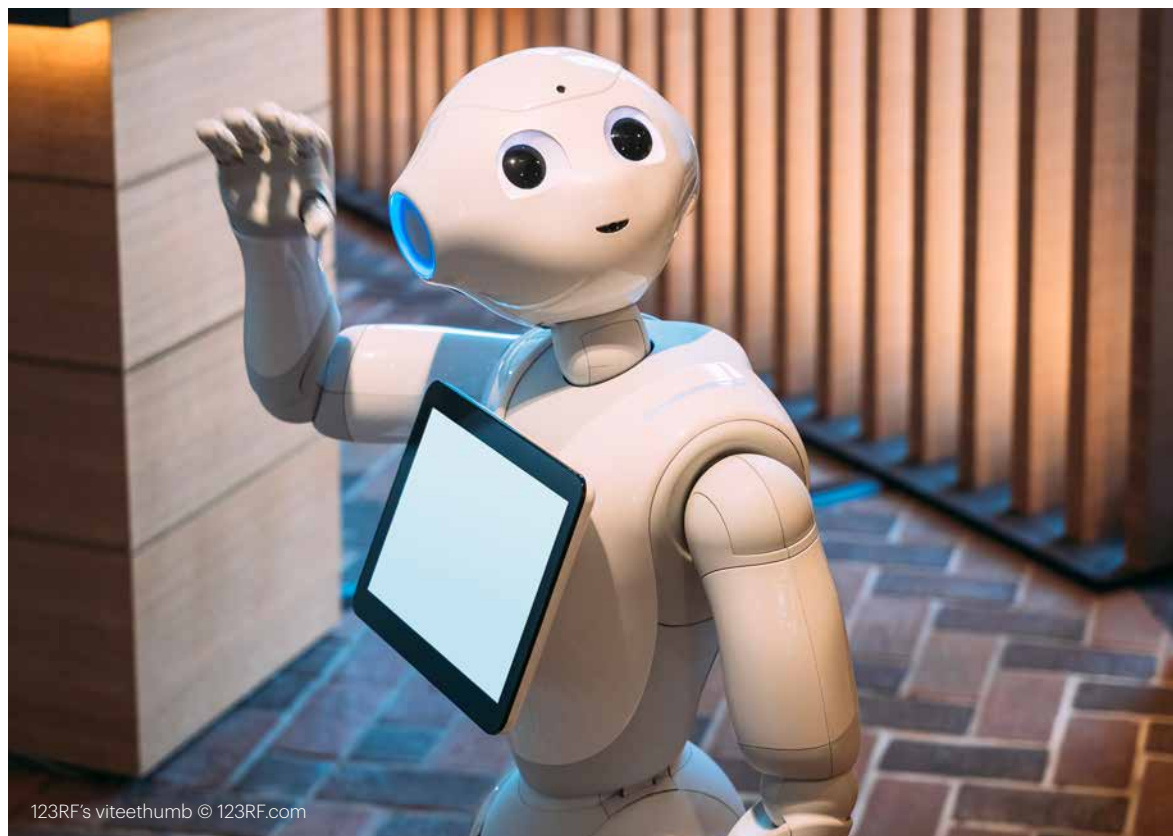
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HUMANISING THE ANDROIDS

In an attempt to reassure those who are wary of the rise of the machines – or perhaps just those who have seen The Terminator films one too many times – there is a growing trend to make robots in public spaces ‘friendly’.



123RF's viteethumb © 123RF.com

In the past, human interaction with robots was only ever a concept depicted in futuristic film and television shows, from 1960s sci-fi program *Lost in Space* to the likes of *Star Wars*, *Terminator* and *I, Robot*. These days, however, robot technology is becoming a part of our daily life, with every industry being impacted by robotics and automation. Robots are now even being introduced into public spaces. But, unlike their robot ancestors of the silver screen, these androids are designed to be more friendly than scary – and the response of the general public has been extremely positive.

In August 2017, Commonwealth Bank of Australia joined forces with property group Stockland, the Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN) and University of Technology Sydney, in order to research human-robot interaction. The result was ‘Chip’ – a 1.7-metre tall, 1000-kilogram social humanoid robot, developed by Spanish firm Pal Robotics. According to the Stockland website, Chip has a 12.1-inch touch screen with a sophisticated mix of cameras, lasers, ultrasounds, microphones and speakers, allowing it to recognise faces, converse with

people and answer questions. It’s also able to grasp and move objects and move around independently in the same way a person does.

Chip was first trialled in December 2017, at Merrylands Shopping Centre in Sydney’s western suburbs. The robot was used to greet customers upon arrival and also provide assistance with such things as directions and food sampling. In a media release, group executive and chief operating officer at Stockland, Michael Rosmarin says, “Our shoppers have already demonstrated their desire for a more tech-integrated experience through their adoption of new digital channels and tools. Properly leveraged, the capabilities of robots can enhance the overall customer experience.”

The world-leading Australian Centre for Robotic Vision, based at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT), is making enormous developments in robotic technologies with researchers succeeding in giving robots the vision, understanding and hand-eye coordination to solve problems. Recently, patients and visitors at Townsville Hospital were surprised to see a new staff member working on the wards – a robot called ‘Pepper’, the first of its kind to be trialled in the clinical setting of a public hospital. Pepper is the focus of a \$1.5 million social robotics research project, based at the Australian Centre for Robotic Vision, funded by the Queensland Government.

Pepper’s initial role was to act as concierge in the short stay unit, offering information such as how to pay for parking, the location of the nearest café, and hand washing or smoking policies. The robot was then to be moved to the main foyer, providing information to patients and visitors on influenza vaccination.

According to Belinda Ward, project manager Human Robotics, Australian Centre for Robotic Vision, Pepper is a type of ‘social robot’, designed primarily to engage with humans, rather than to perform physical tasks. “Pepper uses directional microphones to identify and turn towards sounds, as well as visual face detection to appear to make eye contact with a person who approaches or starts speaking to the robot,” says Ward. “Subjectively, Pepper is the most appealing and engaging of this class of robot; that’s probably a combination of the robot’s physical design, and its ability to convey attention and effect.”

Judy Morton, executive director Nursing and Midwifery, Townsville Hospital and Health Service, has seen overwhelmingly positive reactions to Pepper. “Initially there’s some hesitancy to talk, but curiosity wins out and there has been a real willingness to engage with Pepper,” she says. “There has undoubtedly been a novelty factor, but also engagement that has provided tangible, useable information to our patients and their families.”

While robotics in healthcare is still in its infancy, with the hospital being the first in Australia to trial Pepper, Morton recognises the importance of such developments. “It is vital that healthcare continues to look to innovate to meet the very real challenges of growing demand for our services,” she says. “If robotics can assist in meeting that demand, then it is something we will continue to investigate.”



Robot Pepper with enrolled nurse Anne Elvin and patient Rodney Whiting

According to Ward, we’re likely to see more of these types of robots as they become more sophisticated and capable. “Our research at QUT is looking at ways to enhance the capability of robots like Pepper so that they can interact with humans more effectively,” she says. “The trial in Townsville is important for learning about how people relate to a robot like Pepper in a hospital setting, and will inform future development of such robots, and how they can most effectively be deployed.”

Meanwhile, at Townsville Hospital, Pepper’s absence is certainly being felt. “It has been a pleasure having Pepper at the Townsville Hospital and we hope for another visit in the future,” says Morton. “I know the team and patients in our short stay unit will miss Pepper – we all wish Pepper the very best for the next chapter and adventure.” ●

LEADING THE CHARGE

How Rose Kelly's Leading Focus is helping real estate agencies effectively pave the way to success.

What's the story behind your career? Is your background in real estate?

My first career was in nursing, which progressed into nurse education, something I think came from my interest in teaching and helping to develop others. In 1984 I decided I wanted to try my hand in the business world and real estate fascinated me, perhaps because as a child I would tag along with my grandfather on his property deals.

I started my real estate career in Townsville and sold my first property in six days before an opportunity arose with the First National Group to participate in some training. By the late 80s I was a sales trainer across three states. A few years later I fell into property management and stayed there through choice; however, I never stopped learning and was always striving to find new and exciting opportunities.

When real estate training started to take off and the Real Estate Institute Queensland got heavily involved in training in the mid to late

1990s I was right there. We taught hundreds of property managers and brought real estate traineeships to Queensland. Through the 90s and early 2000s I walked a bit of a tightrope between family responsibilities and career, while raising two daughters on my own and running two businesses. This gave me a number of great opportunities in both acquisition and building a rent roll from nothing and I learned a lot about the challenges of owning a business.

How did you make the move into a coaching/advisory role?

After I sold my business in 2013, I was looking for the next thing and accepted what I thought may be a temporary gig for Real Estate Dynamics in Brisbane, in coaching and training. All of a sudden three years had passed and I decided to take a break, did some travelling and thought about how I could really start to add value to a business. I knew I wanted to develop my own brand, product and style and came up with the idea for Leading Focus.



When was Leading Focus established?

Leading Focus was officially born in late 2017, though we didn't really get off the ground until early 2018. Having said that, Leading Focus is really the accumulation of lifelong learnings from working in real estate, whether that's been business development, management or training and coaching over three decades.

How does a partnership between Leading Focus and the agent work?

I like that word because that is what I am trying to achieve – a partnership where my role changes and ultimately becomes redundant. Initially, there is significant work to really cut through the noise and clutter of a business to find out what exactly are the issues and, indeed, the opportunities. My role then is to release the opportunities – they come in the form of time, energy and funds in order to give the business owner the chance for greater profits, reinvestment, growth or just a better personal lifestyle. I call it Optimisation and Acceleration but, of course, it depends on what the business owner really wants for themselves and their business. Ultimately, I am guiding business owners on how to achieve what they want on their own.

I meet a lot of agents (often at events) or they are referred to me. Many want some assistance, but are unsure of what exactly they want or need. It's a dynamic industry right now and change is so rapid that what someone thinks they wanted a few months ago may look very different. My role is to find out what's happening and assist the owner in achieving it.

Does your work tend to be with individual agents or companies?

This really depends. I am not someone who will simply come into the business, restructure it, set up some systems and leave. While I can do that, and have done it, unless the leadership and culture are set up for success, then ultimately it will most likely fail. I work mostly with the business leader and/or a delegated manager on the overall business.

It's common for opportunities for transformation to be more easily identified and achieved in the rental department, though inevitably if I start in this part of the business the owner/leader will end up asking me to do the same with the sales department.

What do you find are the main challenges in the industry?

It is always dangerous, and to some extent difficult, to generalise. There are plenty of challenges, though, like anyone, what I see is naturally influenced by the work that I do. If I were a marketing consultant, then I might say that lead generation or brand awareness are the biggest challenges in a world where the average consumer is suffering from sensory overload. So I will answer this one as I see it:

First, there is massive inefficiency in most real estate businesses. Staffing costs are significant – often because of the poor logistics, poor adoption of technology, and inadequate training and management of teams. The volume of 'rework' that I uncover in many small businesses is frightening, but also exciting for those who are prepared to change, as this means plenty of scope for uplift in the business performance.

Second, there is a great confusion about what to do next to innovate, meet consumer expectations, keep up with our peers and stay ahead. There's no secret of the current 'race to market' approach from suppliers with newer and innovative technologies; in many cases 'game changers' are constantly being released. Many in the industry will miss these opportunities because they are not skilled, organised and running efficiently enough to adopt them. Others will miss them because they are not prepared to make a decision or make the changes that are necessary for adoption of new ways and some still believe that the current disruption is a lot of hype and that the industry will still essentially be the same in five years.

What would be your one top tip for a struggling real estate business?

Most people will know when they are struggling and it's usually defined by pain points such as financial challenges, team challenges or client challenges. The real challenge is finding out why this pain point has appeared and then [working out] how to fix it and prevent it. There are many people who can offer band aid approaches and a quick fix is certainly a feel good moment, but my top tip would be: don't stop at quick fixes. Take the time, get the assistance you need and really get to know your businesses – where the waste is, what the real capacity is and how to emerge from 'struggling' forever.

A real estate business should be both a wonderful commercial and lifestyle journey with many rewards. Sadly for many this continues to elude them and it is fixable. ●

“IT’S A DYNAMIC INDUSTRY RIGHT NOW AND CHANGE IS SO RAPID THAT WHAT SOMEONE THINKS THEY WANTED A FEW MONTHS AGO MAY LOOK VERY DIFFERENT.”

THE VESNA VIBE

An accomplished property manager with a background in law, Vesna Wells is driven by both people and performance.

Tony Wells may not have recognised it straightaway, but he struck gold the day he met his dynamic wife-to-be Vesna.

When seeking advice about his first property purchase in 1996, the Wellington-based ophthalmologist sought assistance from his then girlfriend, who boldly suggested that he not only buy the land, but also consider purchasing the section next door with a view to subdividing the enlarged allotment.

The decision to go ahead with the revised plan resulted in a double win for Tony Wells that saw him not only land a talented life partner, but also achieve a financial windfall.

"I did all the drawings of how it would work, negotiated the purchase of a 131-square metre parcel of land from the government department that owned the section and dealt with all of the official [aspects]," says Vesna Wells now. "I helped [Tony] make \$50,000 from that subdivision. He worked out I was good at making him money, rather than spending it, so he proposed."

Twenty-two years later and property is still what Wells does best. Having achieved her career goal of being a CEO before the age of 38, today she leads boutique consultancy Resolve Management, a New Zealand-based property management firm that specialises in property and its management within best practice and REINZ (Real Estate Institute of New Zealand) codes of conduct. Until very recently she was also head of property management at realestate.co.nz. After four and a half years "on a great journey" with the industry-owned website, she says it was important to make space to grow another aspect of Resolve's own business – the Advisory Service it provides to property managers on the Residential Tenancies Act 1986, its amendments and aligned legislation.

"This is an exciting area for us to grow given all the changes that are taking place in the industry," she says. "Our focus is to provide good, robust and practical advice to our industry colleagues."

Wells also takes overall responsibility for property and construction for the New Zealand Salvation Army, including its Fijian and Tongan portfolio.

A practising solicitor who specialises in the provision of pragmatic commercial advice on all property transactions and construction projects, Wells is also a qualified mediator and provides resolution services in property disputes.

In 2011, Wells added published author to her already impressive resumé after co-authoring the tome *Unit Titles – A Practical Guide to Understanding and Complying with the New Unit Titles Regime*. While reluctant to discuss topics or intended audience, she is currently penning her second book – due for publication by the end of the year – which she promises will be "a little more interesting" than the first.

As if that weren't enough, she is also something of a philanthropist, co-founding (with Tony) her own charity in 2004, which funds research into the treatment and prevention of eye disease. The dynamic Kiwi says she has always been "very goal-oriented" and thinks nothing of tackling new challenges to assist where needed.

The most recent manifestation of this occurred just last year when she and Tony sailed more than 1400 nautical miles to win the Round the North Island two-handed yacht race against 27 other boats. As if that challenge wasn't difficult enough, the achievement was all the more remarkable considering that she completed the bulk of the race with a broken collar bone after tripping over some ropes early in the piece.

"While it was sore, I didn't know it was fractured until we finished and four days later thought 'I should have an X-ray'. I received an additional trophy of a bottle of rum at the prize-giving from the organisers," she says. With no two days ever the same, Wells explains that, as with her love of sailing, it's the diversity of the people she encounters in her professional life that helps keep her focused.

"I have worked in the property management business since 2006, but have had a passion for property since a teenager that my mother inspired. I love what I do and have always worked with good people. As a team, we achieve so much together [and] I enjoy the



variety and the opportunity to grow in every aspect of what we do."

Wells believes her background in law has assisted her greatly when it comes to her day-to-day work in property management, with her critical thinking and problem-solving abilities proving the most useful.

"My understanding of the law and compliant nature assists us to ensure best practice is followed every time. I am also practical. So, while a lawyer, I understand the practicalities of doing business and the need to solve problems, as Wellington is a small place and reputation is everything."

Wells says the property management sector in New Zealand is vastly different to that of Australia. Across that side of the ditch there are many more 'do it yourself' landlords than professional property management companies.

With the once popular New Zealand dream of owning a property on a quarter-acre section with a white picket fence now out of reach for many, like Australia, New Zealand is now

encountering generations of Kiwis who will never be in a position to enjoy homeownership.

Compounding the issue is the fact that, though there has been a surge in property managers, the market across the Tasman remains unregulated. While there are calls for that to change – with the issue currently attracting significant airplay across New Zealand media – this means that it is not hard for established companies such as Resolve to attract business.

To ensure her staff remain as actively engaged in their work as she is, Wells has invested heavily in office technology, with much of the firm's software now cloud-based, allowing staff to work remotely.

Changing the office processes has had a raft of unexpected benefits, she adds.

"Our technology wins us business. We are early adopters and embrace the opportunity for change to make life easier for ourselves and our clients." ●

KILL THE LONE WOLF APPROACH

grow mines the thoughts of trailblazing business head and internationally renowned keynote speaker Peter Sheahan on what it takes to be an effective leader.



It took a couple of 50-degree days, an unsharpened hoe and a tonne of weeds for Peter Sheahan to learn about good business practice.

In fact, the then 14-year-old came away with two life-changing decisions from his first paid position scrubbing weeds in the cotton fields of Bourke, northern New South Wales. The first was that he quite liked the notion of working

for reward. The second was that, no matter how alluring having cash in his back pocket proved, he had no intention of returning.

Instead the self-proclaimed “average” student chose to turn his life around, studying hard to work his way up from the lowest 25th percentile in the class to become the school dux within just two years.

Driven by the desire to make his work “more than just a job”, today the 38-year-old is the

founder and group CEO of Karrikins Group, a business growth consultancy, which has 120 staff in more than 24 cities across 15 countries. Counting leaders from companies as diverse as Apple, Microsoft, Hyundai and Pfizer as clients, Sheahan has had seven books published and has delivered more than 2500 keynote speeches in 20 different countries. Named by the National Speakers Association as one of the 25 most influential speakers in the world, he is also the youngest member of its Hall of Fame.

A keynote speaker at this year’s AREC (Australasian Real Estate Conference) event, Colorado-based Sheahan believes the real estate and property management sector is in the middle of a monumental change and this can only be good news for those seeking a growth enabled culture.

He says traditionally real estate and property management has been built on an “eat what you kill” mentality. This approach worked well when the task involved was one-to-one connections built on knocking on doors, showing properties and building relationships.

But now, Sheahan argues, the need to leverage data and analytics and bring more sophisticated insights to the sector has seen team-based environments flourish.

“If you look at the people that are producing the highest results in real estate, most of them are taking a team-oriented approach and not just a rogue warrior approach. So, understanding division of labour, delegation and building culture is the secret to a high performing culture in [this industry].”

While he believes leader boards, track detail and volume still have their place, Sheahan argues that sometimes those working in the industry get disconnected from the real value they are bringing – that is alleviating stress, helping people to protect themselves in the transaction, managing their emotional state, identifying the right property and making sure the price is fair.

“We can get obsessed with our own performance and forget the real contribution and impact that we make. I think understanding the team-based approach, but also orienting around value and contribution, is important.”

Likewise, the issue of entitlement – particularly when it comes to entrepreneurs, CEOs and business owners – also plays a part in effective leadership, he argues.

Many business owners think that because they’ve managed to carve out a competitive advantage and have created a successful

business and a scalable model behind it, that they’re entitled to rest on their laurels, irrespective of the market and changes in the technology, he says.

“Once things change they get [annoyed] about being disrupted. I like to say that everyone likes a free market until they’ve got competition. You don’t have a right to creating a competitive advantage once and keeping it. You have to consistently evolve and recreate that advantage.

“On the other side of entitlement is that we get into these positions and we think, all of a sudden, we don’t have to do the hard work that got us there in the first place. Effective leadership requires that you do different things, but it doesn’t and shouldn’t come with a sense of entitlement about your role and who you are.”

Sheahan says while there is plenty of research that shows the introverted CEO is just as effective as the extroverted CEO, one area in which leaders across all sectors sometimes struggle is that of innovation.

When the world is predictable and not changing very much, innovation is overrated, but when it’s changing a lot this can often prove the lifeblood of a business, he claims.

Sheahan says while most in the sector would find it difficult to thrive without being willing to innovate, there are plenty of industries – and real estate is one of them – where the application of innovation is as valuable in “the basics” as it is in creating new business models.

“You’ve still got to prospect, you’ve still got to generate new listings and you’ve still got to sell property. They’re the mechanics of the model. If you can innovate in the way you use social media to prospect, if you can innovate in the way you use data and analytics to close your listing, then that’s innovation when its applied to the foundations of the business model. Sometimes we get caught thinking that innovation is about throwing the model out and starting afresh, and that’s not been my experience.”

While arguing complacency and the assumption that the world won’t change is the reason many businesses fail, Sheahan says leaders who hold too tightly to the reins, can be equally as destructive to their company’s chance of success.

“We’re so worried that the people around us are not going to do their job well that we hold on to far more activity and responsibility than we should. That not only destroys your ability to scale, but it burns you out and robs your team of the opportunity to grow and show their own excellence.” ●

Photograph: Ashlee Burke



THE ART OF OUTSOURCING

If you want something doing... don't always do it yourself, says Aimee Engelmann. Sometimes the best person for the job doesn't even work in your organisation.

It's no secret that real estate businesses have faced rising pressures and demands in recent years. Today, 20 percent of agencies are struggling to break even, while the stress placed on property managers is rising, leading to higher rates of attrition. The average full-time property manager deals with over 100 properties, with this number trending upwards. As a result, many Australian real estate businesses are turning to a relatively new player in the game to remain competitive and profitable: outsourcing.

Aimee Engelmann, CEO of Australian outsourcing company Beepo, is a strong advocate of the practice, having experienced the benefits it can bring to local companies first-hand. She was inspired to start Beepo in late 2013 during her tenure as the owner of a marketing agency, where she successfully combined talent from the Philippines with her existing staff in Australia. As a result, she developed an interest in learning how overseas workers can enhance the operations of Australian companies. She then sold her marketing agency and founded Beepo to assist other businesses in navigating the world of outsourcing.

The real estate sector is one of the fastest growing industries when it comes to outsourcing various tasks across the business spectrum, having increased its outsourcing services by a massive 190 percent since 2012. So, how can outsourcing assist a real estate agency? One of the key ways is by providing a major increase in efficiency. By delegating often mundane, process-driven tasks to outsourced workers, Australian staff can turn their focus onto building and maintaining stronger client relationships among other high-value revenue-generating activities. Additionally, easing the workload of Australian staff can assist with job satisfaction, which directly addresses the issue of high property manager attrition rates.

"If you can get someone in the Philippines supporting for things like chasing arrears, processing a tenant application or checking databases to look for tenancy issues in the past, the [Australian] property manager can then focus on relationships with landlords and [growing] the rent roll for that business," Engelmann says.

Increased efficiency also leads to a greater customer experience. Outsourced staff can assist in processing tenant applications after hours, therefore enabling property managers to come to a decision more quickly than ever – and without spending hours sifting through the paperwork themselves. As a result, property managers who

work alongside outsourced staff are going from spending 90 minutes on a tenancy application to just three to seven minutes.

Another obvious benefit of outsourcing is cost savings. By outsourcing administrative tasks, real estate agencies can save as much as \$84,000 per year per position, which can then be reinvested back into the growth of the company. Outsourcing can also be extremely useful for smaller businesses that may not have the financial resources to hire in Australia. Opting for an outsourced team means that small companies can get the help they need while providing a high level of customer service. Since the cost of outsourcing is variable rather than fixed, companies can reap the benefits of a more flexible labour structure and save thousands of dollars by only hiring staff when they're needed.

While the advantages of outsourcing are certainly immense, there's undoubtedly some anxiety from Australian business owners taking a portion of their work offshore. After all, won't hiring staff outside of the country lead to a shrinking economy and fewer jobs for Australians? According to Engelmann, Beepo's focus isn't on taking jobs away from the Australian economy, but rather equipping businesses with the resources and tools they need to promote steady, sustainable growth in a global landscape – which, in turn, leads to more positions for Australians.

"With the clients that we work with, we typically do not see a reduction in their Australian workforce – in fact, we see the opposite. We're seeing trends where we're helping businesses be more efficient and productive and use their resources more effectively, and they actually grow."

As for the future of outsourcing, Engelmann predicts that the industry will see a rise in providers specialising in a niche. "There is so much growth in the outsourcing industry, and the smart players recognise that the more they niche, the more value they can provide. It's all about helping a business get value really quickly, and that requires deep industry knowledge."

Alongside the advent of AI, automation and cloud technology, outsourcing has brought about a new wave of change in the workforce. Rather than spelling doom for the national economy, outsourcing can help real estate agencies achieve unprecedented growth while cultivating a generation of highly skilled and professional agents and property managers on our home turf. ●



THE CIMINO CONNECTION

He has only been at the family firm for a short time, but when it comes to making an impact Michael Cimino likes to ensure no stone is left unturned, as grow discovers.

Photography: Elleni Toumpas

“ABOUT TO CELEBRATE ITS 10TH BIRTHDAY, IRE IS NOW CONSIDERED ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL BOUTIQUE REAL ESTATE AGENCIES IN MELBOURNE.”

If property investment is a numbers game then Michael Cimino is superbly positioned to lead the field.

Having spent much of his career as a financial services professional with ‘big four’ practices, he was persuaded to leave his high-profile role at a nationally recognised superannuation consultancy just under 12 months ago to head the property management division of burgeoning Melbourne business, Inner Real Estate (IRE).

The move to join parents Joe and Sandra and brother Anthony at IRE was a natural fit for the qualified chartered accountant, who purchased his first property fresh out of university and who still maintains an active sideline in small business accountancy and auditing.

The seat in his new office had barely been warmed when the busy 30-year-old, together with wife Amal and three-year-old fur baby Milo, welcomed their first child – daughter Abigail, now aged seven months.

“Unfortunately, now the dog plays second fiddle,” he admits.

Cimino’s reasons for entering the family business were twofold. Not only did he want to ensure that Joe’s succession plan was played out, but he was also looking to help IRE achieve better operational efficiencies by way of a new technology-focused growth strategy.

He credits his background in change transformation as the reason he has adapted quicker than most to the new professional (and perhaps even the personal) responsibilities expected of him.

Cimino first entered the work force as a 14-year-old when he secured a role as a ‘checkout chick’ at Coles supermarkets, a position that sustained him from his second year at high school right through to the end of his tertiary studies. He credits this with also playing a significant part in the way in which he approaches his work.

“At Coles it was very much about the process and the way you think. It’s a very repetitive role by nature, so for me it became about doing it the most efficient way I possibly could, but also about making the experience as enjoyable as possible. You don’t get paid a lot of money and it’s not an easy job to do, but you’re exposed to all sorts of people. At times it can be quite enjoyable, but at other times it’s pretty demanding.”

In many ways, he argues, this mirrors the challenges his father initially faced in getting the IRE business off the ground.

Having founded several start-ups previously, Joe Cimino launched IRE by renting a small space in Noble Park in Melbourne’s south-eastern suburbs before recruiting a part-time receptionist and moving into the city into a 25-square metre third floor office in St Kilda Road.

About to celebrate its 10th birthday, IRE is now considered one of the most successful boutique real estate agencies in Melbourne, with a team of around 16 management, sales and administration staff, around 750 properties under management and an average of 60 sales per year.

But while Cimino credits his father’s “business nous and skill at identifying gaps in the market” for their firm’s success, it is made all the more remarkable given the amount of time the Ciminis must spend in each other’s company.

“The four of us sit in different parts of the business and have very defined responsibilities, so there’s very little crossover,” he says. “I think that’s what makes [our dynamic] work. The way we operate is that Joe, as the founder, is the managing director of the business and the go-to person for any problems. I look after the PM (property management) part of the business, my younger brother Anthony looks after real estate sales and Mum is in charge of accounts.”

Cimino says the family has always been close knit with the bond between the brothers particularly close.

Always having someone to bounce ideas off is something he relishes, while knowing there is less room for misunderstandings also helps foster a stronger team culture, he says.

“My brother and I have always had a pretty close relationship. We’re happy to give each other feedback and speak our minds; however, brutal that may be because we know that it’s not going to be taken personally. I can call him all sorts of names and then five minutes later it will all be forgotten and we can go and get a coffee. It’s definitely a different environment when your colleagues aren’t related to you and you’re forced to bite your tongue a little more.”

Cimino, who also runs a second business providing mentoring and financial services to small businesses, says while there are numerous differences between the demands of the financial and real estate sectors – particularly when it comes to the time spent training and “knowledge building” – his experience also means he is able to bring a new approach when it comes to the level of service offered to IRE’s clients.

“Obviously we tick the service box because Joe’s mantra is ‘above all else service the client, because they are the most important thing’, which they are. But I’ve been able to bring in that next layer and that’s by looking after [our clients’] investments in the best way that we possibly can, whether that be offering them the best returns, maximising their investment or helping them make better decisions in terms of the choices they make with their investments.”

He has also extended this focus to incorporate the company’s best asset, its staff, by making it easier for employees across all areas of the business to work remotely. Cimino says while Joe built a brilliant business, it was built “the way he knows and technology

wise that wasn’t necessarily the way things would be built today”.

While Joe and Sandra have utilised Rockend’s REST product for more than two decades, Cimino says recent months have seen the company invest significantly in its software architecture, including incorporating PropertyTree into its backend operations.

“We decided to make the change obviously because it suited the mobile build, but also because it’s a trusted brand and, in my opinion, it has the best quality product offering when it comes to trust accounting software that is cloud-based. We’ve also changed over to one of its connected property apps called Inspection Manager. Again, it was just about efficiency and replicating the desktop on their mobiles. It now allows, for example, our property managers to do inspections properly and update as they’re doing them.”

With the first of his major tasks now implemented, Cimino, who concedes to spending a lot of time on the road, says he likes to spend his weekends prioritising his family and enjoying the new arrival.

Having added the purchase of a new home to his recent list of accomplishments, Cimino has also discovered a new skill to add to his CV – that of would-be builder.

While he and Amal received some help from specialised tradies, they completed much of the renovation work themselves, helping him develop a new passion in the process. Cimino says he now celebrates the end of his working week by strapping on a tool bag and going out to build up a frame or redo a bathroom.

“Unfortunately, property management is a little like accounting in that you never get the opportunity to stand back at the end of the day like a carpenter would and say, ‘I created that’. It can sometimes be a very thankless job. But I find that through building things, painting a pergola or building a dog kennel, that’s my release.” ●



A PASSION FOR PROPERTY

The term ‘influencer’ may have a different meaning by today’s definition but, where the real estate industry is concerned, Les Hoverd is a classic example of influencing in its true sense.

For around 24 years, Les Hoverd has worked in almost all aspects of the real estate business, from marketing to auctioning, from sales to property management. He has developed a valuable set of skills that have enabled him to start two companies of his own and to nurture the talents of those working with him, pursuing a similar career path.

After spending almost a decade in the UK in the early ‘90s, Hoverd returned to Australia to find a new challenge. He had always worked in sales and service type roles, so real estate seemed like a natural progression. He spent a few years working for different real estate brands learning the essentials, before setting up his own property management business in 2000. Over the following years he developed his own personal property portfolio, as well as a separate independent sales company, further enhancing his existing property management offering.

Both companies have their offices just outside of Auckland city and each has been able to grow and develop, offering a range of services that meet the needs of their local market. Hoverd has done some personal development himself, completing an Executive MBA degree at Auckland University. This extra level of knowledge is essential for him to provide the guidance and leadership his team needs, to continue to deliver excellent customer service, outstanding results and new opportunities.

Of all the things in his businesses there are to be excited about, Hoverd is most passionate about service delivery. He can easily make the connection to the client experience and as such is always encouraging his team to focus on their clients’ needs, finding solutions for whatever challenges they may present. Looking after clients in this way not only enhances the client experience, it also allows Hoverd’s team to

continue to evolve and develop, with each new challenge presenting opportunities for learning and change.

Constant evolution has been important for the business over the years as Hoverd has seen many changes and anticipates more in the years ahead. Professional training and certification are something he sees will have a positive impact in the future. “The industry here in New Zealand has become a lot more controlled and there’s more legislation around what we can and can’t do,” he says. “For example, we know that, pretty soon, property managers are going to have to be registered, which will require them to gain a qualification. This is not currently the case, so it will be great for the industry, as it will tidy up service delivery and standards.”

In line with changes such as these, Hoverd and his team are striving to ensure they have all the tools in place to be able to stay on top of their game. “We see a lot of positive stuff happening in our industry, particularly in New Zealand. The growth opportunities for us are massive, so we need to be sure of what we’re doing and things like premium customised software help us to do that.”

Hoverd has noticed a distinct swing towards technology over the last five to eight years. “There are now all manner of different products to help us become more efficient and productive, and ultimately to provide that ‘wow’ experience we want to deliver to our clients.” One of the biggest advantages he believes any business can have is by making the switch from a desktop- or web-based software to a cloud-based one. This is particularly important for real estate teams where many staff are working away from the office, taking details from clients, fielding calls with questions that need answers and so on.

Where previously a team member may have to return to the office numerous times a day to get information or log data, with cloud-based solutions everyone is able to add and access the latest data in real time. "Our property management team can operate from anywhere now – from the office, home or the car," says Hoverd. "This allows for much faster response times to any queries that come in, be they from tenants, landlords or contractors, because we have all the information we need, on our mobiles and other devices."

This kind of innovation is what Hoverd believes is transforming the industry. With other companies slower to adopt new technology, he says that those still working with desktop solutions will soon find themselves at a disadvantage, as clients demand a higher, more modernised level of service. "We were on a desktop version for about 12 years before that provider moved us across to their upgraded cloud-based version," he explains. "We soon found out they were ill-prepared and not ready to provide us with the level of service we needed from a cloud management program. It was so bad, we were losing clients, so we had no choice but to look for a new product immediately."

This is where Property Tree software came in. Hoverd says even simple things, like instant reporting from property inspections, changed the game for him and his team. By providing landlords with real-time feedback about the status of their property, they were not only able to deliver a higher standard of service, but were also able to get more out of their day without being dragged down by antiquated admin tasks. "Features such as the owners' portal are game changers for us," says Hoverd. "Owners can log in, review information about their property, their tenants, rent payments, statements and so on. Being able to access so much information, any time they like, really gives us the point of difference from our competitors."

Hoverd's adaptability to innovation and change is a rare quality – one much needed for those wanting to achieve continued success in an ever-changing world. It's also what sets him apart from the competition and secures his future as a key influencer in the New Zealand property industry. ●

**"THE INDUSTRY HERE
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FAMILY TREE

Ristic Real Estate's Melodi Brown reveals her experiences of working with family and why the business will never switch its software from Rockend again.

The story of Ristic Real Estate is a story of family. What began with the four Ristic family members – Mills, Fusun, Kaan and Melodi (Brown) – working from their Epping home back in 2003 has, over the last 15 years, expanded into a business that's now bursting at the seams. "We recently moved into a bigger office because we outgrew our previous place," says Brown with a laugh.

While there's no doubt that Ristic is now more than simply a small family real estate business, this sense of closeness and community has remained at the forefront of the company's ethos. "Dad has worked in the real estate industry for most of his life," explains Brown. "My brother Kaan and I grew up seeing just how passionate he was about the industry, which I'm sure played a huge part in both of our decisions to follow him into the business."

The Ristics have learned to lean on everyone's strengths, something that has no doubt played a part in their success. "Dad and Kaan are both company directors, Mum is director of property management and I'm responsible for trust accounting," says Brown. "It means I'm the one making payments, taking care of payroll and using the majority of the software."

The software is a topic Brown speaks about with passion and experience. After initially signing up with Rockend in 2010, the team at Ristic made the decision to switch to a competitor earlier this year. As Brown says, they

learned the hard way and lasted just over a month before switching back.

"We chose Rockend because it was a modern software system, simple to use and easy to integrate," she says. "It was brilliant when we had a smaller portfolio, but once we went over 500 properties we decided we had to upgrade to a cloud-based system. We made the mistake of trying out a competitor instead of moving straight to PropertyTree and, I have to admit, it was a massive fail."

"The biggest issue we found was the support. Coming from Rockend, where we had fantastic support in place, we found ourselves working with a company where we couldn't call anyone if we had an issue. The protocol was that we had to send an email and it could take three or four days to get a response. We stayed with them for around four weeks before contacting Rockend and asking to switch us back. We spent a month integrating all our data back into the original system before being moved over to Property Tree in April of this year."

"We've never looked back. Cloud-based has been so much better for us as a business because we can access everything we need from wherever we are in the world. I was in Fiji earlier this year and suddenly had to do something for a client and it was easy. It's great because not only can we now work on the move, it also means I don't have to time my holidays around certain work dates – I can go on holiday at any time of the month!" ●



CIRCADIAN RHYTHMS AND ARCHITECTURE

How can architects embrace our sleep/wake cycle and strengthen our connection to nature?



123RF's kekoka © 123RF.com

Indoor/outdoor living has become increasingly popular in Australia with many homes offering a relaxed and easy flow from inside to out. This certainly makes the most of natural light and beautiful surrounds; however, many are now looking more closely at this connection to nature and the benefits it provides. While designing more sustainable and environmentally friendly spaces is well-recognised, architects are now taking into account our natural in-built cycles or circadian rhythms, in order to make spaces as nurturing and enlivening as possible.

Circadian rhythms basically refer to the physiological processes of plants and animals that occur in a 24-hour period. This is why we find it hard to sleep during the day, yet at night we start to wind down. Generally, these cycles are in-built; however, they can also be influenced by outside forces, such as light and temperature. Disruption to these circadian cycles has been known to cause a range of diseases; for example, according to the US-based Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota (www.mayoclinic.org), there is an emerging connection between circadian rhythm interruption and type 2 diabetes mellitus. So, it makes sense to consider our natural cycles when it comes to design – we can create spaces that are not only a pleasure to be in, but also beneficial to our overall health.

According to architect and sustainability expert Caroline Pidcock, today there is a greater understanding of what sustainable and good design is about. "It's not just about energy and water efficiency, it's actually about how you create desirable, healthy and regenerative spaces," she says. "As people better understand how we exist in spaces, there are a number of issues that are arising and one of them is circadian rhythms."

Pidcock is extremely focused on an area known as biophilic design, originally introduced by Edward O Wilson through his book *Biophilia*. "Biophilic design is about love of life, it's about connecting in a meaningful and multisensory way with the natural environment," says Pidcock. "Part of this is the natural light patterns, which are completely variable. They change through the day and through the seasons; our body is wired to pick up on these impulses and respond to them."

Pidcock believes that circadian rhythms are very much linked to physical as well as psychological well-being, so having those rhythms disrupted by not getting those changes in light patterns and being exposed to concentrated light at night – for example, through screens – can have a detrimental effect on our health. "A lot of people

are investing in getting their office built because they want to create a healthy environment," she says. Pidcock herself loves being outdoors, so this has long influenced her work. "I've always, through my architecture, wanted to connect people between inside and out," she says.

Architect Tone Wheeler, also Adjunct Professor of Architecture at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) and President of the Australian Architecture Association, is extremely passionate about sustainable design. However, Wheeler believes that it's more beneficial to design for diversity, as it's not possible to create one design to suit everyone's specific lifestyle or circadian rhythm. "The thing about circadian rhythms is that it's almost individualised – people have different rhythms, different lifestyles," he says. "The idea that circadian rhythms give some kind of rhythm or standardisation to things because it occurs like 'clockwork' is completely at odds with the way in which the diverse Australian population lives its life."

According to Wheeler, approximately only 15 percent of houses in Australia are designed by architects for their owners. This means that many homes are more generally designed to suit a wide range of people or different types of families. The designs don't take into account how people actually live or how many family members are living together, which can require a different sort of home. "We're now designing multigenerational homes, so you have grandparents, parents and children all under the one roof," he says.

The other factor to consider when creating liveable, nurturing spaces is external temperatures. According to Wheeler, architects are using considerably more glass than the average home's 25 percent to capture light and beautiful views. While this creates a connection with the outdoors, it also makes heating the space difficult. "Architects are quite commonly designing homes where 50 percent of the living areas is glass," he says. "It's impossible to make that comfortable in winter."

So, while we need to create spaces that are connected to natural light changes and allow us to experience nature, we also have to take into consideration how we individually live our lives and the many external factors that can influence our day-to-day. "We would be better to look at the idea that houses have multiple different people living in them," says Wheeler. "It's a conceit to imagine that we design a home for one single family or one single person." ●

DESIGNING INNOVATION INTO YOUR DAY

Dr Amantha Imber practises what she preaches when it comes to unlocking creativity in her working life.

One of the most crucial elements of good design is innovation, but it can be challenging to fully embrace it into corporate culture. This is where innovation psychologist Dr Amantha Imber's expertise comes in.

Imber is most passionate about the topics of innovation and productivity, and how these are key to designing innovation into our day. The way we approach our daily activities has a significant impact on our productivity, which in turn feeds into our capacity to be motivated and inspired, to achieve and strive for more.

According to Imber, many of us suffer from our own limitations – we allow ourselves to be stressed by particularly challenging situations, when we don't feel we have the necessary skills or resources to complete them. Conversely, when a project on which we're working isn't challenging enough, we allow boredom to sabotage our capacity to be productive. Research has shown that we spend more than 50 percent of our working lives in one or both of these two states. Imber's belief is that there is a sweet spot somewhere in between them, where innovation can truly come to life; the key to finding it lies in personal creativity.

Although it is often thought that people either 'are creative' or they are not, scientific studies have found that all of us have an innate creativity, but some of us are more likely to access it than others. Imber's theory is that to become a better innovator we simply need to unlock our creativity through finding challenges. In her TEDx talk earlier this year, she broke this concept down. "When we feel challenged, we are 67 percent more likely to be innovative. But it's not just about finding any old challenge, we need to seek out that challenge that is just right for us." Without the right skills, a difficult challenge becomes stressful and without the right challenge, a simple task becomes boring.

Innovation performance is dependent on finding that sweet spot – the place where we feel excited and interested in the challenge, but also have enough skills and resources to achieve what is needed. It's in here that we can not only rise to the challenge, but also find motivation to generate new ideas, ways of doing things and alternative solutions we may not have previously considered. In these instances, we achieve greater skill development, because we are put in a situation where we can push ourselves to do more.

Since starting her company Inventium in 2007, Imber and her team have helped dozens of companies and countless individuals access their creativity and take more innovative approaches in their life. "I left advertising because, while I found the work interesting intellectually, I found it a poor fit ethically," explains Imber. "Inventium combined my passions for creativity and science, using the latest findings from psychology, neuroscience and management science. So now we are able to really focus on how individuals and managers can become better innovators."

The challenge in the corporate environment of course is harnessing individual and personal creativity in ways that can benefit the company as a whole and vice versa. The obvious question therefore is whether corporate innovation comes from the top down or the employees up? "It has to start with the top down, otherwise it is just a scattergun approach to innovation, if the leaders are not supporting it," explains Imber. "But bottom up innovation is essential too – making sure employees know how they can contribute to their company's efforts in driving innovation."

One of the strategies Imber has utilised to be more innovative in her own life has been to diversify her career choices. By building her passions within the framework of her own intellectual, creative and ethical needs, she has been able to create an innovative work experience for herself. This in turn has become the foundation for her work – helping others to do the same.

One example of this is her highly rated podcast *How I Work*. Imber started the podcast as a way to disseminate great ideas and strategies from high-profile entrepreneurs among a wider audience. Something many of Imber's podcast guests have in common is a focused approach, which she was fascinated to learn more about as she did more and more interviews. "Most of us go through the day in a haphazard or reactive way," she explains. "Everyone I've spoken to on the podcast so far thinks very deliberately and thoughtfully about their actions and the structure of their day."

A lot of what Imber does to spread ideas through Inventium involves public speaking, writing articles and books, and consulting. "Podcasting gives me an immediate opportunity to talk to amazing guests and learn how they harness their creativity to stay productive and continue to innovate." ●

THE ONLY WAY IS UP

With population numbers heading ever upward, Australia is suddenly facing a crisis of school facilities. With limited space available for new building, are vertical schools the answer?

THE DEVELOPMENT OF VERTICAL SCHOOLS ARE ALREADY UNDERWAY ALL AROUND AUSTRALIA, INCLUDING:

SYDNEY

- Parramatta Public School: four storeys, scheduled to open 2019
- Arthur Phillip High School: 17 storeys, scheduled to open 2019
- Surry Hills High School: 14 storeys, planned completion 2020
- St Patrick's Cathedral College: five storeys, scheduled to be open by 2020

MELBOURNE

- Haileybury City Campus: 10 storeys, opened January 2017
- South Melbourne Primary: five storeys, opened 2018
- Richmond High School: four storeys, scheduled to open 2019

BRISBANE

- Inner City North State Secondary College: seven storeys, planned completion 2020

ADELAIDE

- Adelaide Botanic High School: seven storeys, scheduled to open 2019

NEWCASTLE

- West End: 12 storeys, construction to begin 2018

South Melbourne Primary School, architect: Hayball, photography: Dianna Snape

With significant population growth in Australia forecast – and especially in the capital cities – it is projected that, in the next 10 years, enrolments across all sectors of the Australian education scene will surge astronomically. The result is our major cities are crying out for new schools. The Independent Schools Council of Australia reports that, following the data collected and projected by the ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics), we will need more than 1500 new schools to accommodate the influx of new school-goers.

Melbourne is the country's fastest growing capital city and it is expected that, in the next five years, the number of school-aged children will swell dramatically.

Much of Australia's education system is already at breaking point, with many schools stretched beyond their limit, either at capacity or over. In Wyndham, Tarneit College – a school 25 kilometres west of Melbourne's CBD – opened five years ago with 250 students on its books. In a few short years, this number has ballooned to almost 1600. Sydney is enduring a similar conundrum. Earlier this year, 9News reported Sydney's public education system to be "at crisis point", with figures revealing hundreds of schools

at or exceeding student capacity levels. "NSW Education enrolment data for 2018, released to 9News under freedom of information laws, reveals 636 schools in NSW have between 100 percent and 150 percent of student places filled," the news program reported.

"Despite school ovals, car parks and play areas being filled with demountables and temporary classrooms set up in halls, libraries and gymnasiums, there are more kids than official places in many suburbs of Sydney."

The answer?

As we speed headlong into a future that will include more Australians than ever before, where student growth is outstripping the capacity of the major cities' schools, change and planning for this crowded future needs to be addressed immediately. And in doing so it seems that vertical facilities, particularly within the inner cities, will be the way of the future.

A change in a building's structure brings a change in the building's function. School blueprints will require reassessment of the use of the institutions' grounds and their buildings – for when faced with a school that spreads up rather than out, what happens to typical school components?

Is this the end of multiple sports fields, jungles of playground equipment and separate structures for different year levels, libraries, halls, gymnasiums and canteens? Will these facilities no longer exist in schools anymore?

Unlikely. It simply means they will be incorporated into the grounds in different ways. Victorian Education Minister James Merlino claims that this is the future for schools in Melbourne's inner-city suburbs. "The land lots are smaller, so [we] need to go vertical to cater for the student numbers," he told ABC News. "We need to accommodate 90,000 additional students over the next five years – it's just incredible enrolment growth."

The design of these vertical schools will be extremely important in ensuring that their students want for nothing that traditional school grounds provide. Australia, meet the all-in-one school facility.

There are many design and logistical considerations for vertical schools, says Vinh Le, electrical project engineer at Wood & Grieve Engineers.

Le worked on both the Haileybury and Prahran vertical schools, and he told the Property Council of Australia (PCA), "Vertical

schools squeeze everything – sports facilities, teaching space and administrative functions – into one building.

"We are used to single- or two-storey buildings with football fields and playgrounds outside. In this environment, you don't need to allow for air-conditioning, for example. But that doesn't work in a vertical school, as [these facilities are now housed indoors and] temperatures need to be carefully managed in both winter and summer."

Good design of these new schools, from the very bones right through to the final fitout, is essential. Green spaces for children are important, especially for the current and new generations who spend much more time indoors (or distracted by devices) than any generations that have come before.

Le says, "At Prahran, students will have access to an outdoor learning area and gymnasium on level four, terrace balconies overflowing with greenery and an open atrium at the centre to let in lots of light."

Similarly, Haileybury's campus houses 2500 square metres of outdoor recreation space on its third and fourth levels, and it's apparently a favourite feature of the students'. ●

CONNECTED MINIMALISM UNCOVERED

Thanks to advances in technology, working remotely is becoming increasingly possible – and popular.

To be able to work wherever you like, whenever you want, sounds like a dream come true. With increasing numbers of employees working remotely, however, it's now very much a reality. Working traditional hours in a set workplace does not suit everyone nor does it always offer a satisfying work/life balance. People now want more flexible work conditions and, according to *The Australian*, research from Tesyte revealed that in 2017, 84 percent of Australian organisations had systems in place that allowed employees to work remotely.

In a recent survey conducted by International Workplace Group (IWG), the response to the concept of flexible workplaces was overwhelmingly positive. The survey looked at 18,000 professionals across 96 countries, with 89 percent saying that flexible working helps their business grow and 80 percent saying that having employees working remotely enabled them to recruit and retain top talent. According to Mark Dixon, CEO and founder of IWG, the results were far greater than previous years: "We have been running this survey for 10 years, but the strength of responses this year, with positive answers in the 70, 80 and even 90 percent ranges, surprised even those of us at IWG who have worked in the industry for many years."

For Jessica Triganza, a Sydney-based senior recruiter, working remotely is ideal, particularly as a mother of young children. Triganza took on the role when her daughter was 18 months old and she was pregnant with her second child. The job enabled her to accommodate her family commitments without having to step away from the workforce. "That's definitely the number one benefit of being able to work remotely," she says. "That flexibility to be able to work from

home and not have the kids in 12 hours of care each day."

Staying connected

Not only does Triganza work remotely, so too does the entire organisation. "We've all worked in corporate offices previously and have decided that we don't want to do that anymore, including the director of the business," says Triganza. "There's no central office for us to go to, so we choose where we want to work." Most of Triganza's work is done over the phone or via email. She and her co-workers have voice conversations every day and email each other constantly. "We also use a sophisticated Applicant Tracking System (ATS), which is cloud-based, so we can all access the same information from that one data base," she says. "All I need is a computer and a mobile, that's it!"

Free to roam

Once you're connected, working remotely offers incredible freedom. For Triganza this means being able to drop her kids at school, pick them up and still organise the household. And although she is able to work from absolutely anywhere, Triganza often finds herself working from home. "I mostly stay at home because I've got a great computer with a really good screen, which makes it easy," she says. "But when I want to, I can work from my iPad as well." On the other hand, the director of the business religiously takes an hour for lunch every day, away from work. "He doesn't take phone calls during that time," says Triganza. "He properly switches off for a full hour and that really works for him."

Increased productivity

Working in a set office can mean time wasted with lengthy commutes, not to mention the distractions of a busy workplace with regular meetings and social conversations. Triganza definitely acknowledges the increase in productivity. "We focus on what needs to be done; we're very streamlined in what we do because we don't waste time with team meetings and catch-ups," she says. "It's very much a results-based role."

Meeting up

On the other hand, working remotely can be quite isolating, without the incidental chats of a workplace. "In the conversations that I have with my work mates, it's very much about what needs to be done. There's not a lot of chat about what we did on the weekend," says Triganza. "Sometimes, the only person I speak to during

the day is my barista!" However, this is a small price to pay for flexibility and can be dealt with by organising regular face-to-face events, where everyone can reconnect. "We do get together from time to time, very rarely for a meeting, more for social reasons," says Triganza. "We might spend a few hours having a lovely lunch."

More and more people are able to work in this way and organisations are enjoying the benefits. For Triganza, it means engaging in the workplace while her children are young; for others it may present opportunities to travel, live out of the city or simply organise their life to suit themselves. Whatever the reason, we're now more connected than ever, so flexible working situations are possible, and in many ways more favourable. "It seems that one day soon, flexible working could simply be known as 'working'," says IWG's Mark Dixon. "We are reaching the tipping point." ●



123RF's Benjawan Sittidech © 123RF.com

THE RISE OF THE STAYCATION

As the economy shifts, so too are the holidaying practices of people all around the world – with Australia being no exception.

123RF's Alexander Rath © 123RF.com

The reality is that many people can no longer afford to shell out thousands of dollars on flights, accommodation and travel-related expenses, and this has given rise to a new holiday phenomenon: the staycation.

Staycations are the practice of taking a holiday without leaving town, and can involve anything from partaking in tourist activities or even just booking a few days off work to catch up on some R&R with a glass of wine and a good book. However, the term can also refer to holidaying in your own country, perhaps booking accommodation in a hotel, caravan park or private rental such as Airbnb. The concept gained global recognition during the US financial crisis from 2007 to 2010, and has seen a steep revival in post-Brexit vote UK.

Much like traditional tourists, those who opt for a staycation include local parks, historical buildings, museums, art galleries, festivals, markets, popular shopping destinations, beaches, walking trails and restaurants as some of their favourite picks. To mimic the sense of a traditional holiday, many staycationers choose to set a budget, plan an itinerary and steer clear of routine – all while avoiding the stress of packing and waiting around for hours in an airport terminal.

Recent research from Roy Morgan has shown that 54 percent of Aussies are planning

to take a holiday on home soil in the next 12 months, an increase of two percent from the previous quarter. So, what's the big deal about staycations, and do they really compare to the experience of travelling overseas?

Cost-effective

According to data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the average spend on international holidays is \$2371 compared to \$1630 for domestic holidays. Without the need to pay for airfares and lodging, staycationers can save hundreds – if not thousands – on their holiday budgets, which may explain why many Aussies are opting for a break closer to home. What's more, staycations are generally shorter than an overseas holiday, allowing those without flexible leave entitlements to enjoy a holiday without taking too much time off work.

Convenient

Holidays are intended to bring about a sense of relaxation and fulfilment, and allow people to unwind from work stress. Not all breaks are created equal, however. In 2014, the *Harvard Business Review* found that poorly planned holidays eliminate the positive benefits of time away, resulting in more stress. The study also

found that, conversely, 94 percent of people said they had more energy after returning from a good trip. Staycations are a simple and effective way of taking some time out without having to arrange someone to look after pets or deal with jetlag, lost passports, travel sickness, and pre-travel anxiety – all facets that can contribute to a less than ideal holiday experience. Additionally, staycations begin as soon as you finish up your shift at work, allowing for more time to wind down and enjoy some well-deserved respite.

Job-conscious

For many Aussies, jetting off on a longer holiday overseas just isn't an option. In 2016, over 45 percent of Australians were away for just three nights or less on their last trip. According to research by the Australia Institute's Centre for Future Work, fewer than half of Australian workers are in a permanent full-time paid job with leave entitlements, raising questions about the state of job security in the nation. Those with young children or caring responsibilities are also less likely to pack their bags and board an international flight, opting instead for the convenience of a holiday closer to home. Unsurprisingly, the groups most likely to take

lengthier holidays are empty nesters, retirees and older Australians, who have the opportunity to use up long service leave or aren't limited by parenting responsibilities.

Hidden treasures

Ludwig Wittgenstein once said: "If you want to go down deep you do not need to travel far; indeed, you don't have to leave your most immediate and familiar surroundings." It seems that many Australians are sharing this sentiment, with domestic tourism steadily rising by the year. A staycation offers people the chance to check out local gems that they may not have had time to visit before, which not only allows them to gain a newfound appreciation for their place of residence, but also boosts the local economy. With plenty of Aussies becoming increasingly conscious of supporting local businesses, it's no surprise that more people are choosing to enjoy a break and soak up the sights closer to home.

As well as shaving hundreds off your travel expenses, staycations offer busy people the chance to truly relax without sacrificing their creature comforts. And, frankly, in today's frenetic world, who doesn't want an excuse to wake up in their own bed to a day free of responsibilities? ●

KRIS KRINGLE

Few activities in the workplace are as polarising as Kris Kringle. Here are some suggestions that will keep everyone happy

While the popular festive practice can elicit delight and excitement in some, the grinchers among us are more likely to meet the event with a groan. The good news is that nailing your office Kris Kringle doesn't have to be stressful or even time-consuming as long as you keep a few tips in mind.

First, as a general rule of thumb, make sure to stick within the price range set by the organiser – you don't want to make someone uncomfortable by splurging on an overly pricey gift, or have the opposite effect by spending too little. It's also a good idea to get something that will add practical value to your recipient's everyday life. Instead of choosing an item that'll end up gathering dust – or even regifted come next Christmas – opt for something that your recipient will clearly find useful or, at the very least, be certain to enjoy. The gifts below are an excellent place to start.

DIY TERRARIUM KIT

A terrarium is the perfect way of adding a pop of colour to a drab office desk, and what better way to make it happen than by putting it together yourself? There are plenty of boutique Australian businesses offering terrarium kits that come with everything your recipient will need for an afternoon of DIY, including soil, activated charcoal, moss and decorations – some even supply the plants.

Available from www.terrariumlaboratory.com.au/product/diy-kits, where kits start at \$34.



123RF's Piti Tantaweevongs
© 123RF.com



FOUR-PORT USB CHARGING STATION

You'd be hard pressed to find someone in this day and age who doesn't own at least two devices. Do your co-worker a favour and help them solve their cord clutter issues by getting them a sleek, bamboo-look charging station. Perfect for desks, bedside tables, and busy kitchen counters, this practical gift looks fantastic while saving space.

Available from Kmart for \$30.

OTIUM BLUETOOTH HEADPHONES

These wireless Bluetooth headphones by Otium have been met with rave reviews at a price point that's equally appealing. Ideal for everyone from the gym enthusiast through to the daily commuter, these headphones boast up to eight hours of play time, a lightweight sweatproof design, and a wire-free neckband design. Give your colleague the gift of never having to deal with tangled earphone cords again!

Available for \$26.99 at Amazon.



123RF's Fridav © 123RF.com



JACOB'S CREEK DOUBLE BARREL SHIRAZ GLASS PACK

If you've landed the office wine aficionado for this year's Kris Kringle, congratulations – your shopping trip was just made 10 times easier. Rather than picking up a bottle of whatever looks half-decent at your local bottle shop, take your gift up a notch with a Jacob's Creek shiraz glass pack. The wine itself is highly regarded, and the glasses are a handy addition that are ideal for picnics (or cracking open at the work Christmas do, if your recipient is so inclined).

Available from Dan Murphy's for \$30.

FRANK GREEN STAINLESS STEEL RANGE

For the eco-warrior in your office, a reusable coffee cup or water bottle by Australian brand frank green makes for a fabulous gift. Its recently launched double-walled, vacuum-insulated stainless steel range boasts a customisable colour palette and the ability to retain heat and conserve cool liquids for up to 12 hours – sustainability done stylishly (and conveniently).

Available at frankgreen.com/au and selected retailers for \$39.95 to \$49.95.



HOOVER 12V CAR HAND VAC

Let's face it, no one gets excited by the prospect of vacuuming their car, but this useful handheld vacuum will certainly make the job easier. Equipped with five different attachments to tackle all those hard to reach spots, this vacuum is compact – making it ideal for on-board storage – and plugs into the lighter socket, allowing for easy vacuuming on the go. This makes for an especially excellent gift for those with children.

Purchase from Godfreys for \$29.



What's new on Property Tree

Property Tree releases features' enhancements monthly. We continually aim for smarter automation, more value-added services and better insights at your fingertips, as we develop our next generation, cloud-based property management platform. Recent development highlights include:

Mobile Contacts App (LIVE)

The Contacts app enables property managers to deliver personalised service to their customers through its advanced Caller ID, by matching incoming calls from your phone to your Property Tree contacts, enabling quick and easy access to all your contacts when you are out of the office.

Trust reporting (LIVE)

To make it easier for you to access all your trust reports under a single interface, we have added 19 new reports links to the Trust Reporting section.

Invoice Genius (LIVE)

Speed up your invoicing process by uploading them in bulk instead of one at a time via the Invoice Genius bulk approvals function. This feature is included in your subscription fee.

Tenant Download (LIVE)

Manually entering tenant funds can be a thing of the past with the Tenant Download function. Designed specifically for funds directly deposited into the agency's trust account, the Tenant Download function will automatically match transactions with a tenancy, allocate the funds and then receipt the matched transactions.

Rockend Property Assistant (LIVE)

Access fully trained, Rockend accredited staff from industry leading outsourcer Beepo, and get help with your new property onboarding, new tenant onboarding, tenancy management and tenancy exit administration.

Online Advertising (BETA)

This new feature allows Property Tree users to push ads to online portals such as realestate.com.au, domain.com.au or realestate.co.nz by leveraging the information about a property already held in Property Tree. The new service automatically prefills the necessary fields, thereby reducing duplication of data entry, saving time and allowing agencies to manage all their online advertising from a single screen, in Property Tree.

Direct Debit (BETA)

Be in control of the tenant payment with Direct Debit. Once set up, Direct Debit enables your tenants' rent to be directly transferred electronically to your trust account, reducing your arrears and simplifying your tenants' experience.

Document Management (BETA)

Quickly search, access and retrieve property-related documents when and where you need them. Reduce the time you spend searching for documents related to a tenant or property. Tag them, search them and find them. Fast.

What's new in Strata Master

We've been hard at work building new features and functions in Strata Master this year. We prioritised development based on customer feedback – such as online voting and unified communications – and have delivered enhancement to save time, go paperless and provide more value to strata managers' own customers. Watch out for Strata Master v11 in March 2019.

Strata Master Online Voting

Increase owner meeting participation by allowing owners to vote from their PC or mobile phone before the start of any meeting.

Delegated Functions Reporting

Report on the main functions of a strata manager at plan level, bringing many reports into one. This is a quick and easy way to highlight the work you do for your customers.

Multiple Invoice Dissections with File Smart Workflow

Flag an invoice that has multiple dissections. Process the dissected invoice directly from the File Smart Creditor Invoices screen – a big time saver.

Communication Wizard Overhaul

Send email and SMS messages to owners, tenants, residents, agents and committees for single or multiple corporations, with duplicate removal and the ability to preview email contacts prior to sending.

Added Merge Fields

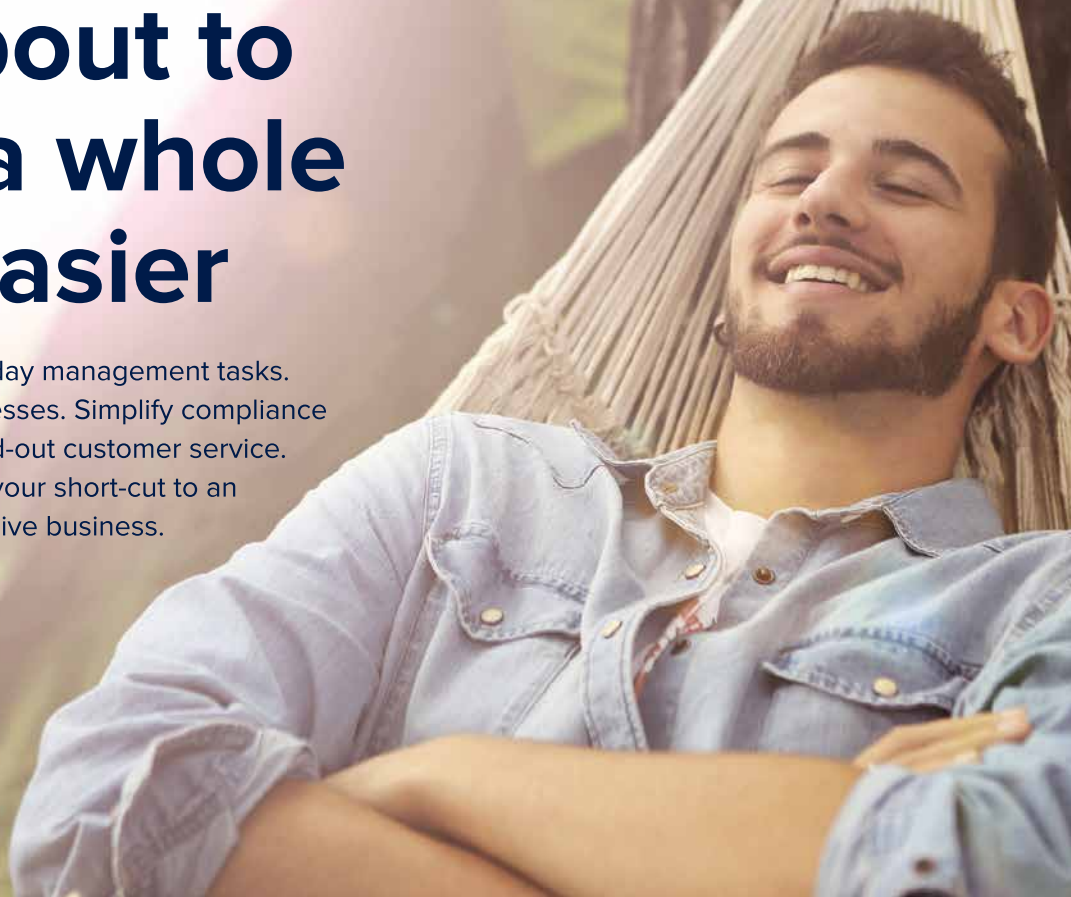
A number of new merge fields have been added to assist in communicating with your customers.

Report Enhancements

With more options to print to file, it's never been easier to go paperless in Strata Master. You'll also notice a range of requested changes that will save you time every day.

Your life is about to get a whole lot easier

Automate everyday management tasks. Streamline processes. Simplify compliance and deliver stand-out customer service. Strata Master is your short-cut to an efficient, impressive business.



At Rockend we get strata management. It's been our business for almost 40 years, so we understand the challenges and the processes.

Getting started is easy. We'll guide you through implementation, provide customisable training options, and free support by local strata experts.

Relax. We're rock solid

We have been delivering reliable strata software for almost 40 years. Today, we support more than 40% of lots Australia-wide.

Free expert support from locals

Phone? Chat? Email? Webinar? Article? You decide. Our award winning local support team is there for you, free as part of your subscription.

Get up to speed in no time

Rockend provides a choice of training options from quick start seminars through to comprehensive classes - delivered online, on your premises or in a classroom.

Organise a demo today and see why Strata Master is **Australia's number 1 property management solution**

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